

BJP and AGP are vying for the Sivasagar seat; don't believe Akhil Gogoi on the partnership : Himanta Biswa Sarma

Guwahati, Mar 08: Assamese Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma attacked Akhil Gogoi for alliance politics and stated that the ruling alliance has not yet decided who will run for the Sivasagar Assembly seat. Speaking to reporters, Sarma stated that the alliance led by the Bharatiya Janata Party was still considering a candidate for Sivasagar because candidates from both the party and its ally, the Asom Gana Parishad, were vying for the position. The Chief Minister stated, "We have not yet made a decision regarding the Sivasagar seat because both BJP and our ally AGP candidates are vying for the seat, so we are still discussing the matter." Sarma also took a swipe at Gogoi, alleging that the Rajior Dal leader was staging a "drama of alliance-building" ahead of the elections. He claimed that such political manoeuvring would continue until the final day for withdrawal of nomination papers. "Do not trust Akhil Gogoi when it comes to alliances. The drama will continue till the last day of



nomination withdrawal," Sarma remarked. The Chief Minister's comments come amid ongoing political developments and negotiations within the ruling alliance regarding seat-sharing and candidate selection for key constituencies in Assam.

Amidst discussions about an opposition alliance in Assam, Akhil Gogoi tweets a cryptic message



Guwahati, Mar 08: On March 6, Rajior Dal chief Akhil Gogoi wrote a mysterious statement in Assamese on social media that loosely translates to "the final attempt also failed." In light of the impending Assembly elections in Assam, the brief comment has caused political circles to speculate about the state of talks about a potential alliance with the Indian National Congress.

The announcement that the Congress and a number of opposition parties will start holding joint campaign gatherings

throughout the state coincided with the post. Gaurav Gogoi, president of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, stated during a news conference that the party is now collaborating with the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and the Assam Jatiya Parishad to create a more comprehensive opposition front.

Gogoi announced ongoing discussions with parties like Rajior Dal, expressing optimism about expanding the opposition alliance ahead of the upcoming Assembly

elections, expected before mid-April. Joint campaign meetings across Upper Assam and other regions are planned, although the seat-sharing arrangement is still in progress. The Congress has already named candidates for 42 seats. Gogoi emphasized the need for the alliance to convey its unity to the public, while confirming that talks with additional parties are ongoing. Key allies have united to challenge the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, which currently holds 64 out of 126 seats in the Assam Assembly.

In Brief

Biometric Enrolment of 97% of Myanmar Refugees

Aizawl: Authorities in Mizoram have successfully completed biometric enrolment for over 97% of the approximately 28,355 Myanmar refugees since the February 2021 military coup. Launched in July 2025, the enrolment utilizes two platforms to document both Myanmar and Bangladeshi refugees. Currently, 27,574 Myanmar nationals have been enrolled, with four districts fully completing the process. However, obstacles such as poor internet connectivity have slowed down progress in six districts, affecting enrolment completion. In contrast, the enrolment of Bangladeshi refugees has been significantly lower, with only 21.18% enrolled. The Mizoram government emphasizes the initiative aims for proper documentation and improved humanitarian aid coordination for the displaced individuals.

NPF objects to 'mandatory' recitation of Vande Mataram

Kohima: In a significant development for the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP), families from Simong and Halleng villages in Arunachal Pradesh have given consent for pre-feasibility report activities. At a ceremony in Yingkiong, 128 of 144 families in Simong (89%) and all nine families in Halleng signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with the state government. The MoUs, signed by Upper Siang Deputy Commissioner Talo Jerang and village representatives, indicate strong local support. The SUMP, proposed on the Siang river, aims to enhance energy security and promote infrastructure and socio-economic growth in the area.

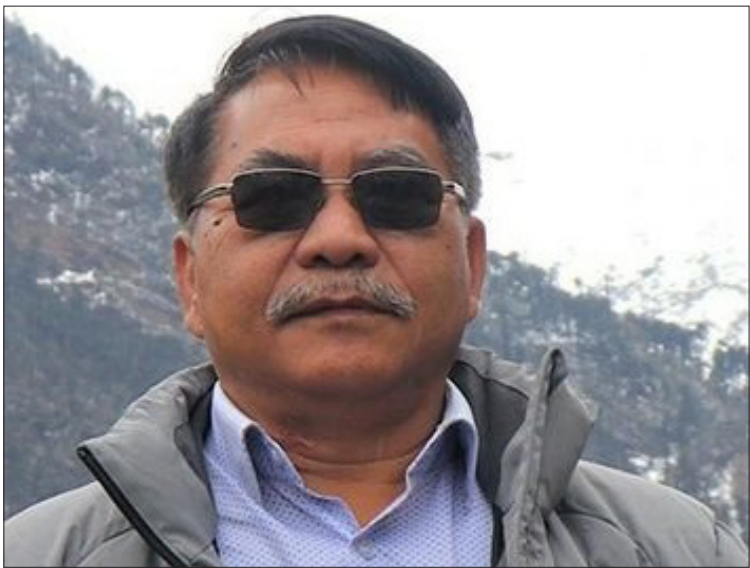
45 villages yet to be electrified in Mizoram

Aizawl: On March 5, Mizoram's Power and Electricity Minister F. Rodinglana reported that 45 villages remain un-electrified or de-electrified, but efforts are underway to provide electricity through the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS). Contracts for electrification works have been awarded to three contractors, and initial materials are being delivered. Additionally, 71 damaged transformers are awaiting repair, though power supply continues via functioning transformers. Delays in repairs stem from a need for formal surveys and transportation challenges to Assam. The government plans to replace corroded electric poles and has allocated Rs 2.70 crore for this initiative in the 2025-26 fiscal year, while demand for Low Tension power line extensions is being addressed based on available funds.

Rising human-animal conflict is linked by an Arunachal minister to habitat stress and development

Itanagar, Mar 08: On March 6, Wangki Lowang, the minister of Arunachal Pradesh's environment, forests, and climate change, stated that the state's growing number of human-animal conflicts are mostly caused by development pressures and stress on wildlife habitats. In response to a private member's resolution introduced in the Assembly by Congress MLA Kumar Waii, the minister stated that Arunachal Pradesh's geography is shared by communities that rely on forests and globally significant biodiversity, increasing the frequency of confrontations between people and wildlife.

According to Lowang, building projects frequently obstruct wildlife migration routes, causing animals to wander into populated areas. He added that tribal societies' custom of shifting farming damages wildlife habitats and fuels these kinds of disputes. He continued by saying that when ecosystems are under stress or when the natural prey base for wild animals decreases, human-animal encounters



Arunachal Pradesh Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Wangki Lowang on March 6 said the increasing instances of human-animal conflict in the state are largely the result of development pressures and stress on wildlife habitats.

Ghat along the Lohit riverbank in Lohit district on February 21 while he was there with two friends.

Last year, former MLA Kapchen Rajkumar, who represented Khonsa North constituency between 1985 and 1990, died after being attacked by a wild elephant near Deomali in Tirap district while on a morning walk.

The minister said long-term solutions require sustained investment in community-based prevention measures, improved rapid response mechanisms, transparent compensation for victims and better landscape-level planning to protect wildlife corridors while safeguarding local livelihoods. He informed the Assembly that the

state government has submitted proposals to the Centre seeking support for installing solar electric fencing and digging trenches in conflict-prone areas but is yet to receive a response.

Lowang also said a proposal has been submitted to the state government to impose a complete ban on airguns and suggested the formation of an Assembly committee to examine the issue and submit recommendations. He further stated that reports regarding human fatalities in such conflicts have already been sent to the Centre and that the state is awaiting ex-gratia funds to be disbursed to the families of victims.

Participating in the discussion, senior BJP MLAs Mahesh Chai, Honchun Ngandam and Wanglin Lowangdong called for stronger legislation to address the issue. Deputy Speaker Kardo Nyigyor, who was presiding over the House, assured members that a committee would be constituted to study the matter and submit a report to the government.

Pramod Boro is warmly welcomed in Kokrajhar

Guwahati, Mar 08: Pramod Boro, the president of the United People's Party Liberal, has achieved a major political milestone for the Bodo community by winning an uncontested seat in the Rajya Sabha.

After the nomination documents for the three Rajya Sabha seats from Assam were examined, his election was verified. Legislators from the All India United Democratic Front, Asom Gana Parishad, and United People's Party Liberal endorsed Boro's nomination, and more than the necessary number of MLAs signed as proposers. For the Bodo community, the development has been called a historic event. Sending Boro to the Upper House of Parliament is primarily intended to support the 125th Constitutional Amendment Bill of India, which suggests raising



the number of One of the key objectives of sending Boro to the Upper House of Parliament is to push for the 125th Constitutional Amendment Bill of India, which proposes increasing the number of constituencies in the Bodoland Territorial Council from the existing 40 to 60. Following the announcement of his victory, Boro received a grand welcome in Kokrajhar. Supporters gathered in large numbers to celebrate the occasion with traditional dances, bursting of firecrackers and showering flower petals on the leader.

Mini stadium in the East Garo Hills of Meghalaya

Shillong, Mar 01: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma laid the foundation stone for the renovation of the Main Primary Health Centre (PHC) at Mangsang in East Garo Hills.

The renovations include upgrades to the PHC building, staff quarters, and a yoga-cum-meeting hall, aimed at enhancing healthcare infrastructure to meet local needs and retain medical staff.

The Chief Minister emphasized that strengthening primary healthcare will alleviate pressure on higher medical institutions.

Keyi Panyor food business owners are required to obtain an FSSAI license

Itanagar, Mar 08: According to an official, all food business operators (FBOs) in the Keyi Panyor district of Arunachal Pradesh have been instructed to obtain a trade licence and a valid license from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) right away or risk facing penalties. The instruction is applicable to all food establishments in the district, including bakeries, hotels, restaurants, resorts, and homestays, according to an executive order signed on

March 5 by Deputy Commissioner in charge Likha Teji.

According to the ruling, before beginning operations, any food business operator in India is required by Section 31(1) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 to get a valid license or registration from the FSSAI. It also emphasised that operating without a valid trade licence is illegal. The deputy commissioner further directed all FBOs to strictly follow food safety and



hygiene standards while preparing, storing and selling food items. The order has come into immediate effect and warned that those found violating the directive will face penalties under the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act and other applicable laws.

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan's Tripura visit

Agartala, Mar 08: Shillong, Mar 01: Extensive security and administrative preparations are being established in Tripura for Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan's visit on March 7 and 8. Dr. Vishal Kumar, the District Magistrate of West Tripura, confirmed that the Vice President will engage in several official activities. On March 7, he will visit the Matabari (Tripura Sundari Temple) in Gomati district and participate in an event at Albert Park in Agartala. On March 8, he is set to attend the 14th convocation ceremony at Tripura University and interact with beneficiaries



during an event for "Lakshpati Didis" at the Hapania International Fairground, where he will also examine exhibition stalls. A preparatory meeting involving district officials was convened to review security measures and in-

struct civic authorities on cleanliness and traffic management. The Vice President's movement post-arrival will be facilitated by road, with significant security, including paramilitary presence, ensured throughout Agartala.

NE/EAST

AGMC & GBP Hospital's new critical care facilities are officially opened by Tripura CM

Agartala, Mar 08: On Thursday, March 5, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha reaffirmed the state government's commitment to bolstering public health infrastructure by inaugurating a number of important medical facilities at Govind Ballabh Pant Hospital (GBP Hospital) and Agartala Government Medical College (AGMC). A 16-bed Geriatric and Respiratory Intensive Care Unit (ICU), a Labor Room-cum-Obstetrics OT Complex, and a Trauma Operation Theatre are among the recently opened facilities. According to the Chief Minister, the hospital's ability to provide prompt, specialized, and high-quality healthcare services will be greatly improved by the inclusion of these vital equipment. It is anticipated that the new infrastructure will enhance emergency response systems and provide better medical care for patients throughout the state. Highlighting the government's vision of building a robust



and people-centric healthcare system, he said the initiative marks another step towards ensuring accessible and improved healthcare services for the people of Tripura.

India gets closer to its \$2/kg green hydrogen target with a record low tender price

Amitabh Kant

Guwahati, Mar 08: Following the discovery of a record low price in a recent tender related to Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) in Assam, former Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant stated on March 5 that India is gradually moving toward its goal of manufacturing green hydrogen at \$2 per kilogram. Kant provided an update on X, pointing out that a tender for the yearly supply of 10,000 tons of green hydrogen to the refinery resulted in the lowest price ever found, at Rs 279 per kilogram (about



\$3.08). According to him, the development highlights the quick progress being made in the green hydrogen industry and shows that manufacturing prices are gradually coming into line with India's long-term pricing goal. Kant attributed the declining costs to sustained policy support from the government and fall-

ing renewable energy tariffs, which have enhanced the economic viability of green hydrogen. The tender outcome, linked to the Assam-based refinery, is being viewed as a significant boost to India's clean energy ambitions and its efforts to scale up domestic capacity in the emerging green fuel sector.

Government regulations were broken during the east-west corridor tunnel renovation

Guwahati, Mar 08: In Assam's Dima Hasao district, repair work has started within the Maibang highway tunnel along the Saurashtra East-West Corridor. However, it is allegedly being done in defiance of government safety regulations. Large potholes had formed inside the tunnel on the Silchar-Saurashtra East-West Corridor, according to local sources from Haflong, putting travelers at grave risk.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had previously neglected to promptly repair the damaged section despite repeated concerns. Inadequate illumination has also long been a problem in the tunnel, and it

hasn't been fixed for a long time. While these safety concerns continued, observers claimed that the NHAI seemed more concerned with reopening the Jatinga-Harangajao route than with fixing the tunnel's declining state. But at last, the repairs have started. According to reports, the rehabilitation is being done without following official government norms, which raises questions regarding worker and road user safety.

There are reportedly no obvious road safety precautions in place, and workers on the job are not wearing the bare minimum of necessary safety gear. Sources said that an outside contractor, DC Azmira, had been awarded the

responsibility from July 1, 2024, to undertake maintenance of the 57-kilometre stretch from near Hatikhali Government Model Degree College to Nerim Bungalow, including tunnel upkeep. For months, the contractor allegedly showed little urgency in carrying out the repair work, allowing the problems to worsen. Even after work has begun, compliance with government norms appears lacking. A site engineer from the DC Azmira contracting group reportedly admitted that the repair work is not being executed in accordance with official standards. The situation has raised fresh questions about road safety and oversight in the maintenance of the key highway corridor.



The NEHU registrar was hurt when masked attackers threw stones at him in Shillong

Shillong, Mar 08: On March 4, masked persons attacked Kailash Chandra Biswal, the registrar-in-charge of North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), near the Mawlai bypass in Shillong, causing him to suffer head injuries.

The incident happened on Monday night when Biswal was leaving the university campus, according to East Khasi Hills Superintendent of Police Vivek Syiem. His car was apparently intercepted by five masked individuals who then started throwing stones at him, one of which hit his head. According to reports, the attack happened in a heavily populated location.

The attackers fled as locals and store owners hurried to the scene upon hearing the disturbance. Biswal was immediately shifted to the North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS) for treatment. Police said he is currently under medical supervision in the neurology department.

Law enforcement authorities have registered a case and launched an investigation to identify and apprehend those responsible for the assault. Biswal was recently appointed registrar-in-charge of the Shillong cam-



pus by NEHU Vice-Chancellor Prof. Prabha Shankar Shukla. The development comes amid ongoing administrative tensions within the university, as the Vice-Chancellor has reported-

ly been away from the campus since November 17, 2024, following allegations of administrative irregularities that allegedly affected the institution's normal functioning.

Without the BJP, tribal areas cannot develop

CM Manik Saha

Agartala, Mar 08: Tribal people in the state have realized that development in their areas is impossible without the Bharatiya Janata Party, according to Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday. Speaking at a public gathering in Atharobhola, Gomati district, Saha asserted that the tribal belt's residents are becoming more aware of the BJP-led government's contribution to regional development and welfare programs. "The days of clinging to power in the ADC by misleading the public through communal whispers and deception are over. The tribal brothers and sisters now realise that development is impossible without the Bharatiya Janata Party," the Chief Minister said. Saha also credited the BJP-led government at the Centre under Prime Minister Narendra Modi for prioritising the welfare of tribal communities. "No one had seriously thought about the welfare of our tribal brothers and sisters before the BJP-led government and Prime



Minister Narendra Modi. During our tenure, several steps have been taken for the development and welfare of the tribal population, and this work will continue in the days ahead," he said. The Chief Minister made the remarks while addressing

a large public gathering organised by the Bagha Mondal in Atharobhola. He called upon people in the tribal areas to support the BJP in the upcoming elections to ensure continued development in the region.

Since September 2024, Mizoram has received Rs 93 crore through fuel taxes: Lalduhoma



Aizawl, Mar 08: On Tuesday, March 3, Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma informed the state Assembly that since enacting a Rs 4 per litre tax on gasoline and diesel in September 2024, the state had earned about Rs 93.37 crore. The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) government introduced the levy, which is divided into two parts: Rs 2 per li-

tre for road maintenance and another Rs 2 per litre for social infrastructure and services. At the time, the administration had also increased the VAT on the two fuels. Lalduhoma, who also has the Finance ministry, presented the data to the House and stated that between October and December 2024, Rs 46.68 crore was collected as social infrastruc-

ture and services. The road repair fund received the same amount of money during the same.

Between April and December 2025, the levy yielded Rs 33.43 crore each for the two dedicated funds. From the total social infrastructure and services cess collected so far, Rs 9 crore has already been released to five departments, including Health, Education and Social Welfare, for improving infrastructure and meeting sectoral requirements. The Chief Minister stated that 60 per cent of the cess is earmarked for the education sector.

The remaining 40 per cent is to be divided equally between the social sector and the health and wellness sector. With regard to the road maintenance component, Rs 15 crore has been allocated in the 2025-26 Budget for road construction works under the Public Works Department's Mizoram State Road Fund Board.

Five milk processing plants lift Assam's dairy output

Guwahati, Mar 08: The Chief Minister's Office Assam stated on Saturday, March 7, that the dairy industry in Assam is growing steadily, with five state-of-the-art milk processing facilities currently in operation and daily milk production approaching 1.5 lakh liters. The CMO highlighted the development, stating that under Himanta Biswa Sarma's leadership, the state's movement toward a "White Revolution" is progressively changing the dairy scene. The CMO said in a post on X that increasing milk output and the development of contemporary processing infrastructure are bolstering Assam's journey toward dairy industry self-sufficiency. The CMO claims that by strengthening organized dairy networks and guaranteeing improved market access for milk producers, the project also aims to empower farmers and improve rural livelihoods. It is anticipated that the expanding dairy infrastructure will boost the state's agricultural economy, provide farmer opportunities, and raise rural incomes. In July 2025, the Government of Assam launched an initiative to enhance the dairy sector and support self-reliance among farmers, benefiting approximately 20,000 dairy farmers linked to 601 cooperative societies. The program provides financial assistance of Rs 5 per litre for milk supplied to organised processing units, with a cap of 30 litres per day.

The Manipur Assembly's budget session will start on March 9

Imphal, Mar 08: The Budget session of the Manipur Legislative Assembly is scheduled to commence on March 9, as confirmed by officials on March 5, with the state budget anticipated to be unveiled during the session. The Assembly proceedings will start at 11 a.m., although the end date for the session has yet to be disclosed. Officials expect that the session will last a minimum of one week, during which the budget will be presented. This comes after a one-day session on February 5, which followed the installation of a popular government led by Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh, who took office the day after the lifting of President's Rule, amidst ongoing violence in the state. Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Tongbram Robindro Singh had previously mentioned, on February 28, that the budget session would be held following the Holi festival. Additionally, Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel has instructed all government departments to prepare their Annual Administrative Reports for the fiscal year 2025-26 to be submitted for review during the session. The backdrop to this year's budget discussions is marked by significant turmoil, as Manipur has been experiencing ongoing unrest due to ethnic violence that erupted on May 3, 2023.

2,968 police recruits receive appointment letters from Meghalaya CM Conrad Sangma

Shillong, Mar 08: 2,968 recently hired Meghalaya Police officers at the 2nd MLP Battalion in Goeragre received appointment letters from Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma. According to the Chief Minister, the hiring represents one of the biggest inductions into the state police force and demonstrates the government's dedication to bolstering security, safety, and law and order throughout Meghalaya. Sangma stated, "This is one of the biggest inductions into the State police force, strengthening our commitment to maintaining safety, security, and law and order throughout Meghalaya." He noted that the recruitment process witnessed significant interest from young aspirants, with more than 1.7 lakh applicants applying for the posts.

According to him, the large number of applications highlights the aspirations of the youth and the importance of ensuring merit

and transparency in public service recruitment. "With over 1.7 lakh applicants for these posts, the recruitment process reflects the aspirations of our youth and the importance of merit and transparency in public service," he said.

Addressing the newly recruited personnel, Sangma said the police uniform symbolises discipline, fairness and public trust, and comes with the responsibility of serving people with integrity. "The uniform represents discipline, fairness, and trust, and carries the responsibility of serving the people," he said, encouraging the recruits to work with dedication and humility. He also congratulated the new recruits and their families on the occasion. The induction is expected to strengthen the operational capacity of the state police and enhance policing services across Meghalaya.



Praying anywhere is not a religious right: Bombay High Court



Mumbai, Mar 08: The Bombay High Court ruled that airport security supersedes religious practices, denying a plea from taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers to pray at a demolished shed near Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport during Ramzan. The court affirmed that,

although Ramzan is significant in Islam, claiming a right to pray at any location near the airport poses security risks.

The court reviewed submissions from authorities indicating that no suitable alternative sites could be allocated for prayers due to congestion and security con-

siderations. Emphasizing public safety, the bench highlighted that while the petitioners can pray, it cannot be at the airport's vicinity. It suggested that they could seek a future solution when terminal redevelopment occurs, acknowledging their role in servicing airport passengers.

India's largest economy is still Maharashtra

Mumbai, Mar 08: Maharashtra remains India's largest state economy, with an estimated nominal Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Rs 46.22 lakh crore for the fiscal year 2024-25, and projected growth to Rs 51 lakh crore in 2025-26. According to the Economic Survey presented in the state assembly, the per capita income for Maharashtra is expected to rise from Rs 3,17,801 in 2024-25 to Rs 3,47,903 in the subsequent year, showcasing consistent economic growth.

The state contributes approximately 14% to India's nominal GDP, which is the highest among Indian states, while Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh follow with contributions of 9.4% and 9%, respectively. In reference to the top ten state economies, Tamil Nadu leads with a GSDP of Rs 31.18 lakh crore, followed by Uttar Pradesh at Rs 29.78 lakh crore, Karnataka at Rs 28.83 lakh crore, and Gujarat at Rs 27.03 lakh crore. Other significant con-

tributors include West Bengal, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. Maharashtra's economic strength is largely attributed to its robust services and industrial sectors.

The state's outstanding debt is estimated to be manageable at 18.3% of GSDP for the fiscal year 2025-26, which ensures stability in public finances under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) framework.

The total receipts for 2025-26 are expected to reach Rs 6,99,569 crore, while total expenditure is anticipated to be Rs 7,00,020 crore, resulting in a minor budgetary deficit of Rs 451 crore. Specifically, revenue receipts are projected at Rs 5,60,964 crore, against revenue expenditure of Rs 6,06,855 crore, leading to a revenue deficit of 0.9% of GSDP. Tax revenue, predominantly from the State Goods and Services Tax (SGST), remains the primary source of income for the state.

PM demands an early conclusion to the hostilities in Iran and Ukraine

New Delhi, Mar 08: Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged an early conclusion to the US-Israel-Iran and Ukraine crises, emphasizing that communication and diplomacy are still the only means of resolving disputes. The Prime Minister's comments take on significance as the Middle East descended into chaos after US-Israeli bombings against Iran on February 28, which prompted Tehran to launch retaliatory airstrikes. Speaking at a joint press conference in Delhi with President Alexander Stubb of Finland, Prime Minister Modi stated that both nations firmly believe in the rule of law and will keep working for enduring peace in the Middle East and in Ukraine. Finland and India have a strong dedication to communication, diplomacy, and the rule of law. We are adamant that issues cannot be settled by armed war. This



also holds true for circumstances in West Asia and Ukraine. PM Modi stated, "We hope for an early end to the wars and will continue to support efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace." He pointed

out that India and Europe were about to embark on a "golden era" of cooperation for stability and development, highlighting global turmoil from Ukraine to the Middle East. "Today, the world is going

through a period of instability and uncertainty. Conflict persists in many parts of the world, from Ukraine to West Asia. In such a global environment, India and Europe, two of the world's major diplomatic powers, are entering a golden era in our relationship. Our growing cooperation is giving new strength to global stability, development, and shared prosperity," PM Modi said. PM Modi's remarks come at a time when two major conflicts — the Russia-Ukraine war in Europe and the ongoing US-Israel-Iran confrontation in the Middle East — have heightened global tensions, disrupted economies and raised fears of a wider geopolitical crisis. The war in Ukraine began in February 2022 after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbour, triggering the biggest conflict in Europe since World War II.

Kashmir willow bats for survival

Srinagar, Mar 08:

The Jammu and Kashmir cricket team's recent victory in the Ranji Trophy has drawn attention away from the ongoing struggle in the region's orchards, where the prized Kashmir willow faces competition from fast-growing poplar trees. While cricketing icons like Sachin Tendulkar celebrate the Kashmir willow's legacy, local farmers increasingly prefer poplars due to their quicker financial returns. Fawzul Kabir from the Kashmir Cricket Bat Manufacturers Association reports a tenfold increase in bat production, with three million bats manufactured annually, catering to a growing international market. Specifically, bats made from Kashmir willow have caught the interest of 47 international players, contributing to the industry's employment of 150,000 people, many within Kashmir itself. However, the bat industry confronts a severe shortage of willow trees, with 70,000 harvested annually and minimal replantation efforts. The sweet poplar trees offer quicker yields, with financial returns significantly lower than the mature willow.



Assam BJP denounces the "non-existent" opposition

Guwahati, Mar 08: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) state unit declared that the state's political scene had essentially become "opposition-less," accusing opposing parties of withdrawing from the electoral battlefield during the most recent Rajya Sabha election for three Assamese seats. The much-discussed coalition amongst opposition parties, according to Assam BJP spokesperson Kamal Kumar Medhi, only exists in media narratives and has not resulted in any genuine political cooperation on the ground. Despite the state's three recently empty Rajya Sabha seats, Medhi noted that the opposition parties did not even step forward to run in the election, demonstrating what he called their lack of unity and political resolve. He made a direct jab at the Indian National Congress, claiming that the party's catchphrase, "There will be a fight," has now shown to

be meaningless.

Medhi stated that the Congress, along with other opposition forces, had essentially opted for "retreat and political escape" by refusing to run in the Rajya Sabha election and staying hundreds of miles away from the battlefield. The BJP senior claimed that although it was clear from the numbers that the government alliance would win the first two Rajya Sabha seats, the third seat still presented a chance for opposition parties to unite and launch a symbolic challenge.

He added that running for the seat may have shown the public the power and seriousness of the opposition alliance, even though success was doubtful. Politics involves both winning and losing. However, the opposition has demonstrated that its promises of unity are purely rhetorical by not even trying to run for the third



seat, Medhi said. He further said the failure of opposition parties to even file nomination papers in the Rajya Sabha polls has laid bare the current state of opposition politics in Assam.

The development, he added, indicates that the opposition may struggle to forge a practical alliance in the run-up to the state's upcoming Assembly elections. "The events surrounding the Rajya Sabha election have exposed the stark reality that opposition parties in Assam lack the ability to unite in practice," Medhi said, asserting that the episode reflects the growing political dominance of the BJP in the state.

Supreme Court prohibits families in accident fatality cases from receiving extra compensation

New Delhi, Mar 08: According to a ruling by the Supreme Court, dependant family members of a government employee who perishes in an automobile accident may seek compensation for lost wages from either the government or the Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal, but not both. The decision was rendered by a bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Augustine George Masih, who also granted Reliance General Insurance Company Limited's appeal against a Punjab and Haryana High Court ruling that had adopted a different stance and permitted the state government and the Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal (MACT) to compensate the dependents of a deceased government employee. Hom Devi, a government employee, was killed and the other two were injured after a motorcycle ridden by Ravinder Kumar and carrying two pillion riders, Kanika and Hom Devi, collided with a jeep on November 2, 2009. The dependant family members appealed the MACT's ₹8,80,000 award before the high court, requesting a larger sum. The Haryana Compassionate Assistance to Dependents of Deceased Government Employees Rules, 2006 required

that the sum received by the family be subtracted from the overall amount of compensation, however the high court first granted the motion for augmentation. According to the main ruling, the high court awarded ₹29,09,240 in total compensation. It stated that the sum granted by the MACT and the sum received by the claimant-respondents as compensation under the 2006 guidelines would be subtracted. Reliance General Insurance filed the appeal after the high court ruled in a later decision that the money received from the government did not need to be deducted. The Supreme Court granted the insurer's appeal, citing its previous decision from ten years ago in the Reliance General Insurance v. Shashi Sharma case, in which a three-judge panel addressed a claim for damages made by dependant family members of a government employee who had perished in a deadly car accident. The court's decision clarifies that when calculating compensation, only overlapping or equivalent benefits are taken into account for deduction, leaving unrelated assistance intact," the apex court said, while setting aside the high court order.



Amit Shah Introduces Mascots for the First Digital Census of India in 2027

New Delhi, Mar 08: On Thursday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah presented two mascots for Census 2027 and soft launched a series of digital portals, signaling the beginning of preparations for the greatest demographic exercise in history. As India strives to become a developed nation by 2047, the mascots Pragati and Vikas, which stand for male and female enumerators, are intended to emphasize the equal participation of men and women in the national exercise. According to officials, the next census will be carried out in two stages and will be the first time that digital technologies will be used for a national exercise. Before the door-to-door survey starts, individuals will have the opportunity to self-enumerate for the first time via a secure web-based platform where they can input their household details online in 16 languages. The digital tools that will facilitate the nationwide enumeration procedure have been created by the Center for Development of Advanced Computing. During the launch, four important digital



systems were presented. These include the Self Enumeration portal, which allows citizens to submit their information online, the Houselisting Block Creator web application, which enables officials to create houselisting blocks using satellite imagery, the HLO mobile application, which allows enumerators to gather and upload field data via smartphones, and the Census Management and Monitoring System, which will enable authorities to track the exercise's progress in real time. In a gazette notice published on June 16, 2025, the government formally declared its intention to carry

out the next census. There will be two phases to the nationwide exercise. The first phase, known as the Houselisting and Housing Census, will gather details on housing conditions and household amenities. This phase will be conducted between April 1 and September 30, with each state and union territory carrying out the survey during a 30 day period notified locally. An optional 15 day window for self enumeration will be provided before the door to door survey begins. The second phase will involve population enumeration and will capture demographic, social and economic informa-

tion of every individual. This phase is scheduled to be carried out across the country in February 2027. For the Union Territory of Ladakh and snow bound areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the population enumeration will be conducted earlier in September due to weather conditions. Officials said more than 30 lakh enumerators, supervisors and other personnel will be deployed across the country to carry out the census, which will rely heavily on mobile applications and digital monitoring systems to ensure accuracy and full coverage.

Concerns over law and order in Itanagar led to the withdrawal of AAPSU election permission

Itanagar, Mar 08: The Itanagar district administration has rescinded permission for the All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) election and conference, citing heightened law and order concerns due to recent clashes among rival candidates. The Deputy Commissioner's office canceled the previous approval, which had been granted to Chief Election Commissioner Nabam Tamar for the election process scheduled from February 17 to 23, 2026, under specified condi-



tions. This revocation of permission reflects the administration's prerogative to halt the election depending on the local security situation, as outlined in the initial order issued on February 5, 2026.

The decision to withdraw permission was primarily driven by violent altercations between AAPSU candidates, which exacerbated the local law and order environment and raised fears of further disturbances during the event. Additionally, the administration considered the impending Sixth Session of the Eighth Legislative Assembly of Arunachal Pradesh, set to occur from March 6 to March 12, 2026, emphasizing the importance of maintaining security during this significant budget session.

The resignation of Hailakandi MLA Zakir Hussain Laskar has caused new unrest for the AIUDF

Guwahati, Mar 08: Following the official resignation of Hailakandi MLA Zakir Hussain Laskar, the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) is experiencing a new wave of internal unrest in Assam. Ahead of the state's impending elections, Laskar declared his intention to leave the AIUDF, adding to the party's mounting political turmoil. The MLA's departure coincides with the party's ongoing struggle with disciplinary proceedings against two of its lawmakers, however he has not publicly disclosed the reasons for his leaving. Karim Uddin Barbhui-

ya, the party's vice president, and Abdul Aziz, an MLA from Badarpur, were previously suspended by the AIUDF central committee. Due to alleged anti-party activity, both leaders have been suspended from the party for six years. The directive stated that the party had been closely observing the two MLAs' actions, which it characterized as contentious and harmful to the organization's objectives. According to the AIUDF, their actions were a flagrant transgression of the party's values and had a detrimental effect on the party's reputation. The two

lawmakers were allegedly preparing to join another political party and offering support to it, according to the directive. AIUDF General Secretary (Administration) Hafiz Bashir Ahmed signed the suspension orders, which were issued in accordance with the party constitution. After talking with members of various social groups, Karim Uddin Barbhuiya subsequently declared on social media that he had made the decision to leave the AIUDF divisions, as seen by the resignation of one MLA and the suspension of two more.

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IIM Guwahati

In a transformative development poised to redefine the academic and economic landscape of the Northeast, the establishment of the Indian Institute of Management Guwahati is being hailed as a watershed moment that will elevate higher education and management education in the region to unprecedented heights, strengthening Assam’s position as an emerging knowledge and innovation hub while expanding access to world-class business education for students across the eight Northeastern states. Conceived as part of the Government of India’s broader strategy to deepen institutional capacity and bridge regional disparities in access to premier educational institutions, IIM Guwahati is expected to function as a center of excellence in management studies, entrepreneurship, public policy, digital transformation, sustainability, and regional development, thereby integrating academic rigor with local economic priorities. Education experts assert that the institute will not only deliver high-quality MBA and doctoral programs but will also foster research tailored to the unique socio-economic dynamics of the Northeast, including tea industry modernization, oil and natural gas logistics, crossborder trade, infrastructure financing, agribusiness value chains, eco-tourism, renewable energy, and the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises. By anchoring advanced management education within Assam, the initiative seeks to reduce the long-standing outflow of talented students to metropolitan centers such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru, ensuring that local aspirants can access premier training without migrating far from home, while also attracting students from across India to study in Guwahati, thereby enhancing cultural exchange and national integration. The strategic location of the institute in Guwahati, often described as the gateway to the Northeast, offers significant advantages in terms of connectivity, industry linkage, and regional outreach, enabling close collaboration with state governments, public sector undertakings, startups, and multinational corporations operating in eastern India. Officials indicate that the campus is being designed with state-of-the-art academic blocks, research centers, incubation hubs, digital learning infrastructure, and sustainable architecture aligned with green campus principles, reflecting global best practices in higher education infrastructure. The arrival of IIM Guwahati is also expected to stimulate ancillary development, including improved housing, transportation, hospitality services, and technology infrastructure in and around the city, generating employment and contributing to local economic multipliers.

Academics believe that the institute will play a catalytic role in fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems by establishing incubation centers that mentor young innovators from the region, providing seed funding guidance, market access support, and industry mentorship to transform ideas into scalable enterprises. This is particularly significant for the Northeast, where youth entrepreneurship holds immense untapped potential across handicrafts, organic farming, food processing, tourism services, and digital startups. In addition to flagship postgraduate programs in management, the institute is anticipated to introduce executive education modules tailored for working professionals, government officers, and industry leaders in the Northeast, thereby upgrading managerial capacity across both public and private sectors. Policymakers have emphasized that strengthening management education in the region aligns with national objectives of inclusive growth, capacity building, and self-reliance, ensuring that the Northeast becomes not merely a beneficiary of development schemes but an active driver of economic transformation.

The institute’s academic framework is expected to integrate casebased pedagogy, experiential learning, live industry projects, and international collaborations, ensuring that graduates are globally competitive while remaining attuned to regional challenges. Education analysts note that management education in frontier regions can generate multiplier effects far beyond classrooms, shaping better governance, efficient project execution, and innovation-driven enterprises that create jobs locally. The establishment of IIM Guwahati also carries symbolic significance, reflecting sustained policy attention toward the Northeast’s aspirations and its integration into India’s mainstream institutional architecture. Students and parents across Assam and neighboring states have welcomed the move, expressing optimism that the presence of a premier management institute will inspire academic excellence among school and undergraduate learners, encouraging them to aspire to national-level competitiveness. Industry bodies in the region have indicated their readiness to collaborate with the institute through internships, research partnerships, consulting projects, and campus recruitment drives, recognizing that access to professionally trained management graduates will strengthen operational efficiency and corporate governance standards. Moreover, the institute is expected to undertake research initiatives focused on public policy design tailored to the Northeast’s developmental context, including flood management strategies, sustainable urban planning in hill and riverine terrain, cross-border trade facilitation with Southeast Asia under India’s Act East policy, and inclusive growth models for tribal communities. The infusion of intellectual capital into Guwahati through visiting faculty, international seminars, management conclaves, and industry conferences is likely to position the city as a vibrant academic destination, fostering dialogue between scholars, policymakers, and business leaders.

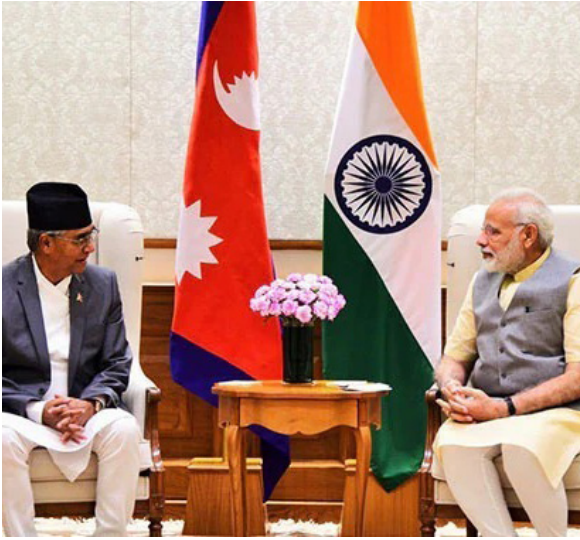
India’s unwavering assistance is essential as Nepal reimagines a democratic, affluent future

The recent political changes in Nepal, coupled with severe economic disruptions, necessitate urgent economic reforms aimed at fostering inclusive development. According to the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FNCCI), the Nepalese economy has endured losses approximating INR 50 billion, which is compounded by the irreplaceable loss of lives due to ongoing crises. Central to the rise of the Gen Z movement is a profound disillusionment with the failures of multiparty democracy in Nepal to deliver effective governance and equitable development, particularly in terms of providing a fair competitive environment for industries.

This political turmoil has obscured critical issues surrounding economic emancipation and transformation, perpetuated by rampant political infighting which undermines the credibility of key political figures in Kathmandu and provincial governance. Moreover, crony capitalism has become deeply entrenched, enabling a small elite to exert significant influence over both politics and business transactions. The inherent inefficiencies and weaknesses within the system cultivate an environment conducive to capital accumulation that prioritizes individual gain over national development, thus impeding the progress of the broader population and tarnishing Nepal’s global image.

To augment Nepal’s economic potential at this critical juncture, a reorientation of economic priorities is crucial. Key strategies include: fostering a competitive and progressive industrial landscape; enhancing performance across sectors, especially in hydropower; supporting industries with necessary working capital and wider market access; forging global partnerships; and ensuring contributions to human development at every level.

Prominent among the urgent needs is the revitalization of energy partnerships between Nepal and India, which could significantly alter the industrial landscape and reinforce Nepal’s position within the India-Nepal economic sphere. Past missed opportunities should serve as learning tools rather than sources of frustration, and successful collaborations should be utilized as inspirations for ongoing partnerships. Nepal possesses substantial hydroelectric potential, which remains largely untapped, and there is a pressing demand for establishing quality enterprises that generate meaningful employment and reduce emigration. To this end, Indian business leaders should actively seek new avenues for expanding and diversifying trade and investment relations with Nepal. Strengthening economic ties with India and facilitating joint ventures will unlock vast opportunities for economic growth. India’s steadfast commitment to foster-



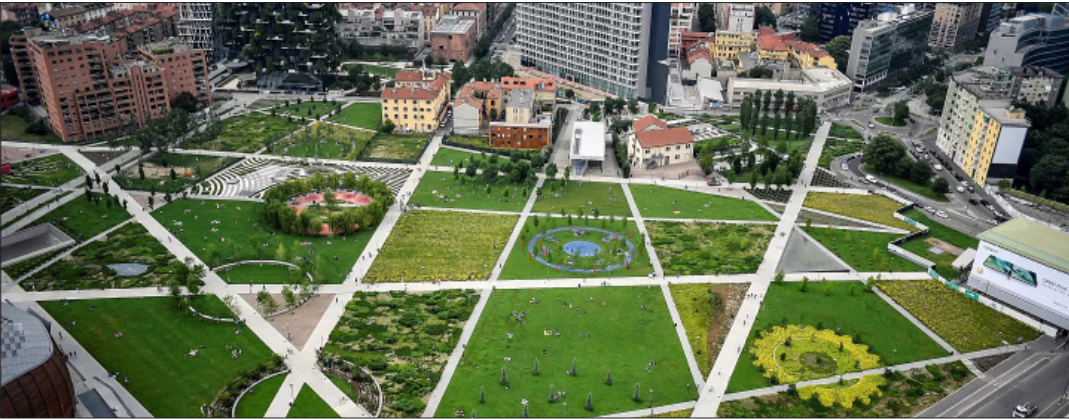
ing peace and prosperity in Nepal, coupled with a harmonious bilateral relationship, can help establish a more robust economic environment. Despite the current turbulent economic landscape, it is overly pessimistic to assume an imminent breakdown of Nepal’s economy is unavoidable.

Unless we are extremely imaginative, a Europe with clean, green cities and a thriving economy is just a pipe dream

In the 1980s, Bitterfeld, a town within the heavily industrialized Chemical Triangle of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), earned the grim reputation of being the dirtiest town in Europe, encapsulated in the saying “Bitterfeld, Bitterfeld, where dirt falls from the sky.” The local chemical industry and lignite mining practices resulted in severe environmental degradation, with toxic waste contaminating waterways and air pollution levels—particularly sulphur dioxide—reaching concentrations forty times higher than current standards. As the GDR approached its end, Europe underwent a significant shift away from a heavy industrial economy towards reliance on cheaper imports, coinciding with the rise of environmental activism. The release of the undercover documentary “Bitter Things from Bitterfeld” in 1988 highlighted the dire living conditions stemming from industrial pollution, ultimately leading to the closure of the city’s chemical plants. This shift marked a broader European narrative where the remnants of heavy industry are increasingly seen as outdated. Former industrial zones have been transformed into cultural hubs, with former factory districts becoming vibrant social spaces. Contemporary European cities rank highly in global livability assessments, with a substantial portion of UNESCO World Heritage sites located in the region. In the early 2000s, the former Chemical Triangle was revitalized as Solar Valley, evolving into a center for photovoltaic technology and briefly leading in solar cell production, illustrating a successful transition from industrial decline to sustainable

innovation.

Europe banished much of its industry, but we continue to enjoy its fruits: globalised manufacturing chains provide us with cheap goods that arrive in neat packages. And while our cities are beautified with good intentions, they are being reduced to markets for the consumption of that beauty: streetscapes fill Instagram feeds, as surely as homes become Airbnbs. Meanwhile the average resident, faced with dwindling employment outside the tourism industry, is increasingly priced out of their own home town. When heavy industry was offshored, so was its labour. Today, a dizzying amount of products that Europe consumes are made elsewhere. China represents upwards of 80% of global solar manufacturing and a majority of global wind turbine installations in figures from 2023. Meanwhile, much of the vital digital infrastructure that enables productivity and leisure originates on the west coast of the US. Bitterfeld’s Solar Valley has sadly fallen on hard times, its start-ups overwhelmed by subsidised competition from abroad. The reality today is that European “quality of life” has become a subscription offered by third parties, fuelled by mountains of coal in Xinjiang and energy-guzzling datacentres in Virginia. This creates concerning vulnerabilities for Europe, and the warning lights are blinking in the corridors of power. Since Mario Draghi’s 2024 report on European competitiveness, Brussels has been anxiously powwowing about bringing productivity back to the continent. The most significant outcome is the Industrial Accelerator Act, which will set quotas for



European-made components in public procurement contracts and subsidies. Alive to environmental concerns as well as self-sufficiency, it aims to support sectors such as solar and wind energy, and battery production. Yet lawmakers hesitate to force businesses to purchase from boutique European suppliers, and there will be significant hand-wringing over whether to endorse “Made in Europe” or settle for “Made with Europe”. Without the sufficient scale to create efficiency and affordability, European re-industrialisation will be nothing more than a vanity project. Let’s consider how that emblem of sustainability, the solar panel, is made. The largest plant in Europe is located in Catania, Sicily: Enel’s 3SUN Gigafactory. This 24-hectare (60-acre) site opened recently with much fanfare, and is capable of producing 3GW of capacity per year, which would just about power a quarter of London’s buildings. The EU currently aims to produce 10 times this amount: 30GW worth of solar panels per year. Nine more 3SUN-sized plants and the annual quota is reached. The problem is that

a solar panel factory itself is only the final and smallest link in the chain. A photovoltaic panel starts mainly as sand, which needs to be melted down at extreme heat over a few days in order to produce polysilicon ingots. This is an energy-intensive process which now takes place at a laughably small scale in Europe. The ingots must then be sliced into wafers, the wafers cut into PV cells – we don’t do these things either – and the cells finally assembled on to panels. To get an idea of how much space and resources this requires, look at the JA Solar base in China, which is designed to assemble, sand-to-panel, roughly the EU yearly target of 30GW solar capacity. It covers 172 hectares, seven times the Tango site in Sicily, and roughly half the size of central Amsterdam. It also needs an awful lot of energy, because nine-tenths of the solar value chain’s energy is used in the steps before panel assembly. Coal looms large in China’s electricity provision – 6,300 TWh annually, which is double the EU’s electricity generation. It uses this to feed 60% of its combined solar panel production. Where would this

energy come from, if Europe were to forego coal? So much for solar panels. Similar chains unravel when examining windmills, batteries and GPUs. Behind any product that is “made in Europe” are mazes of mundane intermediaries – whether it is the Russian fertiliser used for Spanish tomatoes, Middle Eastern plastics for German medical devices, or Chinese vitamin B1 to fortify cereals made in France. Our back-of-house has a back-of-house: it is sprawling, massive, located almost entirely outside Europe, and currently far dirtier than we would like to admit. Even assuming that new forms such as these are realisable, the sheer scale of industrial areas needed would surely spoil many a postcard. But it is worth remembering that the heritage sites enjoyed in Europe today were often practical engineering solutions to the needs of yesterday. Georges-Eugène Haussmann’s grand Paris boulevards organised transport and sanitation in an insalubrious medieval city; the canals of Venice were originally conduits for goods, as well as production lines for the ships that supported the Republic’s pre-eminence.

How a nuclear disaster is approaching while Europe is sleepwalking

The global nuclear threat is on the rise amidst escalating tensions between Russia and the United States, particularly highlighted by Russia’s recent test of the Burevestnik missile, described as a nuclear-powered missile with an unlimited range. This test, conducted on October 21 and announced later, indicates significant implications for geopolitics, especially concerning the ongoing war in Ukraine. The missile, presenting both an ability to circle the earth and evade missile defenses, raises concerns about the potential consequences of an accident. Despite its testing history, which included multiple failures and casualties, the presence of a launch site near a nuclear storage area could suggest strategic deterrence against potential attacks.

The United States faces a critical juncture as the ‘New Start’ arms control treaty is set to expire, with debates ongoing regarding its renewal and the necessity for including other nuclear powers such as China. This treaty does not adequately cover missiles like the Burevestnik, which exceeds the intercontinental range defined by current treaties. In light of these developments, US Presi-

dent Donald Trump’s responses appear oddly casual, emphasizing Europe’s responsibility regarding the conflict in Ukraine, even as NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte downplays the immediate risks despite recognizing the reckless behavior from Russia.

European leaders like President Macron are calling for discussions on enhancing France’s nuclear capabilities, while the UK has emphasized the role of its nuclear forces in deterring extreme threats. Simultaneously, Russia’s missile strategies aim to counteract Western support for Ukraine, particularly regarding the Tomahawk missile supply. Furthermore, sanctions on Russian oil companies have sparked significant market changes, although the overall impact on European energy supply remains murky. The need for a robust nuclear posture is further complicated by the geopolitical landscape, where Russia maintains an aggressive stance in claiming territories like Donbas, defying Ukrainian resistance led by President Zelenskyy. Although there are suggestions of entering into nuclear arms control dialogues, actual advancements in this regard remain uncertain.

Keir Starmer must do better and go faster in bringing Britain closer to Europe

Since the EU-UK summit in May, Keir Starmer faces the risk of stagnation in enhancing Britain’s relationship with the EU, as noted by MPs on the foreign affairs committee. The committee’s report indicates that despite significant progress, Starmer’s project lacks clear direction and momentum, which is critical for Labour to achieve its goals of economic growth and improved living standards amidst the challenges posed by parties like Reform UK. To revive this initiative, Starmer must urgently collaborate with EU leaders and member states to translate the commitments made during last year’s summit into tangible outcomes. The report suggests four key actions that the Prime Minister can implement to invigorate this essential policy area. It would make trading with our largest market easier and cheaper, and ease prices at the tills. Ministers expect a so-called sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement

to add up to £5.1bn a year to the UK economy. This is a boost we sorely need, and it would show voters that politicians understand their struggles and have the tools to “make life affordable”, as the Labour MP Dr Jeevun Sandher put it after the spring statement. This would be another vital measure to address the cost of living crisis by getting heating bills down. This will have rocked up No 10’s risk register in recent days as Donald Trump’s flagrantly unrestrained actions in Iran have turned the global temperature up even further. The world faces yet another oil price shock that will hit UK residents already stretched to breaking point. Jonny Peters, of climate thinktank E3G, warned weeks ago that the UK faced significant price spikes in the “fallout from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine”, and rightly called the UK-EU energy negotiations “absolutely vital” amid these “unforeseen geopolitical situations”. Unforeseen no

longer, ministers seeking maximum mitigation for UK consumers, start here. Negotiations are always a process of give and take. There are policies that in effect are sitting in a traffic jam, where progress could unlock agreement in other areas. One clear example that can accelerate us towards deeper cooperation is youth mobility.

The cross-party, cross-industry UK trade and business commission recommends the UK and the EU should launch a new time-limited youth experience scheme (YES), capped at 44,000 visas in the first year. It would be the UK’s largest and most generous programme of its kind, restoring brilliant opportunities for young Britons and Europeans denied them for too long by the existing Brexit deal. Their clear and cohesive recommendations identify exactly how the UK government can deliver a youth experience scheme with the EU that has the overwhelming (72%) support of the pub-

lic, while honouring its manifesto pledge to lower net migration.

As we’ve long argued, getting YES done will open possibilities to do so much more. Amid increasing concerns resembling a dystopian scenario, public sentiment in the UK has significantly soured toward Trump’s assertive use of US power, contributing to a decline in trust in the US since his return to the presidency. His approach risks overshadowing critical issues like the Russian war in Ukraine, where the threat posed by Putin remains pressing. The UK Prime Minister, an ex-international lawyer, recognizes the imperative to strengthen ties with European allies who uphold shared democratic values and a history of resisting aggression. Engaging with the Security Action for Europe commission—an EU defense initiative from which the UK currently lacks access—is crucial for safeguarding security in the region.

Despite record revenue, Morgan Stanley eliminates 2,500 workers; AI is not the cause

Mumbai: Despite a record year for income, Morgan Stanley has laid off nearly 2,500 workers, or 3% of its staff. According to the WSJ, the bank's three main divisions—investment banking and trading, wealth management, and investment management—all saw employment layoffs, but its financial advisors were unaffected. The bank plans to increase staff in other areas, and the layoffs at Morgan Stanley are determined by strategy and

individual performance. Morgan Stanley employed 82,992 people as of December 31, 2025. The US-based investment bank's record-breaking revenue year coincides with the layoffs at Morgan Stanley. Additionally, it exceeded Wall Street projections for its January fourth-quarter profit, which was driven by a 47% increase in investment banking revenue due to a spike in deal-making and an almost twofold

increase in debt underwriting fees.Banking CEOs expressed optimism for 2026 due to strong pipelines for both IPOs and M&A transactions. As clients rearrange their portfolios to mitigate risks, trading desks continue to be boosted by unpredictable markets amid concerns about AI disruption to legacy technology companies and geopolitical unrest. Since the beginning of the year, numerous US businesses



have made significant layoffs in an effort to streamline operations in light of the growing use of AI tools.

Due to a tax drop, India's retail auto sales increased by 25% in February



New Delhi: The auto dealers' body reported on Thursday that demand for two-wheelers and passenger cars increased by 25.6% in February due to last year's tax cuts and an increase in weddings.Due to price reductions, the introduction of new models, and strong rural demand, analysts had anticipated double-digit year-over-year growth in February. This came after India lowered car taxes in September of last year in an effort to increase consumption following high U.S. tariffs. According to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations, sales of two-wheelers increased by 25% in February compared to the same month last year, while sales of passenger vehicles increased by 26.1%. They added that demand was bolstered by weddings, with inquiries increasing in both rural and urban markets. Growth is projected to continue for several quarters, if

Two-wheeler sales jumped 25 per cent from a year ago in February, while passenger vehicle sales climbed 26.1 per cent, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations said

not years, according to C.S. Vigneshwar, president of the dealer body, who told Reuters that the sector has always anticipated the impact of the tax cuts to be "seismic" rather than seasonal. Due to festival-driven demand and fiscal year-end purchases, more than two-thirds of dealers surveyed by the organization anticipate an increase in retail sales in March. Dealers have noted supply issues with several models, though. Vigneshwar said that there has been no immediate impact on logistics for vehicles from the Middle East war. Passenger vehicle inventory, or the average time a car remained on the showroom floor, fell for a fifth consecutive month to 27-29 days from 32-34 days in January.

BSE stock rose 4% as Sebi approved the debut of derivatives

New Delhi: After the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), a capital market regulator, gave the exchange permission to introduce derivative contracts for the BSE Sensex Next 30 index, BSE shares ended a three-day losing run today and increased 4% in trading. BSE shares began trading at ₹2,710, up ₹83.10, or 3.1%, from the previous close of ₹2,626.90. After that, the counter reached an intraday high of 2,735.50, up about 4%.Around 11:30 AM, more than 4.1 million shares were traded, and BSE shares were trading firmly in the green to quote 3.7% northward at ₹2,724. The BSE Sensex Next 30 index follows the next biggest and most liquid companies in the BSE 100 that are not part of the BSE Sensex 30 index but are in the derivative segment. The BSE said that it will provide cash



settled monthly index futures and monthly index options in a regulatory filing on Wednesday after market hours. The final Thursday of the expiration term will be the contracts' expiration date.The Sensex Next 30 index's F&O contract launch date, however, was not disclosed by BSE. For the benchmark Sensex, BSE now offers both weekly and monthly derivative contracts. Additionally, it provides BANKEX and Sensex 50 derivative contracts with monthly expiration dates. Last year, the exchange moved the expiry date for all derivative contracts from Tuesday to Thursday. In the third quarter

(Q3FY26), BSE's consolidated profit jumped nearly threefold to Rs 602 crore as equity derivatives activity hit an all-time high. A total of 7,720 million contracts traded during the quarter, generating Rs 784 crore in revenue for the exchange. BSE is India's oldest stock exchange and is listed on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). BSE shares closed marginally lower at ₹2,626.90 in the previous trade. BSE shares have surged more than 81 per cent over the past year and delivered a staggering return of over 250 per cent in two years and 1,600 per cent in three years.

Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, suggests that investments in OpenAI will halt

New Delhi: Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang indicated that the company's recent investments in OpenAI and Anthropic may be their final ones, as both firms prepare for public offerings this year. Nvidia has invested \$30 billion in OpenAI, which is expected to go public with a valuation potentially reaching \$1 trillion. Huang



also suggested that Nvidia's \$10 billion investment in Anthropic could be its last, as the startup is also considering an IPO. The backdrop includes a previously announced \$100

billion deal with OpenAI that has since been abandoned amid concerns over the AI sector's health and potential conflicts of interest.

India's coal prices rise 4% as the war in Iran raises coal prices worldwide



New Delhi: On Thursday, March 5, Coal India shares increased by more than 4% in trading on rising coal prices in international markets.The stock rose 4.2% today, reaching an intraday high of ₹453.4 per share on the BSE thanks to strong transactions. By 9:58 AM, about 0.56 million shares had been traded on the Coal India counter, compared to an average of 0.52 million shares for the previous two weeks.In contrast, at the time this story was written, the BSE Sensex index had increased by 464 points, or 0.6%.Following a spike in the price of coal used to generate electricity in reaction to the conflict in West Asia, the share price of Coal India increased in trading on Thursday. According to sources, South African thermal coal prices surged to their highest level since August 2024, while European thermal coal prices reached their highest point since

October 2023 on Wednesday. Newcastle Coal Futures, a crucial global benchmark for thermal coal futures, has increased by 26% in a year and 13% in the last week. The quote is approximately \$131 per metric tonne. In the meantime, the cost of Northwest Europe steam coal, a high-energy thermal coal imported into Europe, increased by 16% to \$133.18 per metric tonne on Tuesday, marking a weekly increase of 26%. Coal prices are rising globally as investors anticipate rising demand due to reduced natural gas supply from major Middle Eastern exporters such as Qatar.Further, with Qatar halting production of LNG after it intercepted two Iranian drones near its energy facility in Ras Laffan Industrial City, market participants expect consumer demand shifting from gas to coal.A UBS report said that when gas generation gets expensive due to lack of

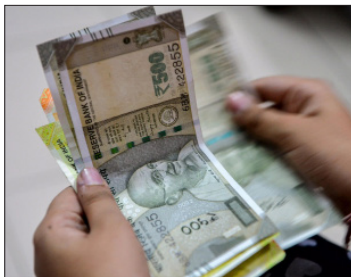
LNG supply, "more coal power generation could take place, driving up the demand for thermal coal and hence price." Analysts said the direct impact of rising global coal prices on Coal India Limited is limited as the state-owned company operates largely in a "regulated domestic market". However, rising coal prices may support its earnings through the "e-auction" channel. Coal India sells around 10-15 per cent of its coal through a Single Window Mode Agnostic (SWMA) e-auction. When coal prices in the global markets rise, domestic coal-using industries, including cement, steel, and sponge iron, turn to domestically produced coal rather than imported coal. The industries, thus, shift to CIL's auctions, driving up the "premium."Notably, in February 2026, Coal India recorded a 35 per cent premium over its notified (base)

prices in e-auctions. Analysts estimate that every \$100 per tonne increase in e-auction realisations likely boosts Coal India's earnings per share (EPS) by roughly 2 per cent. According to analysts at Mirrae Asset Sharekhan, Coal India is expected to remain the dominant coal supplier over the next decade led by power and steel demand, high cash flows, high-dividend utility-like franchise with moderate volume growth, cyclical but controllable earnings risk, and the possibility of new value being unlocked through subsidiary listings. "At CMP, CIL trades at current valuation of 4.5x/4x for FY27E/FY28E EV/Ebitda. We maintain our 'Buy' rating with a share price target of ₹500, taking into consideration that coal is an essential baseload stabilizer in India," it said in a Q3 result review report. In the December 2025 quarter (Q3FY26), Coal India recorded a consolidated net profit of ₹7,160 crore, up 65% quarter over quarter but down 16% year over year.Additionally, its consolidated sales increased 14.5% QoQ but decreased 4.7% YoY to ₹30,818 crore.In 9MFY26, total coal production decreased 3% year over year to 529.20 metric tonnes, while offtake decreased 3% to 545.74 Mt.According to CIL, the company's Ebitda and margins in Q3 were hurt by volume decreases, increased contractual costs, and worse realizations. At ₹7,870 crore, adjusted Ebitda was up 34% quarter over quarter but down 24% year over year. "With e-auction volumes making up about 10% of total volumes and premiums standing at 62% in

Q3FY26, Coal India performed admirably in Q3, mostly thanks to volume recovery. We maintained our FY27/28 expectations, however we increased our APAT estimate by 14% for FY26 to account for the performance beat," Motilal Oswal Financial Services officials stated.The firm anticipates a recovery in e-auction volume and premium in the future, bolstered by declining mining and power plant inventory as well as a recovery in demand. "With e-auction volumes making up about 10% of total volumes and premiums standing at 62% in Q3FY26, Coal India performed admirably in Q3, mostly thanks to volume recovery. We maintained our FY27/28 expectations, however we increased our APAT estimate by 14% for FY26 to account for the performance beat," Motilal Oswal Financial Services officials stated. The firm anticipates a recovery in e-auction volume and premium in the future, bolstered by declining mining and power plant inventory as well as a recovery in demand. MOFSL rates CIL stock as a "Buy" with a ₹500 goal.MOFSL rates CIL stock as a "Buy" with a ₹500 goal. Those at JM Financial, however, have a 'Reduce' rating on the stock with a target of ₹401 as they forecast lower production in months ahead."Coal India has been given a target of producing 875 Mt for FY26. So far, it has produced 546 Mt (down 3 per cent Y-o-Y). Considering production of 529 Mt during 9MFY26 (543 Mt in 9MFY25), we estimate CIL to produce 770 Mt during FY26 versus our estimate of 820 Mt at the start of the year," it said.

The rupee stabilizes, but fluctuations in oil prices pose a threat to the future

New Delhi: After falling to a record low in the previous session, the rupee recovered on Thursday, but the pressure on the currency is far from done.The protracted conflict in West Asia has caused investor unease, strengthened the US dollar, and shaken the world's oil markets, causing the rupee to fall to its lowest point ever. The rupee fell below its all-time low of Rs 92 per dollar on Wednesday before stabilizing on Thursday as a result of alleged Reserve Bank of India (RBI) intervention. The rupee was trading at Rs 91.61 against the dollar as of 10:37 am, partially reversing the sharp declines seen earlier in the week. Currency markets have experienced some short-term respite as a result of the comeback, but analysts say the fundamental pressures on the rupee have persisted. The conflict in West Asia has caused financial markets to react swiftly to geopolitical shocks. Because the Middle East is the center of the world's oil production, even the potential for supply disruptions might cause prices to fluctuate dramatically. Crude prices have increased recently due to concerns that the war may impact energy flows from the area.



weakened by about 0.55% to trade near 92.10 as escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia and increasing US involvement pushed oil prices higher. The spike in crude prices has increased concerns about India's import costs and the broader impact on the country's external balance. Oil is not the only factor weighing on the rupee. The US dollar has also strengthened globally as investors move money into safer assets during periods of geopolitical uncertainty. When tensions rise in global markets, investors often shift funds away from emerging markets and into assets they consider more stable, such as US government bonds or the dollar itself. This shift, often described as a risk-off environment, tends to strengthen the dollar while weakening many emerging market currencies, including the rupee. In recent days, this global move toward safer assets has added to the downward pressure on the Indian currency. Selling by foreign investors has also played a role in the rupee's recent weakness. Foreign portfolio investors, often referred to as FPIs, are overseas funds that invest in Indian stocks and bonds. When they sell their holdings and move money out of the country, they convert rupees into dollars before transferring the funds abroad. That conversion increases demand for the US currency in the foreign exchange market, which can push the rupee lower. Such outflows tend to accelerate when global uncertainty rises. Despite the pressure, the rupee managed to stabilise on Thursday after the Reserve Bank of India stepped into the market. Central banks can intervene in currency markets by selling dollars from their foreign exchange reserves and buying rupees. This increases the supply of dollars in the market and helps slow the currency's decline.These actions do not permanently reverse a trend, but they can calm markets and prevent sharp swings.The rupee's recovery to around Rs 91.61 per dollar suggests the RBI's intervention helped steady the market, at least for now.

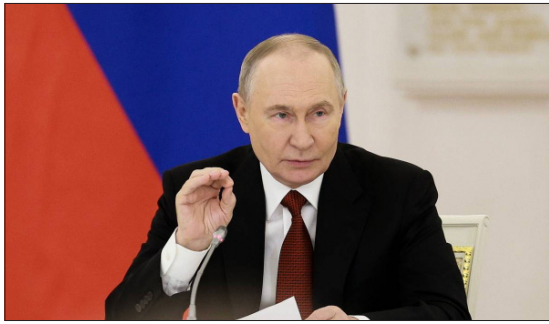
Flipkart fires 250–300 workers after evaluating their work



Bengaluru: According to those acquainted with the situation, Flipkart has asked between 250–300 workers to quit this year as a result of performance appraisals. The layoffs amount to about 2% of the company's total workforce, which is comparable to the 1%–2% of workers the company typically fires each year as part of regular performance reviews.Flipkart regularly evaluates employee performance in accordance with well-defined standards. A tiny portion of the workforce may leave the company as part of this process. In answer to a question from Business Standard, Flipkart stated, "We are providing transition support to affected employees." About 20,000 people work for the company. Flipkart Internet, the company's marketplace arm, reported revenue of ₹20,493 crore in fiscal 2024-2025, a 14 per cent increase from a year earlier, while net loss narrowed 37 per cent to ₹1,494 crore. The growth pace slowed from fiscal 2023-2024, when operating revenue rose 21 per cent, marking the second consecutive year the business expanded by more than 20 per cent. Over the past two years, Flipkart has also streamlined its senior leadership ahead of a planned initial public offering. The company reportedly reduced its cadre of senior vice presidents to fewer than a dozen from 18 previously, while selectively hiring executives with more specialised mandates to fill roles vacated by departing leaders. Flipkart is strengthening leadership and governance capabilities ahead of its planned IPO. The Flipkart group recently named two senior executives — Jason Chappel joined as vice president and group controller, while Amer Hussain was appointed vice president of supply chain for grocery and Flipkart Minutes. The appointments reflect Flipkart's focus on strengthening leadership and governance capabilities, in line with its evolving scale and long-term growth ambitions. This includes the company's next phase of growth ahead of its planned IPO filing, according to sources. The firm recently announced the appointment of Jane Duke as chief ethics and compliance officer (CECO) for the Flipkart group. In her new role, Duke will lead the group's ethics and compliance function and will be a key partner to the leadership team. In December, Flipkart announced the appointment of former senior Meta executive Dan Neary to its board of directors. Neary brings extensive global technology and leadership experience to the board, and his appointment highlights Flipkart's commitment to strengthening governance. It recently also hired Vipin Kapoor as vice president of business finance, and Yogita Shanbhag as vice president of human resources, among others.

INTERNATIONAL

Putin calls Khamenei's death 'cynical' murder



Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin denounced the assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, calling it a “cynical” murder that went against both international law and fundamental human values. Putin wrote in a message to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, which was made public by the Kremlin, “Please accept my deep condolences in connection with the murder of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyed Ali Khamenei, and members of his family, committed in cynical violation of all norms of human morality and international law.” Putin declared, “Ayatollah Khamenei will be remembered in our country as an outstanding statesman who made a huge personal contribution to the development of friendly Russian-Iranian relations and bringing them to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership.” “I would like you to express my deepest condolences and support to the government, the Supreme Leader’s family, and the Iranian people as a whole.” Fears of broader unrest in the Middle East were raised on Saturday when Iran’s state television revealed that Khamenei had died in airstrikes. Britain’s defence secretary John Healey declined to explicitly support the strikes by the United States and Israel, saying it was for Washington to explain the legal basis of its actions. Speaking to the BBC’s Laura Kuenssberg, Healey said the UK had no role in the strikes but shared the aim of ensuring Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon. Asked whether the strikes were lawful, he said: “It is for the US to set out the legal basis of the action that it took.” Healey said Iran was responding in an increasingly indiscriminate manner, targeting civilian airports and hotels along with military bases.

“We have strengthened the UK defences in the region, we are active in regional defence operations,” he told Sky News. He said UK aircraft were operating from bases in Qatar and Cyprus and were intercepting drone attacks on bases and allied forces. China called for an immediate halt to hostilities. Wang Yi said China’s position was “immediate cessation of military action.” He added, “Blatant killing of a sovereign leader and incitement of regime change are unacceptable.”

Iran must understand that it has to give up nuclear armament if a good solution for the country is to be found, German foreign minister Johann Wadepuhl told NDR broadcaster on Sunday. Asked how things would develop in Iran, he said: “There is a common interest in finding a solution. This can only be achieved if Iran understands that it really must renounce nuclear armament.” North Korea also criticised the strikes. A foreign ministry spokesperson said Israel’s attacks on Iran and the US military operation amounted to “illegal aggression” and violated national sovereignty, according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency. The spokesperson said the US military action was “within the range of expectations,” calling it a result of the “hegemonic and gangster-like” nature of the United States.

The statement said the “war of aggression” by the United States and Israel was unacceptable under any circumstances and urged regional countries and others with shared interests to take responsibility for restoring peace and stability in the Middle East. Israel’s military said on Sunday it had launched a wave of strikes in central Tehran after a large-scale air operation that killed Iran’s Supreme Leader.

An advisor to the President of the United Arab Emirates issued a direct warning to Tehran, “Your war is not with your neighbors.” The advisor added, “Go back to your senses.” The European Union said it was engaging partners to reduce tensions. EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said, “I’m in contact with partners, including those in the region that bear the brunt of Iran’s military actions, to find practical steps for de-escalation.” Pope Leo said on Sunday that he is following events after US-Israeli strikes against Iran with “deep concern” and made an impassioned appeal to stop what he called a “spiral of violence”. “Stability and peace are not built through mutual threats or through weapons ... but only through reasonable, genuine, and responsible dialogue,” the pope said during his weekly address to pilgrims in St. Peter’s Square after a Sunday prayer.

Macron claims that France will expand its nuclear arsenal and European weapons cooperation

Paris: As part of a “major” reinforcement of its deterrent policy, France will expand its nuclear arsenal for the first time in decades and greatly step up nuclear weapons cooperation with eight European allies, including the UK, according to Emmanuel Macron. The French president stated on Monday that Paris may send nuclear-capable Rafale fighter jets to allies like Germany and Poland, amid mounting worries among European leaders about the US’s faltering vows to assist in defending the continent. However, he stated that “the definition of [France’s] vital interests” would remain “sovereign” and that the French president would make the “ultimate decision” over the use of the nation’s nuclear weapons. In a speech delivered from the Île Longue nuclear submarine base in Brittany, Macron said a “period of geopolitical upheaval, fraught with risk” meant France, the EU’s only nuclear power, must strengthen its deterrent “in the face of multiple threats”. An upgrade of the country’s arsenal was “essential”, Macron said, adding that he had decided to order an increase. France’s estimated 290 nuclear warheads, a number that has not changed since 1992, constitute the world’s fourth largest nuclear arsenal, after Russia, the US and China.

“My responsibility is to ensure that our deterrence maintains – and will maintain in the future – its assured destructive power,” said the French president, who is commander-in-chief of the country’s armed forces. He added



that France would not stipulate how many nuclear warheads it had in its arsenal nor how many it planned to add, and that the increase was needed to maintain it. “This is not an arms race,” he insisted. “It is essential that our adversaries, or combination of adversaries, cannot even glimpse the possibility of hitting France without the certainty of suffering damage they would not recover from.” Macron cited Russia’s war against Ukraine, which last month

entered its fifth year, China’s expanding military power and recent changes in US defence strategy as reasons why Europe had to take more direct responsibility for its own security. Announcing the “gradual implementation of what I would call ‘advance deterrence’”, Macron said France must now also “consider our deterrence strategy deep within the European continent, with full respect for our sovereignty”. Under unspecified circumstances, French “stra-

tegic assets” could be deployed in other European countries, he said, referring to France’s nuclear-capable Rafale jets. Talks on enhanced cooperation had already started with the UK, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Sweden and Denmark, he added. The new model would allow France’s strategic deterrent to be “spread across the European continent” to “complicate the calculations of our adversaries”, Macron said. The doctrine could

also involve “the conventional participation of allied forces in our nuclear activities”, he added. Bruno Tertrais, the deputy director of France’s FRS thinktank, said Macron’s speech was “the most significant update to French nuclear deterrence policy in 30 years” and a “major step forward”. Donald Trump’s rapprochement with Russia over the Ukraine war and his tougher posture towards the US’s traditional transatlantic allies have shaken European governments, which have long relied on the US for deterring potential adversaries. Macron’s long-planned speech was maintained despite the escalating conflict around Iran because the “violence in the Middle East shows the importance of France’s power and independence to face down growing threats”, a French official said. Macron has previously floated a mutualisation of France’s nuclear arsenal, including at last month’s Munich Security Conference at which he said a “re-articulation” was needed to reflect “special cooperation ... and common security interests” within Europe. Earlier this month the German chancellor, Friedrich Merz, said he had held “initial talks” with Macron on the nuclear issue. France and the UK also adopted a joint declaration in July on the “coordination” of both nations’ nuclear forces. France and Germany said in a joint statement on Monday after Macron’s speech that they had set up a “high-ranking nuclear steering group” as part of an arrangement they said would “add to, not substitute for, Nato’s nuclear deterrence”.

An interim leadership council takes over after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is killed

New York : Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian reiterated his prior promises to get revenge for Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s death on Sunday, announcing that an interim leadership council formed following Khamenei’s murder has started its job. In a taped video statement that was shown on state television, Pezeshkian declared, “The US and Israel should know that nothing will come of this except their own downfall.”

“The Islamic Republic of Iran’s armed forces are acting decisively to crush the enemies’ foundations,” he continued. After Khamenei was killed in an Israeli strike, Iran’s top national security official had earlier said that an interim council would be established on Sunday to govern the nation. Security official Ali Larijani stated in remarks reported by Iranian state media that the President, who is also the head of the judiciary and a member of the Council of Guardians, a strong group of jurists, would rule temporarily until a new leader was selected. The action revealed that, following the passing of its longtime ruler, who served as the focal point of the nation’s theocratic system, the Islamic Republic was eager to create a feeling of continuity. Before he was killed, Khamenei had delegated much of the running of the country to Larijani, a veteran politician and former commander in Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps. The rise of Lar-



ijani had sidelined Pezeshkian. “Yesterday Iran fired missiles at the United States and Israel, and they did hurt,” Larijani said on Sunday in a post on social media. “Today we will hit them with a force that they have never experienced before.” During

Iran’s 12-day war with Israel last year, Khamenei named three candidates who could succeed him, but they were never publicly identified. Though Larijani appears to be largely running the country, he is not regarded as a candidate because he is not a senior Shiite cleric — a fundamental qualification for any successor. Larijani was, however, ensconced in Khamenei’s trusted circle. He was in charge of using lethal force to crush the recent protests demanding the end of Islamic rule, liaising with Iran’s powerful allies, like Russia. He also oversaw nuclear negotiations with Washington, and was tasked with devising plans on what to do if war with the US were to break out. In the weeks before the assault, the Iranian leadership had been preparing for its political survival, as well as military and security mobilisations. Those deliberations, described by officials familiar with the planning, touched on a range of matters, including who would manage the country if Khamenei and top officials were killed.

“Iran Boasted Of Having Uranium To Build 11 Nuclear Bombs”: US Special Envoy Remembers Initial Meeting



Washington, D.C.: Iran’s top negotiators claimed during the first round of talks earlier this year that they had enough highly enriched uranium to produce eleven nuclear weapons, according to S special envoy Steve Witkoff on Tuesday. In an in-

terview with Fox News, Witkoff remembers, “During that initial meeting, both Iranian negotiators told us directly — with

no shame — that they controlled 460 kilograms of 60 percent [enriched uranium] and that they’re aware that could make 11 nuclear bombs.” That marked the start of their negotiation position. They took pride in that. He said, “They were happy that they had circumvented numerous oversight procedures to reach a location where they could drop eleven nuclear bombs. Witkoff recalled the Iranian negotiators boasting that they had “an inalienable right” to enrich their nuclear fuel during the initial negotiating conference. The US ambassador continued, “We responded that the President feels we have the inalienable right to stop you dead in your tracks.” Witkoff also reaffirmed his assertion that Iran’s highly enriched uranium stockpiles could be converted into weapons-grade material in a week or ten days. However, Iran would need the nuclear facilities that the United States claims it destroyed in strikes last year in order to produce nuclear bombs.

After 170 years, East India Company files for bankruptcy



London: The East India Company, a once-dominant British trading company that dominated much of India and signaled the country’s British colonization, has closed once more, this time as a high-end London boutique. A British-Indian businessman recreated the old East India Company in 2010 by purchasing the name rights after it had lain inactive for over 152 years. After going bankrupt, the East India Company enterprise has officially come to an end. Following the 1857 Indian Rebellion, also known as the Sepoy Mutiny, the British government assumed control of India from the East India Company. The direct British Raj in India began in 1858 when the British Crown assumed control. Due to its extensive exploitation in India and throughout Asia, the East India Company’s history is primarily associated with negative connotations. Global trade was altered, but Indians suffered greatly as a result of conflict and the Great Bengal Famine, which claimed 30 million lives. The purchase of the East India Company naming rights by Indian businessman Sanjiv Mehta in 2010 was perceived as a form of colonial retaliation. Global headlines praised the fact that an Indian was now in charge of a firm that used to govern India. But the company’s current iteration is now in liquidation.

The East India Company Limited appointed liquidators in October 2025, The Sunday Times reported. It owed more than £600,000 (Rs 6.3 crore) to its parent group, registered in the British Virgin Islands, £193,789 (Rs 2.03 crore) in taxes, and £163,105 (Rs 1.71 crore) to employees, according to the British newspaper. Several related companies with “East India” in the name, connected to owner Sanjiv Mehta, have also been dissolved, it reported.

The company’s website is down. Its shop at 97 New Bond Street in Mayfair, London, is reportedly empty and up for rent through agents. Another linked firm, East India

Company Collections Limited, also recently faced a winding-up petition from creditors. Sanjiv Mehta started the process of acquiring the name of the East India Company in the early 2000s from shareholders who tried to restart it as a wholesale business. In 2010, he opened a 2,000 sq ft luxury store in Mayfair. It sold high-end teas, chocolates, confectionery, spices, and other items, similar to famous shops like Fortnum & Mason. Mehta saw it as turning a symbol of colonialism into something positive. In a 2017 interview with The Guardian, he said: “The fact that an Indian now owns the East India Company means that the negative has become a positive. The historic East India Company built itself on aggression, but today’s East India Company is about compassion.” At its height in the early 1800s, the original company had a private army of around 250,000 men, twice the size of the British Army then, and controlled vast areas of India. It drove global trade in spices, cotton, silk, tea, indigo, and more, but often at a huge human cost. Founded on December 31, 1600, by a royal charter from Queen Elizabeth I, the English East India Company started as a joint-stock trading firm to compete for spices and goods from the East Indies, including India and Southeast Asia. It was one of the world’s first joint-stock companies, where investors bought shares and shared profits and risks. The company set up its first trading post in Surat, India, in 1612-1613. Over time, it gained monopoly rights on British trade east of the Cape of Good Hope. By the 1700s, it had grown into a major power, building forts, making alliances with local rulers, and fighting wars against rivals like the French and local kingdoms. It collected taxes, ran courts, and ruled territories like Bengal after the Battle of Plassey in 1757. At its peak, it accounted for half the world’s trade in some goods and acted almost like a government in India.

A guide to Whistler, Canada, from the godfather of freeskiing



Cradled in British Columbia’s magnificent Coast Mountains 120km north of Vancouver, the town of Whistler is a snow-sports haven. It’s also home to Whistler Blackcomb, North America’s largest ski resort. Biggest isn’t always best, of course. But Whistler Blackcomb’s terrain – more than 8,000 acres of endless cruisers, adventurous glades, steep bowls and backcountry possibilities – is revered for good reason. The diversity at the bottom of the hill is similarly impressive. Boosted by its role in hosting the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics, Whistler boasts an array of restaurants, cultural experiences and high-profile events. Named after the twin peaks looming above, Whistler Blackcomb has long been a bucket-list destination and stomping ground for the planet’s best skiers – including freeskiing legend Mike Douglas. Douglas – aka: “the godfather of freeskiing” – arrived from Vancouver Island at just 18 years old, back when Whistler’s ski scene was dominated by the Whistler and Blackcomb resorts (they merged in 1997) and the population was just around 3,000. Within two years Douglas made both the BC and Canadian freestyle teams. He has stood at the vanguard of Whistler and wider ski culture ever since. Does he long for those early days? “I actually don’t think I’d want to go back,” he says, explaining that Whistler is now a much more holistic community, with excellent amenities and cultural programming. Unlike other famous ski towns, Whistler still feels like a thriving hometown. From daycares to gymnastics programmes, “raising a family here has made me appreciate the community even more”. Ultimately, Douglas reflects, “how this [amazing] community is what kept me here. People are really progressive and forward thinking. Everything is possible.” Not that paradise is perfect; even Whistler’s hallowed powder is vulnerable to climate change. Douglas remembers how “thick and full” Horstman Glacier on Blackcomb peak once was. “It was hard to imagine that in my lifetime I would see that essentially completely disappear,” he says. Observing these changes first-hand helps motivate his work with Protect Our Winters to mobilise the snow-sports community and get climate-positive policies on the national agenda. “Outdoors people who participate in these sports have an obligation to try and protect these environments.”

Best for a pre-ski coffee: Rockit Coffee Co

Skiers seeking a shot of energy before hitting the slopes will find Rockit Coffee Co by the base of the Creekside Gondola (one of the resort’s original



lifts) at the end of Peak to Creek; one of Douglas’ favourite runs. Rockit is actually in Whistler Creekside, 4.2km south of Whistler; you can travel between the two by ski and ski lifts. “[It’s] my go-to coffee shop these days,” he says. Rockit’s big draw is its ambience. “It’s got a fully committed retro-music vibe and feels warm and cosy inside,” says Douglas. “Always good tunes, great coffee and tasty food.” The walls are festooned with ‘70s-style posters, art, gadgets and curios; one wall is simply a Tetris jumble of old-school speakers and subwoofers. Visitors can warm up by the wood stove, hang out on window stools or get comfy in an egg-shaped capsule

chair. Given most tourists stay in the main village, Creekside is a great spot to soak up the local atmosphere, says Douglas. He doesn’t live far away himself. “Now that I’ve got an e-bike, I’ve been using that to go skiing sometimes,” he says. “I’ll ride over to Rockit and just lock it up, riding wearing my ski boots!”

Best signature ski run: Peak to Creek

Descending 1,529 vertical metres over seven miles, Peak to Creek is one of North America’s longest continuous



ski runs – without a single flat section requiring ski-pole pushing or binding unclipping. It starts on Whistler peak, offering a sensational 180-degree view of the southern Coast Mountains, and winds all the way down (with diversions aplenty) to the base of the Creekside Gondola. “[It’s] a classic,” says Doug-

las. The run is a leg-burner in the best snow conditions, but a particular challenge when it hasn’t been groomed all the way – which is often. “It can get pretty gnarly down at the bottom there!” Douglas says. “It’s a good all-rounder, a big challenge – and something that people often come here and want to try and do by the end of the week.” Thankfully it finishes next to Dusty’s, a beloved pitstop serving beers and massive BBQ plates on the terrace or by the fireplace. “The pulled-pork sandwich is always a fave there,” says Douglas. Douglas also recommends Whistler’s Harmony Ridge and Blackcomb’s Cloud Nine as similar runs offering sweeping vistas and epic cruise potential.

Best for a post-ski surprise: Vallea Lumina

Vallea Lumina Night Walk is an immersive, after-dark, multimedia forest adventure. Following clues and cryptic radio transmissions in search of two lost hikers, participants proceed through a mystical storyline rendered with holograms, lasers, music and more. It’s designed in collaboration with Moment Factory, which has staged Cirque Du Soleil events. “Honestly, I remember that when I first heard about it, I thought

here from out of town for a week, it’s always a recommendation.” If visiting with children or people with access requirements, note that Vallea Lumina requires a kilometre of self-guided walking along snow-cleared but uneven winter terrain.

Best for dinner: Sushi Village
“Sushi Village – all time fave!” Douglas says when asked to name a Whistler culinary highlight. The Japanese Hawaiian fusion menu at this local mainstay is full of delights: “way ahead of the whole poke craze,” says Douglas. He recommends the Tangy Agedashi Tofu (deep-fried tofu on a bed of bean sprouts with a soy-based sauce) and the Ahi Poke. The atmosphere – always fun, sometimes raucous – is also key. Sushi Village is also a sentimental place for Douglas, given he worked there for four years shortly after moving to Whistler. “One of my local claims to fame is inventing the modern recipe for the Strawberry Sake Margarita on a hilarious drunken night with owner Miki Homma when I worked there in the early ‘90s,” he reminisces. But the true magic of Sushi Village lies in its legendary role in Whistler’s history. “It is the cultural heart of Whistler, in my opinion,” Douglas says. And, when asked whether his friends would agree, he says he “can’t think of a single one that wouldn’t”. Sushi Village was Whistler’s sixth-ever restaurant, opened in December 1985 by three Vancouver friends who simply wanted to ski every day. It soon became a storied hangout for the outdoor community. “It seems most of the celebs that roll through Whistler make a stop,” says Douglas. “Check out the ‘Wall of Fame’ on the ‘five-mile’ walk to the restroom.”

Best for a rest day: Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre

The area today known as Whistler is located on the unceded territories of the Lil’wat and Squamish First Nations. European colonists – mostly prospectors and fur trappers – only started settling there in the late 19th Century as part of a long process of displacement and oppression of Indigenous communities. Engaging with and learning about this Indigenous heritage is essential for an authentic experience of Whistler – or anywhere in modern-day Canada. And the Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre is the perfect place for it. “Especially for people that haven’t been to Whistler, or haven’t been exposed to our Indigenous culture, I think it’s pretty well done and a really cool thing to check out,” says Douglas. “There are thousands of years of human history in this region that were never properly acknowledged until this century. It’s nice to see the record finally being set straight.”

ENTERTAINMENT

The role of Nawazuddin Siddiqui in Tumbbad 2 has been confirmed

Mumbai: More information regarding Tumbbad 2 has been highly anticipated by fans. After actor-producer Sohum Shah formally partnered with Pen Studios, led by seasoned producer Dr. Jayantilal Gada, the excitement started. The formal casting of actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui in Tumbbad 2 was confirmed by the film’s producers on March 2. He will be crucial to the folklore franchise’s development. Although his character’s specifics are being kept under wraps, it is implied that he will be essential to the movie’s mythological arc.

Nawazuddin Siddiqui shared in a statement, “Tumbbad has always been a film I admired for its originality and atmospheric storytelling. When Sohum shared the vision for the sequel, I liked the story and I joined them in their journey. Collaborating with Sohum Shah and Pen Studios on a project of this scale is truly exciting. The character I’ll be portraying has many layers, and I’m looking forward to exploring this immersive universe with such a passionate team.” The production on the sequel is yet to begin. Last month, HT revealed that Akshaye Khanna and Nawazuddin Siddiqui were the two names which were being considered for the part. Ultimately, it was Nawazuddin who got the part. Meanwhile, Sohum Shah said



in a statement, “Bringing Nawaz Sir on board Tumbbad 2 feels incredibly exciting for us. He is an actor who brings an unmatched intensity and authenticity to every role he takes on. The character he will portray plays a very crucial part in expanding the emotional and psychological landscape of the sequel. With Nawaz Sir joining the team, we believe the narrative will reach a whole new level of depth and impact.” Producer Dr. Jayantilal Gada (PenStudios) shared, “We at Pen Studios are committed to presenting good content as hence with Tumbbad 2, we are taking the cinematic experience to a much grander level. Bringing Nawazuddin Siddiqui on board aligns perfectly with that vision. His craft,

versatility, and powerful screen presence will significantly elevate the film.” Released in 2018, Tumbbad has slowly become a cult film. Its 2024 re-release went on to do wonders at the box office. Tumbbad features the protagonist, Vinayak Rao, portrayed by Sohum Shah, navigating through the ominous night, lantern in hand, alongside his young son. The two are seen on a perilous journey, hinting at the dangerous quest that drives the narrative. Directed by Rahi Anil Barve, with Anand Gandhi as the creative director and Adesh Prasad as the co-director. Written by Mitesh Shah, Prasad, Barve, and Gandhi, the film was produced by Sohum Shah, Aanand L Rai, Mukesh Shah, and Amita Shah.

Ahaan Panday underwent one of the most painful surgeries

Mumbai: Following the release of Saiyaara, Ahaan Panday, who recently made his feature film debut, talked about the difficulties he encountered behind the scenes. In an interview with Esquire India, Panday disclosed that soon after Saiyaara debuted in theaters, he had a significant shoulder operation, a battle he was able to keep private. Even though he was receiving praise for his performance, the actor called the time one of the most physically taxing of his life. A few years prior, a snowmobile accident caused the injury that required surgery, which resulted in a subluxation of the shoulder. His ability to develop and maintain the body needed for his acting roles was impacted by the injury.

Despite the setback, the 28-year-old was resolved to deal with the problem and chose to get surgery shortly after the release of his first movie rather than allow the ailment to impede his advancement. “I actually got a whole surgery done after the release of Saiyaara last year,” Panday added, describing his experience. Additionally, it has the



longest recovery period and is among the most painful surgeries available. The actor clarified that in addition to being uncomfortable, the treatment necessitated a protracted recuperation and rehabilitation period. He shared that doctors had warned him about the severity of the aftermath. According to Panday, doctors warned him that the procedure would reset his physical progress entirely. His body, he was told, would “go back to zero”, making it extremely difficult to rebuild the strength required for his next film with director Ali Abbas Zafar. De-

spite facing significant challenges during his recovery from surgery, Panday drew motivation from his journey, contrasting it with typical dramatic fitness transformations. The recovery process was lengthy and mostly private, with few outside his close circle recognizing the severity of his injuries. Some fans did notice his weight loss and inquired about it through his mother. Currently, he is preparing for a new project directed by Ali Abbas Zafar, featuring Sharvari in the lead role, which promises a fresh on-screen pairing.

According to Nora Fatehi, she is secure in India

Mumbai: As tensions rise throughout the Middle East in the wake of the US-Israel military operation in Iran, actor Nora Fatehi has reassured fans that she is safe and currently in India rather than Dubai. The actor-dancer, who lives in Dubai, responded to growing worry on social media following unsettling images from the area. Fatehi explained on Instagram that she is in India and that the pictures that have surfaced from the US-Iran confrontation have profoundly disturbed her. “I am currently in India, not Dubai. I’m quite shaken by the images. “All we want is peace,” she declared in direct response to her supporters’ pleas for her safety. Her statement comes after a dramatic escalation in hostilities that reportedly led to the assassination of Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and subsequent retaliatory strikes across parts of the Gulf. With flight suspensions and airspace disruptions affecting the region, concern has grown for celebrities and expatriates based in the region. She described a collective global anxiety that has intensified in recent years. “People all over the world want to live lives with civility, and unfortunately, all we are feeling collectively is uncertainty and fear,” she said. The conflict, she added, feels like “one chaotic event after another,” she said. Her message struck a reflective tone rather than a political one. She urged followers to remain grounded, keep faith and pray for unity during what she called a period of “psychological and spiritual warfare”. The



current crisis initiated with a U.S.-Israeli military operation against Iran on February 28, leading to Iranian retaliatory strikes on U.S. and Israeli interests in Bahrain, the UAE, and Jordan. Israel responded with attacks in Lebanon, specifically targeting Beirut due to provocation by Hezbollah. This escalation has caused unrest in the Gulf region, affecting flights and raising concerns about further conflicts. Additionally, uncertainty in Iranian leadership following Khamenei’s reported death, with a temporary three-member council in charge, adds to the instability, leaving long-term political outcomes uncertain. Several Indian actors in the Gulf, including Sub-

hashree Ganguly, Sonal Chauhan, and Esha Gupta, are facing travel disruptions due to suspended flights while in Dubai. Their representatives have confirmed their safety and hotel accommodations. Additionally, Fatehi’s recent post has addressed speculation regarding her location amidst the conflict. Fatehi cautioned that tensions may escalate before they stabilize, highlighting a significant shift in power. She acknowledged the psychological and economic impact on ordinary people during crises, while consistently emphasizing the importance of preventing the loss of innocent lives, a sentiment that has gained widespread resonance online.

Dhurandhar’s fans respond The teaser for Revenge



Mumbai: The trailer for “Dhurandhar: The Revenge” has sparked significant online reactions, with fans expressing excitement on social media immediately after its release. The film, anticipated as a major cinematic event, features a 3-minute-25-second preview that has been described as “goosebumps-inducing,” showcasing high scale and editing, along with Ranveer Singh’s intense transformation. Viewers praised the impactful dialogues and linked the film’s buzz to industry developments, with comments reflecting strong enthusiasm among fans. The high-octane trailer opens with intense action sequences and a strong political tone. Ranveer Singh returns in a rough and rugged avatar as Hamza, with the story continuing from the point where he killed Rahman Dakait in the first film. The preview later introduces another dimension to his character as Jaskirat Singh Rangi, hinting at a layered narrative involving dual identities and revenge. The trailer’s caption -- “Ab Pakistan ka mustakbil, Hindustan tery karega (India will write Pakistan’s future)” -- signals the cross-border conflict that lies at the heart of the story.

Fans respond to the release of Yash, Kiara’s love song without a visual Toxic song Tabaahi

Mumbai: The first track from Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups has been published by the film’s producers. Yash and Kiara Advani are featured in the song Tabaahi. Here’s the twist, though. As of March 2, only the audio track—not the video—is accessible. The project’s reach was increased when Tabaa-hi was introduced in other languages. Vishal Mishra is the composer of the music. Different authors wrote the lyrics for each version: Yogaraj Bhat for Kannada, Ramajogayya Sastry for Telugu, Vignesh Shivan for Tamil, Raj Shekhar for Hindi, and Rafeeq Ahammed for Malayalam. Fans who had been anticipating additional video footage from the movie after teasers and posters were disappointed by the song’s audio release.

Although the song received positive reviews on the internet, the absence of fresh images from the movie became an annoyance. Since its announcement, Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups has generated a lot of interest, and two teasers have already gone viral on the internet. While the second teaser showed Yash in a striking



beardless appearance, the first teaser showed a violent, action-packed environment. The official trailer, which will continue the build-up to the movie’s theatrical premiere, is set to be released on March 8. A Fairytale for Grown-Ups marks Yash’s return to cinemas four years after his last major release, KGF: Chapter 2. In the new film, he will be seen in dual roles as Raya and Ticket. Kiara Advani features as Nadia, with the ensemble cast including Nayanthara, Huma Qureshi, Tara Sutaria, Rukmini Vasanth, Tovino Thomas, Akshay Oberoi, Darrell D’Silva, and Sudev Nair. Directed by Geetu Mo-

handas, the film has been shot simultaneously in English and Kannada. The project is produced by Venkat K Narayana and Yash under the banners of KVN Productions and Monster Mind Creations. The filmmakers have remained tight-lipped about the plot and have focused on building excitement through teasers and the music release. Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups is scheduled to release in cinemas on March 19, 2026. The film will open alongside Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar The Revenge, headlined by Ranveer Singh, setting the stage for a high-profile box office clash.

Rashmika-Vijay announced scholarships to students in hometown after wedding

Mumbai: Following their recent marriage, actors Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda established a scholarship program for students in Thummanpet, Telangana. When the pair went to Vijay’s hometown in the Nagarkurnool district’s Achampet division, they discussed their dedication to advancing education for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The locals, who came to see the announcement and commemorate the event, applauded their gesture. Students in Classes 9 and 10 at 44 government schools in the area will benefit from the scholarships, which are made possible by the Deverakonda Charitable Trust. The main goal is to support youngsters who are struggling financially and motivate them to keep going to school, particularly as they get ready for important exams. During the announcement, Vijay addressed the villagers directly in Telugu, outlining the specifics of the scholarship program. The support was met with applause and



appreciation from community members and his own family, including his mother, Madhavi, who was visibly moved by the gesture. Rashmika Mandanna and brother Anand Deverakonda stood beside Vijay during the event, expressing their support. The villagers responded enthusiastically, reflecting the sense of pride and the family’s decision to look after the wel-

fare of the children. The visit to Thummanpet included family ceremonies, with Rashmika-Vijay performing Sathyanarayan Vratam puja at their new residence in their hometown. Vijay Deverakonda vowed that he and his family would often visit and work for the betterment of the village. Rashmika and Vijay got married on February 26 at ITC Momentos in Udaipur in the presence of their family

members and close friends. The couple plans to host a reception in Hyderabad for industry colleagues and political leaders on March 4, emphasising that the event will be invitation-only and requesting privacy for the family. Both Rashmika and Vijay will soon appear together in the film Ranabaali, scheduled for a September release. This is their third outing after Geetha Govindam and Dear Comrade.

Alia Bhatt calls working with Bhansali magical

Mumbai: Actor Alia Bhatt provided an update on her much anticipated movie, Love & War. She disclosed that the project is currently almost finished. The star talked about the movie and her reunion with director Sanjay Leela Bhansali. She thanked him for the chance to collaborate with him once more and described the trip as “magical.” As a worldwide ambassador for Gucci, she visited Milan Fashion Week, where she gave the update. At the esteemed event in Milan, Alia attracted attention with her eye-catching black leather trench coat and enormous eyeglasses from the luxury brand. She was shown preparing for the performance, thinking back on her time in the city, and juggling her hectic film schedule in a video that was shared with Vogue Italia. During the chat, Alia revealed that this was her second visit to Milan in six months and shared her fondness for the city’s people and cuisine. She then spoke about her upcoming project, saying, “I am working on a



movie currently called Love & War. It is a film directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. We are at the tail end of filming. It has been quite a magical experience. Working with Sanjay sir is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I am so grateful that I get to do it.” The film marks her second collaboration with Bhansali after the critically acclaimed Gangubai Kathiawadi, which earned her the National Award for Best Actress. Love & War also stars Ranbir Kapoor and Vicky Kaushal, making it

one of the most talked-about upcoming projects in Bollywood. However, the film’s release timeline has seen multiple changes. Originally announced for a Christmas 2025 release, it was later shifted to March 20, 2026. Earlier this year, reports suggested the film may now arrive in 2027. Addressing the speculation during an Instagram Live session, Ranbir confirmed that the postponement rumours were true, though he refrained from sharing a revised release date.

Filipe Luis is fired by Flamengo, and Leonardo Jardim will take his position



Mumbai: After a string of poor performances, Clube de Regatas do Flamengo fired head coach Filipe Luis. Leonardo Jardim, a Portuguese manager, is now the team's front-runner to take over before the Carioca final. Despite Flamengo's decisive 8-0 victory over Madureira in the Carioca semifinal, the decision was made. Filipe Luis was allegedly taken aback by the news of his firing after speaking to the media at the Maracan following the victory. Globo.com claims that the

coach had not received a formal explanation or warning. It is said that the decision to fire him was made before the kickoff. After the team had already left the stadium, Filipe Luis was briefed by football director Jos Boto. The former coach is now expected to visit Ninho do Urubu to bid farewell to the players and staff. The move was ordered by club president Luiz Eduardo Baptista, known as Bap, who had grown increasingly dissatisfied with the team's early-season performanc-

es. Following defeats in the Brazilian Super Cup and the South American Super Cup, the board began weighing decisive action. Reports suggest Bap had already issued firmer demands to both players and coaching staff amid concerns over physical sharpness, technical inconsistency, and dressing-room unrest. Filipe Luis had initially been appointed Flamengo head coach in 2023 after impressing within the club's youth setup. He began his coaching journey with

Flamengo's under-17 side in March 2024 after retiring from professional football, winning the Copa Rio before guiding the under-20s to a world title in June. Promoted to the senior role on September 30 to replace Tite, he quickly delivered silverware, lifting the Copa do Brasil in 2024. In 2025, Flamengo added the Supercopa do Brasil, the Campeonato Carioca and the Copa Libertadores to their trophy cabinet under his leadership. However, an Intercontinental final shootout defeat to Paris Saint-Germain and subsequent setbacks this season intensified scrutiny. Despite having recently renewed his contract until 2027, relations between Filipe Luis, Bap and Boto reportedly became strained in recent months, with communication growing increasingly distant. Flamengo have yet to confirm who will lead the team in Sunday's Carioca final against Fluminense, but they are keen to finalise an appointment swiftly.

Supreme Court rules that insolvency law cannot be used to avoid attachment of benami assets

New Delhi, Mar 08: According to a ruling by the Supreme Court, contaminated property acquired under the Benami Act cannot be used as a pretext to raise a liquidation plea under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 in order to get exemption from attachment. We believe that the appellants were unable to contest the attachment order issued under the Benami Act in front of the IBC's statutory authority. We are certain that this kind of invocation is not legitimate and is really meant to get around and stop the processes that the Benami Act envisions. In a ruling dismissing the group of appeals, a bench of Justices Pamidighantam S. Narasimha and Atul S. Chandurkar stated, "Further, filing of appeal before National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), despite the finding that the appropriate forum is not the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), but the statutory authorities under the Benami Act, leaves no doubt that it is a complete abuse of the process." Before the NCLAT, an NCLT order



may be contested. The corporate entity M/S Padmaadevi Sugars Ltd. challenged the attachment of properties valued at ₹450 crore by income tax officials under the Benami Properties Act, 1988 and its revised version of 2016, however the supreme court rejected their plea.

The corporate entity had pleaded that since the company was under liquidation, its assets cannot be attached or seized by the income tax authorities under the Benami Act. The company is stated to have sold the properties to V.K. Sasikala, who, according to the income tax authorities, had paid ₹450

crore through demonetised currency in 2016-17. A similar plea was raised by certain other corporates which were clubbed by the top court while passing the ruling. Under a benami transaction, the beneficial owner pays money for the property but the titles of such assets are in the name of another person known as the benamidar. The Benami Act prohibits the illegal accumulation of movable and immovable property with a view to avoiding taxes, money laundering, and other illegal activities.

It imposes a punishment of up to seven years for those involved in the prohibited ac-

tivities. Writing the judgment, Justice Narasimha said the Benami Act was concerned with identifying and extinguishing benami (illegal) holdings through a confiscatory mechanism, while the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was directed at a resolution and liquidation of assets of a corporate debtor within a time-bound framework. "The IBC, concerned as it is with insolvency resolution and value maximisation of lawfully owned assets, cannot be employed as a mechanism to dilute or override statutory proceedings undertaken in the public law sphere for confiscation of tainted property.

"The properties in question, having been provisionally attached and confirmed by the adjudicating authority under the Benami Act, stand vested in the Central government under Section 27, subject to statutory appeal. Those determinations remain operative. "The NCLT cannot, in exercise of insolvency jurisdiction, disregard or nullify a statutory vesting effected under another enactment.

Al-Nassr awaits Ronaldo's comeback in order to advance to the Asian Champions League knockout stage

New Delhi: Al-Nassr will be hopeful that Cristiano Ronaldo, a 41-year-old Portuguese great, returns to action on Wednesday to help the Riyadh club get closer to winning a major prize since coming to Saudi Arabia. A spot in the Asian Champions League Two quarterfinals is up for grabs when Al-Nassr plays Turkmenistan's Arkadag. Ronaldo has not participated in Al-Nassr's previous two Saudi Pro League games due to rumors that he was dissatisfied with the club's funding, especially after witnessing rival Al-Hilal sign Karim Benzema during the transfer window last month.

The Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia owns the majority of Al-Nassr, Al-Hilal, Al-Ittihad, and Al-Ahli. No player is greater than the club or the league, according to a statement from the SPL. Every club in the Saudi Pro League operates independently while adhering to the same set of rules, according to the league. Since joining Al-Nassr, Cristiano has been totally committed to the team and has contributed significantly to its development and aspirations. However, no one, no matter how important, makes choices outside



of their own club. Al-Nassr defeated the defending champion Al-Ittihad 2-0 on Friday, despite the five-time Ballon d'Or winner being absent.

Ittihad is the only one of three Saudi teams in the top-tier AFC Champions League Elite not to have secured a place in the round of 16, with two group games remaining. Despite losing star striker Karim Benzema last week to Al-Hilal, which has a history of making high-profile signings, including Neymar from Paris Saint-Germain in

2023, Ittihad will advance to the next round if it defeats Al-Gharafa of Qatar on Tuesday. The top eight in each of the tournament's two 12-team groups - divided geographically into East and West Asia - qualify for the second round. Al-Hilal leads the western zone and is the only team with a perfect record of six wins from six, meaning coach Simone Inzaghi can choose to rest players. Al-Ahli, which won its first Champions League title in May, is also guaranteed a spot in the knockout stage.

Andrey Rublev and Daniil Medvedev will not attend the Indian Wells exhibition

New Delhi: Due to travel problems brought on by geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, two of Russia's best men's tennis players, Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev, have been forced to skip a prominent exhibition tournament at the Indian Wells Masters in California. The interruption comes after hostilities escalated following Israeli and US airstrikes on Iran over the weekend, which resulted in the shutdown of airspace throughout the Gulf. This led to numerous aircraft disruptions and negatively impacted the transit routes used by international competitors to move between competitions. On the eve of the main draw at Indian Wells, both players were supposed to compete in the Eisenhower Cup, a mixed doubles exhibition. Medvedev was set to pair with fellow Russian Mirra Andreeva, while Rublev was paired with



American Amanda Anisimova. Travel disruptions prevented either from arriving in time to compete. Despite missing the exhibition, Medvedev and Rublev are still expected to feature in the main singles draw, with first-round byes keeping them out of action until Friday of the tournament week. Rising tensions in the Middle East have begun

to cast a shadow over tennis. The Fujairah Challenger in the United Arab Emirates was abruptly halted on Tuesday after loud explosions and air-raid sirens were heard near the venue, prompting officials to suspend play and evacuate players.

The tennis match between Daniil Ostapenkov and Hayato Matsuoka was halted

with a score of 6-3, 4-6, 2-1 in Ostapenkov's favor due to a fire in the Fujairah Oil Industry Zone, triggered by debris from intercepted drones. The fire was contained without injuries, but the incident led to the suspension of matches, including one between Yuta Shimizu and Max Basing, and raised concerns about player safety.

Modi-Carney talks are shadowed by the ghost of Nijjar during the Canada meeting



New Delhi, Mar 08: According to allegations in two Canadian newspapers, one of which cited the nation's spy agency, the death of Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, which had rocked India-Canada relations, returned to throw a shadow ahead of a meeting between the two nations' prime ministers here on Monday. According to the National Post, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has confirmed that India continues to be a major source of foreign espionage and intervention against Canada. "Indian consular staff operating in Vancouver supplied information to assist in the assassination of Sikh (Khalistani) activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar," according to a Globe and Mail investiga-

tion. When questioned about the two media reports that were released shortly before Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Mark Carney met at the summit level, P. Kumaran, the external affairs ministry's secretary (east), refuted the accusations. "India vehemently denies any involvement in organized crime or transnational repression. Despite repeated requests, these allegations are unfounded, politically motivated, and unsupported by reliable evidence, he said. "India believes that issues of this kind should be handled by reputable law enforcement and the legal system, not by public or politicized narratives." While there was no reference to "transnational repression" in the India-Canada Joint Lead-

ers' Statement, the expression figured in the readout issued by Carney's office on his meeting with Modi.

The leaders affirmed the importance of their countries' shared commitment to democratic values, self-reliance, and respect for sovereignty and the rule of law — including in combating transnational repression and organized crime," it said. "They agreed that there has been significant progress in the security and law enforcement dialogue between their countries and that this work will continue." The National Post reported that the CSIS "has repeatedly cited the Indian government as one of the main perpetrators of foreign interference and transnational repression in Canada in

recent years". It added that in an email to the newspaper on Saturday, "CSIS spokesperson Eric Balsam confirmed that remains the case".

The broadsheet quoted Balsam as saying: "CSIS's threat assessment of the main perpetrators of foreign interference and espionage against Canada has not changed." Earlier, during a background briefing for reporters on Carney's 10-day visit to India, Australia and Japan, a senior Canadian government official had said that India was no longer interfering in Canadian affairs. That statement had contradicted a February 3 statement by CSIS director Dan Rogers that cited China, Russia and India as among the most active perpetrators of foreign

interference targeting Canada. On Nijjar's assassination, Kumaran said: "We understand that the criminal investigation is proceeding as per established legal procedures.... The Canadians have an established legal procedure and it will proceed as per that procedure." Kumaran added: "India has consistently maintained its commitment to the judicial process.

We believe that sensitive matters under judicial consideration are best allowed to proceed through established legal processes without public commentary." Carney's predecessor Justin Trudeau's allegation in the Canadian House of Commons in September 2023 about an Indian government hand in Nijjar's murder in British Columbia that June had put the bilateral relationship on thin ice. It led the two countries to withdraw or expel high commissioners from each other's capitals a year later. The relationship has been on the mend since Carney assumed office. High commissioners have returned to New Delhi and Ottawa, and the diplomatic staff strength has been restored in stages. "The numbers are currently at levels better than what we had in 2023 and we continue to take steps to take this to the next level in keeping with the expanded agenda and ambition," Kumaran said. "We are taking this on a step-by-step basis."

Political unrest is sparked by Nitish Kumar's Rajya Sabha move

P a t n a , Mar 08: Nitish Kumar's announcement of his intention to join the Rajya Sabha has caused a dramatic change in Bihar politics. The Janata Dal (United) is



now concentrating on the future leadership and the potential for Nitish's son, Nishant Kumar, to enter politics as a result of this move, which has increased political unrest inside the party. Just four months after taking office for a record 10th term as Bihar Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar has announced his intention to join the Rajya Sabha. This has led to much conjecture regarding his successor and the party's future. Internal conflicts over leadership are currently plaguing the Janata Dal (United).

A number of high-ranking officials are under consideration, including Bihar government ministers Ashok and Vijay Choudhary, Union Minister Lallan Singh, and acting national president Sanjay Jha. Their leadership bids, however, run the risk of escalating factionalism and maybe causing the party to split. Particularly in the Kurmi-Koeri vote bank, which has been the foundation of Nitish Kumar's political success, dissatisfaction among JDU employees has increased and rifts are expected to deepen.

Party members suspect some leaders are strategising to help vacate the

Chief Minister's position and ensure Nitish shifts to Delhi. Nishant Kumar has become a potential unifying figure in the midst of this uncertainty. Nishant, an engineer with no prior political experience, is viewed as a clean and suitable choice to lead the party without creating more rifts.

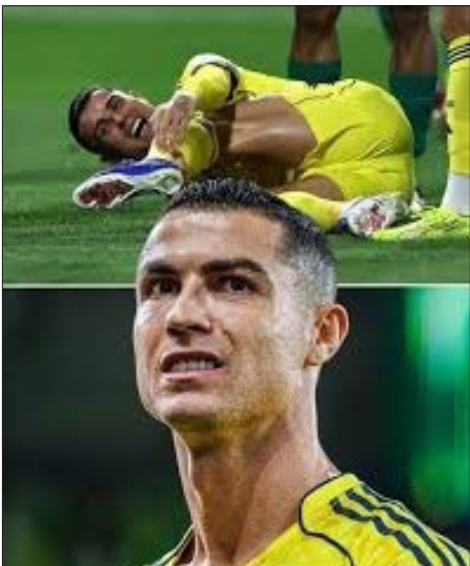
Nishant's Kurmi heritage is consistent with the socioeconomic base that has backed Nitish Kumar for many years. Nishant's foray into politics, according to senior party leaders, may help resolve the escalating dissatisfaction inside the party and protect its support base.

There is also conjecture that the JDU may be offered the position of deputy chief minister since the BJP is expected to have its own chief minister in Bihar. Party sources indicate that Nishant Kumar could be appointed to this position to maintain the party's political relevance and support base. As Bihar approaches a critical juncture, the future unity of the JDU appears closely linked to Nishant Kumar's acceptance of party leadership. The party faces challenges including internal opposition, leadership disputes, and potential splits, with Nishant's role seen as pivotal in determining its path forward.

A major injury worry before the FIFA World Cup for Cristiano Ronaldo

New Delhi: Just weeks before the FIFA World Cup, Cristiano Ronaldo, the captain of Portugal, had a scare due to a hamstring injury he sustained during Al-Nassr's Saudi Pro League match against Al-Fayha. Before the international competition, which will take place in the US, Mexico, and Canada from June 11 to July 19, the five-time Ballon d'Or winner was forced off during Al-Nassr's 3-1 victory on Saturday, raising questions about his fitness. Ronaldo has begun a rehabilitation program and will be attentively watched, according to a statement released by Al-Nassr on Tuesday that confirmed the setback. The club stated, "He started a rehabilitation program and will be under evaluation day by day."

The club acknowledged that the seasoned forward is suffering with a hamstring tendon problem, but the Saudi Pro League leaders did not clarify whether the injury is a strain or tear. Al-Nassr posted pictures of Ronaldo working out at the gym with weights as part of his recuperation process on social media. According to preliminary estimates, the 41-year-old may be sidelined for two to four weeks, but depending on how he reacts to therapy, the schedule may extend closer to a month. Even though Ronaldo is nearing the end of his career, he is still an important player for both his team and his nation. The Portuguese star, who has 226 international caps, is expected to lead his nation in what could be his sixth appearance at a World Cup. The injury comes at a time when Ronaldo has been enjoying another productive season with Al-Nassr, who currently sit at the top of the Saudi Pro League table. However, his fitness will now be closely monitored in the coming weeks as Portugal prepare for the biggest tournament in world football. Despite the scare, there is currently no immediate concern regarding Ronaldo's participation in the World Cup.



The expected recovery period of two to four weeks means he should still have time to regain full fitness before the tournament kicks off in mid-June. Portugal's medical staff are also expected to keep a close eye on his rehabilitation progress once he rejoins international preparations. Al-Nassr coach Jorge Jesus had initially played down the severity of the injury after the match, suggesting that Ronaldo was experiencing muscle fatigue rather than a serious setback. Even so, any injury involving a player of Ronaldo's importance will naturally trigger concern for Portugal supporters, particularly with the tournament fast approaching. For now, Portugal will hope their captain's latest setback proves to be nothing more than a temporary pause rather than a major obstacle on the road to another World Cup campaign.

Lewis Hamilton says a sequel to the popular film "F1: The Movie" is in the works

Lewis Hamilton revealed Thursday he was working on a sequel to the blockbuster Brad Pitt film 'F1: The Movie', with a script being written.

New Delhi: Lewis Hamilton disclosed on Thursday that he was writing a script for a follow-up to the popular Brad Pitt movie "F1: The Movie." The picture was directed by Joseph Kosinski, who also made "Top Gun: Maverick," and it starred Pitt and Damson Idris. It was released last year. Seven-time world champion Hamilton and Jerry Bruckheimer were among the producers.

The Ferrari driver stated, "We are already working on the first script," in Melbourne prior to the Australian Grand Prix, which kicks off the season. "We had our first meeting maybe mid-to-late the second part of the end of the year -- me, Jerry and Joe talking about different ideas, different directions that we could go with the script." Thus, it's quite thrilling. I'm ecstatic. I've been through it now, and the first time I went, it was already really intense. I'm accustomed to it now, therefore I'm prepared." In the first movie, Pitt portrayed a seasoned veteran who was brought



in to support his former teammate Javier Bardem's faltering Formula One team. Idris, the team's gifted rookie driver, harbored animosity against the elder guy, and their tense relationship served as the emotional core. It brought in almost US\$630 million globally, making it a major hit. Hamilton remarked, "It's been incredible to see how much of an impact it's had and how many people have

loved the movie." I continue to receive texts from people who have only recently seen the film and who say it has helped them understand what this sport is all about. "Sequels aren't always excellent," he continued.

"However, we have a fantastic cast, fantastic script, and fantastic staff. Therefore, that doesn't worry me. However, we will take our time to ensure that every-

thing is just how it should be." Asked if he might be tempted to have a role in the sequel, he replied: "I don't really have a lot of desire to be on camera, and I've had loads of opportunities to be in movies. "I really liked the idea of being in the background. It was an amazing experience, and it's so much more enjoyable, I think, than actually being on camera."

I just tried to get in good positions: Finn Allen

New Delhi: After his brilliant 33-ball undefeated century sent New Zealand into the T20 World Cup final with a nine-wicket thrashing of South Africa in Kolkata on Wednesday, Finn Allen stated calmly, "I just tried to get in good positions and perform for the team." After his brilliant 33-ball undefeated century sent New Zealand into the T20 World Cup final with a nine-wicket thrashing of South Africa in Kolkata on Wednesday, Finn Allen stated calmly, "I just tried to get in good positions and perform for the team." The intention was evident right away, according to Player-of-the-Match Allen, and he benefited from having an aggressive batter at the other end. For the first wicket, Allen and Tim Seifert (58 off 33 balls) put on a 117-run partnership that essentially ended the match. "We wanted to get off to a good start and put them at a disadvantage early on. When Timmy is acting that way, it's easy for me. All I have to do is watch him go on strike. He used a flyer to bat. "Huge game for us," Allen remarked. Allen emphasized the value of preparedness when discussing how to adjust to the circumstances. "You adjust to the wicket." To obtain a sense of the surface, training is crucial. We had the intelligence that it would be dark earth. demonstrates the significance of the series before to the World Cup. The opening swiftly turned his attention to the summit match despite the decisive victory. The Kiwis will play the



winner of Thursday's semifinal between India and England in Mumbai on Sunday in Ahmedabad. "You celebrate a little and take the game's positive aspects, but you have a final to look forward to on Sunday." Mitchell Santner, the captain, described it as one of their most comprehensive efforts. "To put on a performance like that in a crucial game is pretty pleasing when you consider how good South Africa are." We were good at times earlier, but today we were good all day. Santner said there was clarity in planning, including the tactical use of spin in the PowerPlay. "There was a plan for the first two overs and then a free-for-all. With [Dewald] Brevis coming in, we knew he likes spin but we thought it would be better spinning it away from him." Though the 170-run target appeared competitive at the break,

the captain admitted the openers turned it into a one-sided affair. "In T20, you never know. Wickets in the PowerPlay would have made it a challenge. But they took it on. And Finny just carried on. A 33-ball 100 is not bad," he said with a smile. Looking ahead, Santner remained cautious. "It's a different ground next time, red soil, black soil, lot of variables. Pretty good performance. I don't know if it was a perfect game, but we were good all the way through." A dejected South Africa captain Aiden Markram conceded that Allen's knock floored them. "They bowled really well up front. Credit to their bowling unit. And when someone plays an innings like that, you don't often come out on the right side of that." Markram felt his side may have fallen short on a good batting surface.

D. Gukesh collapses and loses against Abdusattorov, leaving him without a victory

New Delhi: The turbulent run of world champion D Gukesh at the Prague International Chess Festival continued for a fifth day in a row. The Indian prodigy languished in the bottom of the standings after suffering yet another brutal loss at the hands of Nodirbek Abdusattorov. Before the wheels came off spectacularly, Gukesh once again maintained a commanding position in what has become an unwanted routine. The 18-year-old used the black pieces to launch an innovative plan that immediately put pressure on his opponent's king. Throughout the middlegame, he created what seemed to be an unbeatable lead.



Gukesh was on his way to winning the Masters portion of the competition for the first time. However, the clock's ruthless countdown proved to be his downfall. Gukesh cracked as time evaporated in a position that still required accuracy, getting closer to the first time control. This gave Abdusattorov a way out of what appeared to be a certain defeat. When Abdusattorov almost made the same mistake, the drama grew more intense. In order to salvage a draw

a stronger position. The Tata Steel Masters was the site of the prior incident. Gukesh is now ranked 17th in the world with a rating of 2734.5 as a result of the loss.

Abdusattorov is now at 2778.3. Jorden van Foreest, a Dutch sensation, kept up his barnstorming form in the meanwhile. He shot up to world number 11 in live ratings after defeating Hans Moke Niemann for the fourth time in five rounds. With four points, Van Foreest currently leads the leaderboard. David Navara, a local hero, and Abdusattorov come next on 3.5. Gukesh remains stranded on just 1.5 points alongside Aravindh and Niemann in the tournament's basement positions. With the lone rest day now upon them, the world champion faces an uphill battle to resurrect his campaign.

from the carnage, he offered Gukesh a lifeline. However, the struggling champion received no leniency from fortune. In the final seconds, he tripped again, allowing his opponent to advance a crucial piece for victory. With this heartbreaking defeat, Abdusattorov has defeated Gukesh twice in a month after the Indian made a mistake while in five rounds.

AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 South Korea maintains perfect record

South Korea finished as the runner up in the previous AFC Women's Asian Cup, and continues to look in fine form in this edition of the tournament in Australia.

New Delhi: South Korea defeated the Philippines 3-0 at Gold Coast Stadium on Thursday to advance to the Women's Asian Cup quarterfinals, with Park Soojong scoring the game's best goal. After defeating Iran 3-0 in their first match on March 3, the outcome guaranteed the Koreans a perfect record. The tournament host and South Korea will advance to the knockout stage if Australia defeats Iran later on Thursday. The only thing left to decide is which of them will win Group A when they play in Sydney on Sunday. Three minutes later, midfielder Park curled the ball into the top corner of the net from the edge of the box after Jeon Yu-gyeong opened the score with a deft move and goal in the twelfth



minute. Playmaker Mun Eun-ju scored a third goal for the 2022 finalist early in the second half, although the Philippines,

who are now without a win and have only their last group match against Iran to play, had a few header opportunities.

Aston Martin can still reach the front in 2026



New Delhi: Aston Martin and Honda most definitely did not expect to be in this situation when they decided to collaborate on the 2026 regulations. Before this weekend's Australian Grand Prix, the AMR26 has a number of problems, the primary one being the Honda engine. Adrian Newey has disclosed the seriousness of the team's dependability problems in an interview with Australian media. Aston Martin does not intend to finish this weekend's Grand Prix unless something drastically changes. Aside from a lack of overall durability, excessive vibrations (caused by engine and packaging issues) raise safety concerns if Fernando Alonso and Lance Stroll complete too many consecutive laps. Despite all this, team principal Adrian Newey stands by the AMR26's potential. When Aston Martin first made their track debut in Barcelona (despite arriving late) they turned plenty of heads in the paddock. The AMR26's aggressive and innovative interpretation of the regulations was clear from the very beginning. Of course, severe reliability issues mean that Aston's aerodynamic design is no longer a main talking point. Instead, all eyes are on the Honda power unit and other durability fears with the British team's 2026 challenger. Still, this does not mean the team themselves have lost faith in their underlying package and philosophy.

Super sub Osula wins as outnumbered Newcastle defeats Manchester United

New Delhi: As his 10-man team broke Michael Carrick's undefeated streak as Manchester United's interim manager on Wednesday, manager Eddie Howe celebrated a fantastic night for Newcastle. After being a man down for the whole second half, the host won the Premier League match 2-1 at St. James' Park thanks to a fantastic solo goal from William Osula, who came off the bench.

Howe, whose team needed a boost with important games coming up, including Barcelona in the Champions League final 16, said, "Probably with the sending off it turned it into a really famous victory for us." "Even though you have 10, you've got to try and give the opposition a problem. I thought we did that." Manchester United's loss put them nine points behind second-place Manchester City, who were held 2-2 at home by struggling Nottingham Forest, and tied Aston Villa with 51 points. Newcastle is now just one point behind fierce rival Sunderland in 12th place. It was occasionally difficult to determine which team had men throughout the second half. The third-place team, which came to Tyneside with the firepower that Newcastle would have wanted to recruit last year—Bryan Mbeumo, Matheus Cunha, and Benjamin Sesko—ended up looking lackluster. After losing three league games at home, Newcastle found success in the face of hardship. "We're not happy with the way we played the game tonight," said Carrick, a boyhood Newcastle fan who had gone seven games unbeaten since taking over at Old Trafford but now has to find fresh motivation. "I don't think it was the 10 men. We just didn't play good



enough tonight. We can't make any excuses for that. "They deserved to win tonight... tonight hurts, because we don't like losing games, but we'll be better for the next one." The game hinged on Jacob Ramsey being sent off with the clock at 45+1' after he was judged to have taken a dive and was shown a second yellow card. Despite the setback, Anthony Gordon won a penalty after a clash with United captain Bruno Fernandes five minutes later and put Newcastle 1-0 up with his ninth successful spot kick from nine this season. The half-time whistle had still to be blown when Fernandes, from a set piece, found Casemiro who headed in the equaliser at 45+9'. Newcastle had already started promisingly, with Kieran Trippier hitting the upright in the third minute and the host having five good chances in the first 20 minutes. United had also come close, with Kobbie Mainoo having a goal-bound shot saved by Aaron Ramsdale before Mbeumo blasted over the bar in the 44th. Ramsdale, making his first league start of the year in goal with Nick Pope on the bench, played a blinder with a series of world class saves. "With 10 men, well it may as well have been 13 men with the crowd tonight," he said. "It's been an excellent game for us."