

Rahul Gandhi Raises Concerns Over Delimitation Through Women's Reservation Bill



Guwahati, Apr 18: Rahul Gandhi on April 18 alleged that the BJP-led central government attempted to alter India's electoral map under the pretext of a women's reservation bill.

Addressing an election rally, he claimed that states like Assam and Jammu and Kashmir have already experienced such changes, and similar measures could be extended across the country.

Gandhi accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah of attempting to alter the balance of representation among states. He alleged that such moves could weaken smaller and northeastern states.

He termed the alleged proposal "anti-national" and contrary to India's federal structure, claiming that opposition parties collectively resisted and defeated the bill in Parliament.

Gandhi further alleged that delimitation was being used as a political tool to influence representation and warned that it could impact the cultural, linguistic, and political identity of various states.

He also urged voters to remain vigilant, stressing that protecting the Constitution and the federal framework is crucial.

Two children drown in pond in Merapani

Golaghat, Apr 18: Two children drowned in a pond in the Merapani area of Assam's Golaghat district on Friday.

The incident took place in the 2 No. Tarani locality when the children were reportedly playing near the pond. The deceased have been identified as Bidyanjyoti Chutia (6) and Nomom Gogoi (5).

According to sources, Nomom Gogoi had come to visit his grandfather's house from Kachamari along with his mother. At the time of the incident, family members were busy with other work, while the two children were playing nearby. It is suspected that they accidentally slipped into the pond.

When the children were not found for some time, family members began searching for them. After a brief search, both were seen floating in the pond.

They were immediately taken to the Merapani Community Health Centre, but doctors declared them dead on arrival.

Ukhrul Ambush Claims Two Lives; Kuki-Zo Council Denies Involvement Amid Tensions

Imphal, Apr 18: A soldier of the Naga Regiment and a civilian were killed in a deadly ambush by suspected militants in Ukhrul district on Saturday afternoon, raising fresh concerns over security in the hill district. The incident occurred barely a day after Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh visited the region and formally reopened the Ukhrul highway, a move aimed at restoring normalcy. According to reports, the attack took place around 2:30 PM at TM Khasom under Litan police station. Suspected militants allegedly laid an ambush targeting vehicles travelling along the route, damaging at least five to six vehicles in the process. The deceased soldier has been identified as 46-year-old SW Chinaoshang, a resident of Tashar village in Ukhrul district. The civilian victim was identified as Yaruingam Vashum of Kharasom village. Both belonged to the Tangkhul Naga community. Sources said the victims were travelling from Imphal to Ukhrul when the militants opened fire. The incident is being seen as a major setback to ongoing efforts by the government to restore peace and ensure safe movement along highways in the state.



Meanwhile, the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) issued a clarification denying any involvement of Kuki-Zo individuals or groups in the incident. In a statement, the council expressed concern over media reports linking Kuki militants to the attack and categorically rejected such claims. The KZC stated that, based on ground-level inputs, the incident appears to be linked to tensions among certain factional

groups rather than any Kuki-Zo organisation. It termed the attribution of blame without proper verification as "deeply regrettable." The council also alleged that such accusations have become a recurring pattern in Manipur whenever incidents involve Meitei or Naga communities, adding that it unfairly portrays the Kuki-Zo community in a negative light. Urging restraint, the KZC called on social media users, media

houses, civil society groups, and authorities to verify facts before making or publishing allegations against any community. It reiterated that the Kuki-Zo people have no role in the incident and appealed to all concerned to refrain from spreading misinformation. The attack and subsequent developments highlight the fragile security situation in Manipur, even as efforts continue to restore peace and normalcy in the region.

Man held over viral threat to Zeliang community

Kohima, Apr 18: One person has been arrested in connection with a viral video allegedly containing criminal intimidation against members of the Zeliang community in Nagaland. The accused, identified as 40-year-old Nur Bahadur Chettri, a resident of Jotsoma in Kohima district, was apprehended by Kohima Police with assistance from Peren Police. Authorities said further investigation is currently underway. The case originated from a First Information Report (FIR) filed by the Nagaland Zeliang Youth Organisation at Jalukie Police Station against an unidentified individual. The complaint included charges of criminal intimidation, promoting enmity between groups, and issuing death threats against members of the Zeliang community. According to the FIR, a man in a viral social media video, identifying himself as "Nepali," claimed to have killed a Zeliang individual and disposed of the body in a river.

Meanwhile, the Peren District Gorkha Union has also filed a separate FIR at Jalukie Police Station against an unknown individual from the Gorkha community. The organisation alleged that the video has unfairly implicated the community and created fear among its members. In the FIR filed on April 15, PDGU president Thul Bahadur urged the police to take swift action to identify and arrest the person responsible, while condemning the use of the district's name in the video. Police officials have assured that the matter is being treated with utmost seriousness. The arrest of Nur Bahadur Chettri marks a significant step in the investigation, though authorities have clarified that the probe is ongoing and more details will emerge as evidence is examined. The incident highlights the growing challenge of viral misinformation and hate speech on social media, where unverified content can quickly spread and inflame communal sensitivities.

Assam Rifles Bust Areca Nut Haul Worth ₹54.88 Lakh in Champhai



Aizawl, Apr 18: According to an official statement released on Friday, the Assam Rifles and the Customs Preventive Force worked together to confiscate a sizable shipment of areca nuts in the Champhai area of Mizoram. 98 bags of areca nuts totaling about 7,840 kg and worth Rs 54.88 lakh were found in the Ruantlang neighborhood of Champhai.

However, the date of the procedure was not mentioned in the statement. "Assam Rifles along with Custom Preventive Force, Champhai, seized 98 bags of areca nuts weighing 7,840 kg worth ₹54.88 lakhs in general area Ruantlang, Champhai district, Mizoram," the force said in a post on X.

It further added that the operation reflects "continued efforts of Assam Rifles, in coordination with civil agencies, to curb illegal smuggling activities along the Indo-Myanmar border."

The seized consignment has been handed over to the concerned authorities for further legal proceedings.

Opposition, Groups Raise Concerns Over Umiam Resort Project; Demand Scrapping of Lumpongden Lease

Agency: The Voice of the People Party (VPP) on Friday expressed strong suspicion over the state government's handling of the proposed luxury resort and spa project at Umiam Lake, suggesting that "something is happening behind the scenes" given the manner in which Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has defended the project.

After visiting H Bansiewdor Nonglang, who is on an indefinite hunger strike at Malki Ground, VPP leader and JHADC opposition MDC Awhai Andrew Shullai said available records indicate the involvement of an external construction company in the Umiam tourism project.

Shullai clarified that while there is no direct allegation against the Chief Minister, the government's strong defence of the project raises concerns about possible undisclosed developments. He criticised the lack of proper consultation and stressed that the project should undergo a thorough environmental impact assessment (EIA) along with meaningful public participation. Citing RTI findings obtained by the Green-Tech Foundation Meghalaya, he said the concerns raised by protesting youths are valid and grounded in environmental understanding. He also warned that the project could negatively impact local entrepreneurs who have already established tourism ventures around Umiam. Raising ecological concerns, Shullai emphasised that Lumpongden Island is an iconic ecological site and habitat for migratory birds, and should be preserved in its natural state rather than leased out for commercial use. He added that the opposition is not against development at Umiam but specifically opposes leasing 36 acres of the island.

He urged the government to scrap the

lease agreement with the private firm if there are no clear plans for responsible use. The Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) also clarified its stance, stating that any construction should take place at the existing Orchid site instead of Lumpongden. Party president K P Pangniam said development must not harm the environment.

Meanwhile, the Hynniewtre National Youth Front (HYNF) warned that the government would be responsible for any untoward incidents if it continues with its "adamant" stand. HYNF East Khasi Hills president Steve Khyriem expressed solidarity with the hunger strike and urged the government to reconsider the project.

Khyriem also pointed out inconsistencies in the government's statements, alleging that its forceful approach has led to growing unity among social organisations opposing the project.

The ongoing protest, led by the Green-Tech Foundation, continues to focus on protecting Lumpongden Island from commercial exploitation, even as pressure mounts on the government to review the lease agreement and address public concerns. The Shillong concert of legendary German rock band Scorpions, scheduled for April 21, has been cancelled, sources confirmed on Friday, even as organisers are yet to issue an official statement.

According to sources, the cancellation is part of changes affecting the band's India tour, which included scheduled performances in Delhi-NCR on April 24, Bengaluru on April 26 and Mumbai on April 30.

However, there has been no formal confirmation from the organisers or the band so far. Earlier rumours of cancellation had been circulating on social media, but

official platforms, including the band's website and X handle, had not reflected any such update at the time. The lack of an official announcement has added to the confusion among fans, particularly in Shillong where anticipation for the concert had been high.

As of now, the cancellation is indicated by sources, while clarity on the reasons behind the decision and the status of other tour dates are awaited from organisers. Sources indicated that the band's entire India leg may be called off.

Scorpions' Shillong Concert Cancelled Amid Uncertainty Over India Tour

The Shillong concert of legendary German rock band Scorpions, scheduled for April 21, has reportedly been cancelled, sources confirmed on Friday. However, organisers have yet to release an official statement. According to sources, the cancellation is part of broader changes affecting the band's India tour, which included performances in Delhi-NCR on April 24, Bengaluru on April 26, and Mumbai on April 30. Despite earlier rumours circulating on social media, there has been no formal confirmation from either the organisers or the band. Official platforms, including the band's website and X (formerly Twitter) handle, have not reflected any update so far. The absence of an official announcement has created confusion among fans, particularly in Shillong, where excitement for the concert had been high.

As of now, the cancellation remains based on source inputs, with no clarity yet on the reasons behind the decision or the status of other scheduled performances. Sources also indicated that the band's entire India tour could potentially be called off.

ZPM Criticizes MNF For Wasting Crores Of Public Money Before Aizawl Municipal Corporation Polls

Aizawl, Apr 18: The ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) has launched a scathing attack on the previous Mizo National Front (MNF)-led Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC), accusing it of unnecessary and wasteful expenditure amounting to Rs 4.92 crore at the Tuirial Solid Waste Management Center near Aizawl. The allegations came ahead of the AMC polls slated for April 21. Speaking to reporters at a press conference here on Friday, former corporator Malsawmzuala Ralte said that the Tuirial facility was completed in December 2019 by the State Investment Project Management and Implementation Unit (SIPMIU) at a cost of Rs 13.32 crore, adhering strictly to the Detailed Project Report (DPR). The centre was officially handed over to the AMC on January 20, 2022, he said. Despite the project being fully completed as per the DPR, the MNF-led AMC government incurred an additional Rs



4.92 crore on it. This is a blatant waste of public funds," Ralte said. He further claimed that landfill excavation work was carried out departmentally by the AMC without floating any tender, raising concerns over transparency in the

execution process. Ralte also highlighted issues related to the Ward Development Fund, alleging that corporators did not receive their full allocation. Of the sanctioned Rs 68 lakh, only Rs 28 lakh was reportedly disbursed, leaving Rs 40

lakh unpaid, he said. The ZPM leader also criticised the handling of pig rearing within Aizawl city.

He alleged that the MNF-led AMC failed to implement its own plans and, instead of forming a dedicated committee, shifted responsibility to local councils. Despite repeated attempts, former MNF corporators and party leaders could not be contacted regarding the matter. He attributed the party's optimism to increasing support from politically neutral voters, who, he said, are drawn to the government's "Kalphungthar" or new system of governance and its developmental initiatives. "We are seeing support from people who are not politically aligned but are keen on progress. Many are backing the ZPM after witnessing the changes brought by the Kalphungthar government," he said, adding that the party could potentially win all seats, as it did in Lunglei.

MoU signed between Meghalaya Police & Royal Global University

Shillong, Apr 18: Reinforcing its commitment to nation-building through education, The Assam Royal Global University (RGU) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Meghalaya Police. The agreement was formalised at the Office of the Director General of Police in Shillong in the presence of officials from Meghalaya Police and RGU.

The MoU was signed by Idashisha Nongrang, DGP, Meghalaya, on behalf of the Meghalaya Police, and Dr. D.N. Singh, Registrar (Academics), representing RGU. Speaking on the occasion, Nongrang expressed optimism about the collaboration, stating that it would be fully leveraged to benefit the community and stands as a meaningful promise of support and opportunity. The DGP stated, "This MoU will benefit the wards of the Meghalaya police personnel. I'm sure that the vast choice of subjects and the vast number of schools that are in the Royal Global University, it is only fitting to have representatives from all over the country and abroad. It has also students from Meghalaya. I would just take this opportunity to encourage more students from Meghalaya to join the Royal Global University."

Nongrang expressed confidence that the collaboration would be effectively utilised to benefit the community, particularly the wards of Meghalaya Police personnel. She encouraged aspiring students to consider RGU, highlighting the university's rapid growth in recent years, its wide range of academic programmes, and its diverse student community from across the country and beyond.

This partnership paves the way for enhanced educational opportunities for the wards and dependents of police personnel from Meghalaya. Under this collaboration, RGU will introduce two dedicated scholarship categories — Royal Shaurya and Royal Suraksha — designed to provide quality higher education opportunities to eligible dependents and wards of defence personnel, including serving personnel, ex-servicemen, personnel with disabilities, and those who died in harness.

Four digital platforms launched in Manipur



Shillong, Apr 18: Chief Minister of Manipur, Yumnam Khemchand Singh launched four digital platforms today at the Cabinet Hall of Chief Minister’s Secretariat in Imphal. The platforms developed by the Department of Information Technology are aimed at improving governance and service delivery in the State.

The four portals are Centralised RTI State Portal, e-Seba Manipur, Explore Manipur and the AI-enabled Scheme Finder. These initiatives reflect the government’s commitment to leveraging digital technologies for transparency, efficiency and citizen-centric governance.

The Centralised RTI State Portal will enable citizens to file and track RTI applications online. The portal has been developed in line with the Supreme Court’s direction dated 20th March 2024 to operationalise online RTI systems. The portal will strengthen transparency and accountability across all departments. A total of 287 departments and administrative units have been integrated and 266 Public Information officers have already been onboarded.

e-Seba Manipur is a next-generation service delivery platform being developed to provide seamless and secure access to government services. It builds upon the earlier e-services platform, which delivered 35

services across districts and recorded over 34 lakh transactions. Key services from the Revenue Department and Employment Exchange, including certificates such as domicile, income, SC, ST and OBC, as well as employment-related services, have been integrated. The platform will ensure both online and assisted access, especially for citizens in remote areas.

Explore Manipur is a digital platform designed to help people discover and experience the State. It offers smart search, interactive maps and detailed information on tourism, religious sites, markets, transport and government services. The platform will support smart tourism and improve access to information for both citizens and visitors.

The AI-enabled Scheme Finder will help citizens easily identify government schemes relevant to the needs of the user. It analyses user inputs and recommends suitable central and state schemes. The initiative aligns with the broader vision of Digital India and AI for All and will improve awareness while ensuring that eligible beneficiaries can access government support.

These initiatives reflect the government’s continued focus on using technology for better governance, improved service delivery and citizen empowerment.

Women’s reservation bid falters as Constitutional Amendment bill falls short in Lok Sabha

Shillong, Apr 18: The Lok Sabha on Friday witnessed a dramatic defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, which had sought to expand the number of seats in the house and implement one-third reservation for women in legislatures beginning in 2029. After two days of heated debate, the Bill secured 298 votes in favour and 230 against, but still failed to cross the two-thirds majority threshold required for constitutional amendments. The Bill was ambitious in scope. It proposed increasing the Lok Sabha’s strength from 543 to 850 seats, a move tied to the long-delayed delimitation exercise that would redraw electoral boundaries based on population changes. Alongside this, it aimed to operationalise the 33 per cent quota for women in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies, a reform that had been promised but deferred until after the next delimitation. The government argued that the expansion and redistribution of seats was necessary to correct the imbalance between voters and representatives, a gap that has widened since the last delimitation froze boundaries based on the

1971 Census. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah both pressed the case for the Bill, warning that women across the country would closely watch the opposition’s stance. Shah accused the Congress of historically blocking delimitation and claimed that the party was once again depriving citizens of fair representation. He insisted that linking women’s reservation to delimitation was the only way to ensure equity in representation. However, opposition parties countered that the government was using the promise of women’s empowerment as a cover for a political manoeuvre that would benefit northern states with higher population growth at the expense of southern states, which have managed to stabilise their demographics. The defeat of the Bill also meant that two other related proposals -- the Delimitation Bill and the amendment to extend women’s quota to Union Territories -- would not be taken up. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju confirmed that the government would not move forward with

them after the setback. For many observers, the rejection underscored the deep political fault lines over how India should balance representation between regions while advancing gender equality in politics. The outcome leaves the future of women’s reservation uncertain. While the constitutional framework for the quota was laid down in 2023, its implementation was tied to delimitation, and with this defeat, the timeline has been pushed further into uncertainty. The episode highlights the difficulty of building consensus on reforms that touch both the structure of representation and the promise of gender justice. For the Modi government, the loss is a rare reversal in its legislative record, and for the opposition, it is a moment of triumph in resisting what they see as a politically loaded exercise. Yet for women aspiring to enter legislatures, the wait for guaranteed representation has once again been extended, leaving one of the most significant reforms of recent years in limbo.

Meghalaya approves the Greater Shillong Waste Management Agency proposal

Shillong, Apr 18: The Meghalaya Cabinet has approved the creation of a dedicated body to streamline waste management across the expanding urban region of Shillong, amid concerns over fragmented systems and uneven service delivery.

The proposed Greater Shillong Waste Management Agency will be registered as a society and is expected to coordinate waste collection and disposal across multiple jurisdictions that currently operate independently. Officials said the move is aimed at addressing “gaps in coordination and inefficiencies” that have affected the overall effectiveness of waste management in the city.

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said the decision comes in response to the pressures of rapid urbanisation and population growth. “With Shillong witnessing rapid growth and increasing urbanisation, waste collection and management are currently being handled by multiple agencies across different jurisdictions,” he noted, adding that this fragmentation has impacted efficiency. The agency will cover the Greater Shillong Planning Area, which spans around 288.5



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

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

Tipra Motha wins 20 of the 28 seats in the Tripura tribal council elections

Agartala, Apr 18: The Pradyot Debbarma-led Tipra Motha Party (TMP) on Friday registered a landslide victory in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) polls, winning 20 of the 28 seats, according to the State Election Commission (SEC). The second consecutive triumph for the party floated in 2020 by the former royal scion, with the demand for a ‘Greater Tripaland’, showed its dominance among the state’s tribal community. The BJP won three seats, while counting in five constituencies is underway, according to the SEC. The CPI(M) and Congress failed to win a single seat for the second straight time in the tribal council, which administers around 70 per cent of



the state’s geographical area and is home to nearly 15 lakh people. “Out of the results declared for 23 seats, the TMP won 20 while the BJP secured three. Counting in five seats is still underway,” said Bipul

Barman, officer on special duty in the State Election Commission. Debbarma said the victory has enhanced his party’s responsibility. “Love has won over hate. I urge those who have won to work

for the ‘dofa’ (community), the state and the country.

Ordinary people do extraordinary work. I appeal to everyone that for our ‘dofa’ and the next generation, there should be no violence in our

small state,” he said in a social media post. The BJP and the Tipra Motha are allies, but the two parties fought the elections on their own. Senior BJP leader and minister Ratan Lal Nath conceded defeat, saying, “I had said the scope was thin if electors voted under the influence of sentiment. BJP is the choice if people want to vote for development. Polling for 28 seats of the tribal council was held on April 12 and recorded a voter turnout of 83.50 per cent, higher than the 81 per cent registered in the 2021 elections. A total of 173 candidates were in the fray.

In the 2021 TTAADC elections, the TMP had won 18 seats with a vote share of 46.70 per cent. The BJP, with 29.30 per cent of the votes, had won nine seats.

Several injured as locals vandalise forest office over detention of ‘encroachers’



Guwahati, Apr 18: Several people, including forest personnel, were injured after a mob went on a rampage at Runikhata range office in Assam’s Chirang district on Friday following the detention of a few locals over alleged encroachment of reserved forest land, officials said.

The mob ransacked the forest range office and torched government vehicles inside the premises, located close to the Bhutan border, they said.

The situation was brought under control after senior police officers went to the spot and additional security forces were deployed, with police resorting to lathi-charge to disperse the mob.

“Some people were detained by the forest personnel yesterday, and after an inquiry, they were allowed to go. However, an agitated crowd gathered this morning and threw stones at the personnel and the forest office. They also torched some vehicles,” a senior police official said.

“Additional security forces were called in. The situation is under control now,” he said.

He said four to five forest and police personnel were injured, while there were reports that some of the protestors also sustained injuries, though the exact number was not known yet.

Another official said the assessment of damage caused to the forest office and vehicles is being processed.

On claims that weapons and ammunition from the forest office were looted, he said,

“We have to look into all allegations.”

A forest personnel told reporters that a few of his colleagues were injured in the mayhem.

“The mob vandalised the forest office and residential quarters and torched vehicles on the premises,” he said.

Tensions had erupted after forest personnel detained some locals on Thursday over alleged illegal cutting and clearing of forest land in the Ripu Chirang Reserve Forest, which falls under Sikhna Jwhlwao National Park along the India-Bhutan border in Chirang district, an official said.

While a mob had gheraoed the forest office on Thursday night, demanding the unconditional release of the detained persons, it dispersed without violence.

However, a mob armed with sticks and other similar weapons gathered on Friday morning and went on a rampage, alleging that the forest personnel had assaulted them the previous day, including injuring two women protestors. Locals have demanded action against the forest personnel involved in the alleged assault and raised slogans. They also blocked the road for some time by burning furniture from the forest office and placing stones. A senior police officer urged the protestors to submit their complaints against forest personnel to the administration. Requesting them to clear the area, he said, “Give the local administration time to probe into your allegations. Blocking the road and damaging government property are no solutions.”

Tripura tribal council elections are scheduled for today

Agartala, Apr 18: Counting of votes for the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections will be held across eight districts on Friday under tight security arrangements, an official said. In this election, the Pradyot Debbarma-led Tipra Motha Party is looking to return to power in the council that governs nearly 70 per cent of Tripura’s geographical area, home to around 14 lakh of the state’s about 40 lakh population.

The BJP, which is an ally of TMP, fought this election on its own. It is seeking to wrest power, while the CPI(M)-led Left Front is aiming to regain control of the council after losing it in 2021 following decades in office. Polling for 28 seats of the 30-member tribal council was held on April 12 and recorded a voter turnout of 83.50 per cent, higher than the 81 per cent registered in the 2021 elections. Two members are nominated by the governor. “We have taken all necessary steps to ensure smooth counting at 17 locations across the state. Required instructions have been issued to all Returning Officers,” State Election Commission Secretary Anurag Sen told PTI. He said counting will begin at 8



am and is expected to conclude by early afternoon. “A prohibitory order under Section 163 of the BNS has been imposed in and around counting centres to maintain law and order. Foolproof

security arrangements have been put in place,” from BJP, TMP, CPI(M) and Congress, are in the fray. In the 2021 TTAADC elections, the TMP secured.

State Urges CBSE to Add Khasi and Garo as Language Options

Shillong, Apr 18: Education Minister of Meghalaya Lakhmen Rymbui urged the Centre to include Khasi and Garo languages in the Central Board of Secondary Education language options, particularly under the three-language formula.

In a letter to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Rymbui highlighted that a large number of students in CBSE-affiliated schools across Meghalaya belong to tribal communities where Khasi and Garo are widely spoken and form the foundation of early learning and daily communication. For many children, these languages are their primary medium of understanding and expression. He noted that Khasi and Garo, recently recognised as official languages of Meghalaya alongside English, are not currently included under the CBSE’s R1, R2, or R3 language categories. This creates challenges for students, who are required to choose a third language that may be unfamiliar at an early stage, potentially affecting their comprehension and learning outcomes.

The minister also pointed out that the Meghalaya government has made Khasi and Garo compulsory from preschool to Class 1 in all schools, including CBSE-affiliated institutions. Many schools in the state, including central and Eklavya schools, follow the CBSE curriculum.

Rymbui raised concerns about the administrative and human resource implications, stating that many teachers are currently engaged in teaching Khasi and Garo. Without formal recognition under CBSE, their roles may face uncertainty, affecting their professional stability. He further warned that schools, especially in rural and remote areas, may struggle to recruit qualified teachers for alternative languages within a short timeframe, potentially creating implementation gaps and putting additional pressure on limited educational resources. Referring to the National Education Policy 2020, the minister emphasised the importance of mother tongue and local languages in early education to improve learning outcomes and ensure holistic development. He said that including Khasi and Garo would align with the policy’s objectives.

Rymbui added that their inclusion would support students, address practical challenges for schools, safeguard teachers’ roles, and help preserve Meghalaya’s linguistic heritage. He also noted that other northeastern languages like Mizo and Tangkhul are already included in CBSE despite having smaller speaker populations.

The letter was submitted to the Union Minister through Rahul Singh amid the ongoing Parliament session.

Mizoram Minister Meets CYMA Leaders Amid Surge

Aizawl, Apr 18: Mizoram Tourism Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar on Friday held a meeting with leaders of the Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) to discuss strategies for managing the increasing number of tourists visiting the state. During the meeting, Hmar described the rise in tourist arrivals as beneficial for Mizoram’s economy and visibility but cautioned that unregulated tourism could affect local culture and traditions. He attributed the surge to improved connectivity, particularly the expansion of railway access to Sairang since September last year. Officials noted that over 8 lakh tourists visited the state last year, with higher numbers expected in 2026.

The minister stated that tourism has the potential to become a major industry in Mizoram if developed in a structured manner. He emphasized the need to balance hospitality with the preservation of local customs. The government has already initiated consultations with the Council of Churches in Mizoram (CCM) and the Presbyterian Church, and plans to engage with additional civil society organisations. CYMA President R. Lalngheta raised concerns regarding instances of tourist behaviour that may conflict with local norms. He proposed the introduction of clear guidelines outlining acceptable conduct for visitors, along with awareness campaigns targeting both tourists and residents.

‘Black Day’ for Indian democracy: Tripura CM after Constitution Amendment Bill defeated in LS

Agartala, Apr 18: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has claimed that the failure to pass the constitutional amendment bill in the Lok Sabha reveals the opposition parties’ anti-women mentality, and it was a ‘Black Day’ for Indian democracy.

Saha’s statement came after the Constitution Amendment Bill to implement 33 per cent reservation for women in legislatures in 2029 and increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816 was defeated.

“Black Day for Indian democracy, opposition’s anti-women mindset exposed. The failure to pass the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill-2026 in Lok Sabha reveals the Congress, TMC, DMK, SP, and INDIA alliance’s deep-seated anti-women mentality,” he said.

“This is a dark chapter in our democracy. It’s not just a bill’s defeat, it’s the shattering of millions of sisters’ trust in a brighter future. While we envision ‘Nari Shakti’ empowerment, the opposition’s narrow mindset has erected a wall on their path.

Illegal Army CSD Liquor Smuggling Network Unearthed in Assam

Guwahati, Apr 18: A massive consignment of liquor of around 150 cases, originally intended for sale through CSD outlets catering to Army personnel, was seized during an attempted smuggling operation at the Canteen Stores Depot near Misamari railway station in Assam on Friday. The joint operation, carried out by Assam Police, the Tezpur-based Gajraj Intelligence Unit, and local Army authorities, exposed a well-coordinated effort to divert restricted supplies into unauthorized channels. Acting on precise intelligence, the team intercepted the consignment while being moved out of the depot premises. The seizure highlights ongoing vigilance and strong inter-agency coordination to curb illegal activities and safeguard the integrity of military supply chains. FIR in this regard has been registered at the Misamari Police Station.

MNF Alleges Mizoram Govt Delaying CBI Probe in ₹187.90 Cr Lengpui Land Scam

Aizawl, Apr 18: On April 17, the state government led by the Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) was accused by Mizoram’s main opposition party, the Mizo National Front (MNF), of having no real intention of pursuing a CBI inquiry into the purported Rs 187.90 crore Lengpui land fraud.

Lalpiangfela Chawngthu, vice-chairman of the MNF legal board, stated during a news conference in Aizawl that the government has not taken any significant action since releasing a notification granting general assent for a CBI investigation. “The government hasn’t done anything significant. He claimed, “It appears they have neither the will nor the intention to continue a CBI investigation.” The government has not taken any meaningful action. It seems they neither plan to pursue a CBI inquiry nor have the resolve to do so,” he alleged.

He explained that simply granting consent does not automatically set a CBI investigation in motion. For the probe to begin, the state must submit a formal complaint along with a request to the CBI director — a step he claims has not yet been taken. Chawngthu also disclosed that MNF representatives had sought a meeting with the chief secretary last month to assess progress on the matter,

but were instead referred to the vigilance department.

After meeting the vigilance secretary and requesting key documents — including the consent notification — the party has yet to receive them despite assurances, he said. The controversy centres on land near Lengpui airport, located approximately 32 kilometres from Aizawl, which was acquired by the Indian Air Force for an airstrip.

Opposition parties allege serious irregularities in the compensation process, claiming that a large share of the funds was paid to individuals who were not the original landowners, while legitimate claimants received minimal compensation. Both the MNF and Congress have filed separate complaints demanding a CBI probe into the matter. They have also raised concerns about questionable financial transactions and the speed at which the compensation process was carried out — issues that have been highlighted in recent media reports. The ZPM government maintains that it has already granted the necessary consent for a CBI investigation in response to opposition complaints.

The MNF, however, argues that without a formal request and supporting documentation being submitted to the CBI,

• *The Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) government in Mizoram has been accused by the opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) of lacking genuine intent to pursue a CBI inquiry into the Rs 187.90 crore Lengpui land fraud.*

• *MNF vice-chairman Lalpiangfela Chawngthu claimed the government has taken no substantial action since consenting to a CBI investigation.*

• *MNF representatives sought a meeting with the chief secretary regarding the investigation’s progress but were referred to the vigilance department.*

• *Despite assurances, the MNF has not received key documents, including the consent notification.*

• *The controversy involves land acquired near Lengpui airport, with allegations of irregularities in the compensation process, including payments to non-original landowners.*

• *Both MNF and Congress have filed complaints demanding a CBI probe, questioning financial transactions and the compensation process’s rapid pace.*

the probe cannot move forward — making the government’s consent a hollow gesture, in their view.

Indian Army conducts flood relief exercise

Guwahati, Apr 18: The Red Horns Division of Army’s Gajraj Corps conducted a joint flood relief exercise -- Jal Rahat -- at IIT, Guwahati demonstrating inter agency coordination and disaster preparedness by flood relief columns of Army, NDRF, SDRF and SSB.

The exercise showcased modalities for conducting flood relief operations, role of various agencies, use of high-end technology and innovative means for conduct of rescue operations during floods.

Exercise Jal Rahat was conceptualised and designed with an aim to enhance response capability in the event of severe flooding. A specialist team from Indian Army, supported by other State agencies depicted

rescue missions incorporating and simulating actual scenarios, employment of drones for surveillance and logistic outreach of stranded villagers and evacuation of drowning individuals. Apart from this specialist teams of Army, NDRF and SDRF showcased their skills in deep water rescue operations. It effectively exercised all stakeholders in relief operations in an effectively synchronised manner showcasing inter agency synergy and interoperability at challenging times of natural calamities.

The exercise was witnessed by General Officer Commanding, Gajraj Corps, senior officials from Army, State administration, SSB, CAPFs and disaster

relief organisations and others, including cadets from NCC and NSS, and students from various schools and colleges of Guwahati.

The operational readiness of flood relief columns was overseen by Lt Gen Neeraj Shukla, General Officer Commanding of Gajraj Corps. He also addressed the august gathering and exhorted all ranks of Army, SSB, NDRF, SDRF and NCC cadets for adopting whole of society approach for nation-building by following the mantra of four ‘Ps’ – “PREDICT, PREPARE, PROTECT AND PROVIDE, thus leading to, further strengthening the interoperability and inter agency synergy.

Women’s Reservation Essential in Nagaland: MLA Hekani Jakhalu

Kohima, Apr 18: Hekani Jakhalu, MLA and Advisor for Industries & Commerce in Nagaland, has said that women’s reservation in legislatures is “very needed,” asserting that the state is gradually moving beyond patriarchal barriers with more women entering frontline politics.

Referring to the proposed 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies, she noted that Nagaland has already implemented 33% reservation in urban local bodies (ULBs), which has helped bring forward many capable women leaders.

Although Jakhalu herself was elected without any quota, she emphasised that reservation remains important to

expand women’s participation in politics. She also mentioned that her party had supported both her and fellow minister Salhoutouno Kruse even before reservation provisions, while reiterating her personal support for the policy.

Addressing concerns about the feasibility of such reservation in a traditionally patriarchal society, Jakhalu dismissed them as a “misconception.” She said recent electoral successes demonstrate that societal attitudes are changing.

“Our menfolk—husbands, fathers, brothers and supporters—were in the forefront to make us win,” she stated, adding that patriarchy is now an out-

dated concept that “will not work in Nagaland anymore.”

Jakhalu asserted that reservation would create more opportunities for women to participate in governance and policymaking.

Citing ULB elections, she highlighted that women secured nearly 37% of seats—exceeding the mandated 33%—with several candidates winning even without reservation.

She further said that the Assembly victories of herself and Kruse have “broken the glass ceiling,” transforming both women’s self-confidence and societal perceptions. “If given a chance, they will perform much better than many other men,” she added.

Ukhrul Attack Leaves Two Dead; Kuki-Zo Council Denies Involvement



• *The attack occurred on Saturday afternoon, shortly after Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh reopened the Ukhrul highway.*

Imphal, Apr 18: A soldier of the Naga Regiment and a civilian were killed in a deadly ambush by suspected militants in Ukhrul district on Saturday afternoon, raising fresh concerns over security in the hill district.

The incident occurred barely a day after Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh visited the region and formally reopened the Ukhrul highway, a move aimed at restoring normalcy.

According to reports, the attack took place around 2:30 PM at TM Khasom under Litan police station. Suspected militants allegedly laid an ambush targeting vehicles travelling along the route, damaging at least five to six vehicles in the process.

The deceased soldier has been identified as 46-year-old SW Chinaoshang, a resident of Tashar village in Ukhrul district. The civilian victim was identified as Yaruingam Vashum of Kharasom village. Both belonged to the Tangkhul Naga community.

Sources said the victims were travelling from Imphal to Ukhrul when the militants opened fire. The incident is being seen as a major setback to ongoing efforts by the government to restore peace and ensure safe movement

along highways in the state.

Meanwhile, the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) issued a clarification denying any involvement of Kuki-Zo individuals or groups in the incident. In a statement, the council expressed concern over media reports linking Kuki militants to the attack and categorically rejected such claims.

The KZC stated that, based on ground-level inputs, the incident appears to be linked to tensions among certain factional groups rather than any Kuki-Zo organisation. It termed the attribution of blame without proper verification as “deeply regrettable.”

The council also alleged that such accusations have become a recurring pattern in Manipur whenever incidents involve Meitei or Naga communities, adding that it unfairly portrays the Kuki-Zo community in a negative light.

Urging restraint, the KZC called on social media users, media houses, civil society groups, and authorities to verify facts before making or publishing allegations against any community. It reiterated that the Kuki-Zo people have no role in the incident and appealed to all concerned to refrain from spreading misinformation.

The attack and subsequent developments highlight the fragile security situation in Manipur, even as efforts continue to restore peace and normalcy in the region.

MBSE To Declare Mizoram Board Results In April; Dates Not Finalised

Aizawl, Apr 18: The Mizoram Board of School Education (MBSE) will declare the results of the Class 10 and 12 board examinations this month, an official said. MBSE Chairman JH Zoremthanga said that the board examination results will be published at the earliest convenience within April, and the exact dates are yet to be finalised. He said the examination committee

will soon meet to decide the dates for the publication of the Class 10 and 12 results. “We are planning to declare the Class 10 and 12 board examination results within April.

We will soon convene a meeting of the examination committee to finalise the dates,” he told reporters. Earlier, School Education Minister Vanlalhlana had announced that the MBSE

will cease following the traditional method of declaring Class 10 and 12 results with merit lists (Top 10), ranks, distinctions, and divisions in the result books from the current year. The move is aimed at preventing high-stakes competition among students driven by rote memorisation and ensuring quality, competency-based education, he had said. Last year, 76.68 per cent of stu-

dents who appeared for the Class 10 board examination successfully cleared it, with the majority passing in the second division, while the Class 12 board examination recorded an 81.10 per cent pass rate.

He said that the results can be viewed offline at the MBSE office in Aizawl’s Chaltlang as well online on the websites mbse.edu.in and mbseonline.com. The

chairman also said that the MBSE will also announce class-12 board exam results within this month. This year, the HSLC (Class-10) exams were held from February 26 to March 15. Last year, 71.14 per cent of over 18,000 students cleared class-10 board examinations and boys outshone girls by securing a 71.99 pass percentage against girls’ 70.40 per cent. The notification said due

to Covid19 situation in the state, the results would not be displayed in the premises of the board’s office. The MBSE conducted the Class 12 examinations offline for various streams in April this year following strict COVID19 protocols. A total of 11,849 students appeared in the examinations, according to the board controller of examinations, Lalrinmawia Ralte.

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Tourism Without Sustainability

Tourism is often promoted as a driver of economic growth, especially in regions rich in natural beauty. However, unregulated tourism can place immense pressure on local ecosystems and communities. Overcrowding, waste generation, and strain on resources such as water and electricity are common consequences. Popular destinations risk losing the very charm that attracts visitors in the first place. Local communities, while benefiting economically, also bear the environmental and social costs. Without proper planning, tourism can become more exploitative than beneficial. Sustainable tourism practices—regulated visitor numbers, eco-friendly infrastructure, and community involvement—are essential. Growth must not come at the expense of preservation.

Secure cooking fuel for Bhasan Char residents urgently

It is disheartening to learn that Rohingya refugees living in the camps of Bhasan Char are struggling due to an LPG shortage. According to a report in this daily, with the supply of LPG cylinders halted because of a fund crunch, residents of the island are forced to cut down trees to harvest firewood for cooking. This has been going on for months as LPG supply began to dwindle in August last year. Since then, more than 250,000 trees have reportedly been cut down. The consequence of this LPG shortage and the resultant tree felling is two-pronged. Not only are the Rohingya refugees being deprived of reliable cooking fuel, but the chopping down of trees at such a large scale is also causing rapid deforestation in an already environmentally vulnerable area. Being a coastal area, it is the vegetation that keeps Bhasan Char safe from the dangerous impact of cyclones, storm surges, and erosion. While the Rohingya—around 34,000 of them—living on the 40 sq-km island have little choice but to adapt to the fuel shortage this way, it is the authorities’ lack of action to prevent this crisis that disappoints us the most. The Islamic Relief Bangladesh, a local subsidiary of a US-based NPO by the same name, has been supplying 8,000 Rohingya families with a 12kg LPG cylinder each on a regular basis since 2020. However, due to the US president’s slashing of foreign aid last year, the supply of LPG cylinders to the island took a hit in August last year. Over the following months, this supply slowed and then halved against a requirement of 5,000 cylinders per month. No solution has yet been found despite repeated correspondence from the Bhasan Char and Cox’s Bazar offices of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) and the NGO Affairs Bureau. More concerning, there is apparently no government fund to ensure an uninterrupted supply of LPG to Bhasan Char. We find it unacceptable that a project like Bhasan Char, which has been planned extensively, should be deprived of an item as essential as cooking fuel for so many months. We urge the government to take note of this urgent matter and work with funding organisations to find a lasting solution. Planning for this island also involved massive afforestation efforts. That must not be undone as it would make the island population even more vulnerable than they already are.

China launches the “Arctic Express” route; Indian maritime routes must be pushed

Ningbo-Zhoushan Port in Zhejiang Province of China launched the world’s first China-Europe Arctic Express in September, achieving the “Polar Silk Road” vision with a record 18-day transit. The container vessel “Istanbul Bridge” set off from Beiyi Container Terminal on its maiden voyage to Felixstowe, the largest container port in the United Kingdom. This new route significantly reduces shipping times between China and Europe. Transit took just 18 days, compared to over 25 days by the China-Europe Railway Express, more than 40 days via the Suez Canal and over 50 days around the Cape of Good Hope. This improvement speeds up supply chains, cuts business inventory needs by 40 per cent and lowers capital costs. Also, the Arctic Express provides a safer and more stable route, passing through politically and economically secure areas, which minimises risks from piracy, congestion and regional conflicts, as well as reducing carbon emissions by approximately 50 per cent compared to traditional longer routes. Major sea trade routes include the Suez Canal (Asia-Europe), Panama Canal (Asia-the US), Strait of Malacca (intra-Asia), and the English Channel (Europe-the UK). Other key routes involve the Strait of Hormuz for oil transport, the North Atlantic route for Europe-North America trade, and the Trans-Pacific route connecting Asia and North America. The Suez Canal connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, providing the shortest trade route between Europe and Asia. It accounts for a significant portion of global trade, including oil, gas and containers. The Panama Canal links the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, allowing ships to travel between Asia and the eastern coast of the United States without sailing around South America. The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea, is critical for the transport of oil from the Middle East to Asia. The Cape of Good Hope is an alternative route around the southern tip of Africa used when canals are inaccessible due to war or blockage. The Strait of Malacca is a crucial link between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, connecting major Asian economies like China, Japan and India, and is considered a major chokepoint for intra-Asia trade. The North Atlantic Route is the busiest sea route in the world, connecting the industrial ports of Western Europe with the East Coast of North America. The English Channel is one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes, connecting the North Sea to the Atlantic Ocean and serving as a vital route between the UK and continental Europe. The Danish Straits connect the Baltic Sea to the North Sea, facilitating trade in Northern Europe. The Strait of Gibraltar connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea, separating Europe and Africa. The Bosphorus Strait connects the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara, a key route for Russia and other Black Sea nations. With melting polar ice, Arctic routes are becoming a viable, shorter option for trade, potentially reducing transit times and costs. The Trans-Pacific Route connects the manufacturing centres of East Asia (especially China) with the West Coast of North America, primarily the United States. It is a critical trade corridor for the movement of electronics, vehicles and other goods. Major Sea Trade Choke Points Major sea trade choke points include the Strait of

Hormuz, Strait of Malacca, Suez Canal and Panama Canal, along with others like the Bab el-Mandeb Strait (connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden), and the Turkish Straits. These narrow, strategic waterways are critical for global commerce as they connect larger bodies of water, but their limited capacity can cause major disruptions to trade if blocked or restricted. The Arctic Region The Arctic region covers over one-sixth of the Earth’s land-mass, and is set to play an increasing role in shaping the course of world affairs. The still less-explored region is rich in exploitable natural resources, especially gas and oil, and marine living resources. It is estimated that the Arctic could be home to nearly 20 per cent of the world’s oil and natural gas. The Arctic Ocean, around Earth’s North Pole, is full of floating ice, with ridges up to 20 metres thick. Global industrialisation has raised temperatures because of increased carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, the glaciers are rapidly melting. The minimum Arctic sea ice extent in 2024 was 4.28 million square kilometres, which is around 1.8 million square kilometres lower than the long-term average. The Arctic sea ice reduction has been at a rate of almost 13 per cent per decade. At this rate, the Arctic could be ice-free in the summer by 2040. The Arctic Council Unlike Antarctica, which is uninhabited and administered by a treaty of 1959 that allows only peaceful activities, there is no such treaty covering the Arctic. The Arctic Council was set up in 1996 by the Ottawa Declaration. It is a grouping that looks into issues faced by the Arctic countries and the residents of the Arctic. The United States, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia are the eight countries having territory within the Arctic Circle. All are members of this council. The council provides for countries with observer status. In 2011, the Council clarified its criteria for admission of observers. The critical requirement was that the applicants must “recognise Arctic States’ sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic” and recognise that an extensive legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean. The Himalayas are often considered the ‘Third Pole’, with commonality of elements with the Arctic and Antarctic. It was important for India to have a foothold in all three. In May 2013, India became the 11th country to be made a permanent observer at the Arctic Council. Militarisation and the Arctic Cold War Both Russia and the United States have for long placed weapons, including Russian nuclear deterrence, in the Arctic region. Both have Arctic military bases and have placed significant surveillance systems in the region. Effectively, the Arctic is already militarised. Russia has been operating nuclear-powered icebreakers in the Arctic for some time. The Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (Amec) agreement between Russia, the US and Norway helped clear the Arctic of hazardous waste, including from former Soviet decommissioned nuclear submarines. The US also reduced the assets based in Alaska, but the programme ended in 2006 when the USA stopped funding it. Yet control over the Arctic by many countries, especially the US and Russia, has begun a new Cold War. With the West and Russia drawn into a fresh showdown over Ukraine since 2014, the once-cooperative approach has started breaking

down. Arctic Sea Routes There are three main routes. The Northern Sea Route (NSR) runs along the Arctic coast of Russia. Ice clears here first and therefore is available for a longer duration. It also has the highest commercial potential. The route reduces the maritime distance between East Asia and Europe from 21,000 km via the Suez Canal to 12,800 km. It implies transit time savings of 10-15 days. The NSR was used extensively for natural resource extraction and transportation during the Soviet era. It was also used for military resupplies. In 2009, two German ships, led by a Russian icebreaker, made the first commercial journey across the NSR from Busan in South Korea to Rotterdam in the Netherlands, establishing good commercial prospects. The North West Passage (NWP), the sea route between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans crossing Canada’s Arctic Archipelago, began being used first in 2007. It may open for more regular use soon. While Canada claims it as an internal waterway, the United States and various European countries claim that it is an international strait and transit passage, and must allow free and unencumbered movement. This route between East Asia and Western Europe would be around 13,600 km vis-à-vis 24,000 km via the Panama Canal. But parts of the route are just 15 metres (49 ft) deep, thus reducing viability. But China still seems interested in using this passage to the eastern US, as the Panama Canal also has ship size and tonnage restrictions. The Transpolar Sea Route (TSR) would use the central part of the Arctic to link the Strait of Bering directly with the Atlantic Ocean port of Murmansk. This route is hypothetical as it involves ice-free conditions that are not yet observed. The Arctic Bridge linking Murmansk port in Russia to Narvik in Norway and further to Churchill port in Canada is mostly used for the grain trade. Typically, it cannot be called a trans-Arctic route. China and ‘Near-Arctic’ Claim As China grew into a significant power, it has been showing interest in the Arctic region. It has been building military and other capabilities to defend its interests in the region and has an aggressive Arctic policy. Denmark, backed by the US, refused China, which had offered to buy an old military base in Greenland and build an international airport. China’s Arctic forays are being monitored and challenged by the US. Since the 19th century, the United States has considered, and made, several attempts to purchase the island of Greenland from Denmark, as it did with the Danish West Indies in 1917, the last being President Trump’s announcement to annex it in May 2025. China released its official Arctic Policy paper in January 2018. It covers foreign relations with Arctic countries. China has interests in the Arctic to create infrastructure for research, military and other purposes. It wants to exploit resources. It is establishing a “Polar Silk Road” through the Arctic to help expedite global shipping delivery. China considers itself a “Near-Arctic State” and a major stakeholder in the Arctic. As far back as 1925, China became a signatory of Spitsbergen, later called the Svalbard Treaty. The treaty allows members to engage in a certain amount of mining while recognising Norway’s sovereignty. China has set up a Polar Research Institute in Shanghai. It began Arctic expeditions in 1984. In 1996, China joined the International Arctic Science Committee. It

has a series of research vessels, including the Chinese polar icebreakers MV Xue Long. China built the Arctic Yellow River Station in 2004. In 2018, Shanghai-based Cosco Shipping Corporation Limited made eight transits through the Arctic between Europe and China. China insists that its one-fifth share of the world’s population must benefit from Arctic resources. China spends more than the US on Arctic research. China’s “Polar Silk Road” is a joint initiative with Russia and was launched in 2018. Like Russia, China also wants to have nuclear-powered icebreakers in the Arctic, becoming only the second country to do so. Indian Arctic Presence and Interests India has had a permanent Arctic research station in Svalbard, Norway, since July 2008. Named “Himadri”, it is located within the International Arctic Research Base, nearly 1,200 kilometres from the North Pole. The research is centred on monitoring fjord dynamics, glaciers, space weather and carbon recycling, among many other areas. India is also looking at genetics, glaciology, geology, pollution in the atmosphere and space weather, among other fields. In 2014, India also established an underwater moored observatory, “IndARC”, at Kongsfjorden fjord, Svalbard. Svalbard is the northernmost year-round settlement on Earth, with a population of about 2,200. The scientific purpose is to find linkages between Arctic weather parameters and the south-west monsoon. It would also like to be part of the economic exploitation. India’s ONGC Videsh has been interested in investing in Russia’s Arctic liquefied natural gas projects. India released its Arctic policy in March 2022. It was titled “India and the Arctic: Building a Partnership for Sustainable Development”. The policy enumerated India’s interests in scientific research, climate and environmental issues, economic and resource prospects, sea connectivity, and maintaining India’s presence in the region. India is also looking at the Arctic sea lanes for improving connectivity to certain northern destinations. India also plans to connect with the Arctic sea routes using the already planned International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multi-mode network of ship, rail and road routes. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (Imec) is a project to create a network of infrastructure to improve trade between India, West Asia and Europe. Other routes under consideration include those via Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Another option being explored is to establish a Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor to reach closer to the Arctic. India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor The Imec is a multi-modal connectivity initiative to link India, the Middle East and Europe through ports, railways, roads, pipelines, sea lanes and digital infrastructure. Launched in 2023, it is a partnership between India, the US, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, France, Germany, Italy and the European Union. Other countries involved in the northern corridor include Jordan and Israel. The project includes two corridors—an eastern corridor connecting India to the Arabian Gulf, and a northern corridor connecting the Gulf to Europe—and aims to enhance trade, reduce transit times and promote clean energy. The project aims to build upon the existing, robust bilateral trade between India and the European Union (EU), which reached \$136 billion in 2024.

‘We still hope a solution on the reforms will arise out of parliament’

I think the current government has ruined all possibilities for reform, but we still hope that a solution will arise out of parliament. We are talking about waging a movement, but for how much longer will people sacrifice their lives? It would not be responsible behaviour on our part as politicians to keep asking people to take to the streets. We are not regular lawmakers going to parliament to simply talk about roads and culverts. This parliament is a legacy of the July uprising. If we cannot come to a consensus about the reforms in parliament, we will have to wage a movement outside the House. It will be a political movement, and we hope that those who voted “Yes” in the referendum will join us, because they want to see their vote implemented. I believe they, particularly the youth, are disappointed because their vote has not been upheld. We are walking out only temporarily, and we don’t plan on walking out for good, given that the commitment to implement

the July charter is upheld. The Constitutional Amendment Committee will be a ruse, set up only to implement the ruling party’s agenda. Our experience at the special parliamentary committee created to analyse the interim-era ordinances was not very pleasant. Three members from the opposition bench were in that committee, but their voices were trampled, and crucial ordinances were either repealed or allowed to lapse. The proposal for a Constitutional Amendment Committee has a fundamental flaw. A committee of a few individuals lacks the mandate to decide on the major reforms we demand. I don’t know why they are doing this. These debates took place during the sessions of the National Consensus Commission, and we came to an agreement. I thought we had agreed on the need for a new constitution, to be decided by parliament, and that the parliament must be empowered to make those decisions, because otherwise, it can be challenged and scrapped by

the courts, like the caretaker government system. Even parties currently allied with the BNP had suggested a body to deliberate on constitutional changes during the consensus commission sessions; the BNP then requested a referendum. They, too, asked people to vote “Yes” in the referendum during their election campaigns; the chairperson of the party himself did that. Current parliamentary rules restrict the opposition’s power. Since bills pass with a simple majority, the opposition cannot block legislation. Its role is limited to shaping public opinion and convincing the populace. The government can either respond to these arguments or ignore them and face potential political consequences. We tried talking to BNP lawmakers about the ordinances on enforced disappearance and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), but Article 70 prevents members from voting against their party. The law minister challenged the legitimacy of the ordinances on enforced disappearance,

the NHRC, and judicial independence by picking apart certain clauses. Did the opposition present an adequate rebuttal? I think we tried our best. But the parliament is making decisions by browbeating the opposition. The decisions were already made prior to entering parliament, and the arguments presented by the treasury bench are simply being done for the sake of maintaining the semblance of a debate. The current law minister, who is a former attorney general, knows all the doors and windows of the ordinances, and because he knows them, he is closing them for us. The optics of it look like the ruling party does not care about establishing a system of checks and balances. They want undeterred power, not accountability. We have not taken any such policy after entering this alliance that is different from our ideology. We are still upholding the “centrist” political ideology we pledged to do. Our alliance with the right revolves around common objectives surrounding reforms, and we

are also in conversation with a few other political parties not in the alliance concerning these. Just because we are in an alliance does not mean we are on the same page on all issues. We are a separate party. We have a lot of ideological differences, and this will not be the last time we will vote differently from them. That’s why we believe in floor crossing—so that a lawmaker can vote against their own party. Every party wants to flourish on its own. Parties build alliances when faced with political realities. Our alliance has a party which has more seats than us, whose organisational distribution is stronger. We are often seen in the same “framing” as them. This is a challenge when building our identity. It allows others to spread propaganda about us. If we had participated in the election alone, we would probably have a stronger grassroots network nationally. But we stand by our decision to enter the electoral alliance, and this realisation became even stronger after the elec-

tion. I don’t think this alliance should be seen through the lens of a gender divide. A lot of men were also against this alliance. Similarly, a lot of women sided with our decision. They contested the election with the NCP ticket. The female politicians who left NCP were not in decision-making positions as women or because they were women. They were our top brass and I don’t think we can assume that they dissented because they are women. The more common opinion among the dissenters was that since NCP is a new party, it would be better for us to contest the election on our own. There may be some isolated opinions. However, the majority of the party believed that it was far more important to get a seat in parliament. As of yet, we are thinking of contesting the local government elections alone. We have given the nod to five candidates for the upcoming city corporation elections, and they are already in the field. But we believe in grassroots leadership, and since the

party symbol will not be a factor in local government elections, there are sometimes alliances at the local level. We want to support the candidates. All of the traditional political parties in Nepal became unpopular at some point. In Bangladesh, popular traditional political parties supported the movement, and they have their own vote banks. We had to wage a cold war with the traditional parties. But after some self-reflection, I believe that right after the uprising, we spent more time fighting for reforms instead of building our own party. The fact that more than 60 percent of the voters voted “Yes” in the referendum is the outcome of our movement. As a result, we contested the election almost unprepared. Our group has consistently acted during such crises, and we have addressed this issue publicly. We maintained a firm stance on all incidents, including the attacks on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, even during the interim government. But even after all that,

there is an attempt to smear the NCP. To prevent mob violence, you must accurately identify the root causes of the mob’s actions, rather than just involving any group. The responsibility for stopping the “mob” lies with the law enforcement agencies. This is entirely a law enforcement issue. Yes, after any uprising or revolution, the law enforcement agencies are very lax. From our side, since August 5, 2024, we have played a responsible role. We told everyone to go home; we told everyone to guard the temples; we warned people against taking the law into their own hands. After the uprising, whether it was traffic management or activating the police stations, the students did it all. Taking advantage of this, many opportunists from various interest groups have used the name of the student masses to implement their agendas. We have never indulged them; we are always against it. However, we have always said that legitimate protests should not be called mobs.

Domestic LPG supply normal, 4.58 lakh new PNG connections gasified

New Delhi: Supply of LPG to domestic households remains normal against online bookings, which have increased to 98 per cent, and no dry-outs have been reported at distributorships despite the supply being affected due to the prevailing geopolitical situation, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said on Thursday.The government has ensured that 100 per cent supply is being made to domestic LPG, domestic

PNG, and CNG for vehicles, the ministry said in a statement.Deliveries based on the Authentication Code (DAC) received on the registered mobile number of the consumer have increased to around 92 per cent, which is preventing diversion at the distributor level, it said.About 4.58 lakh PNG connections have been gasified, and about 5.1 lakh additional customers have registered for new connections since March this

year.Till April 15, about 35,000 PNG consumers have surrendered their LPG connections via MYPNGD.in website. States have been advised to facilitate new PNG connections for domestic and commercial consumers. For commercial LPG, priority has been given to hospitals and educational institutions. Besides this, priority has also been given to pharma, steel, automobile, seed and agriculture. In addition to this, the

supply of 5 kg LPG cylinders to migrant labour is also doubled based on the average daily supply on March 2 and 3.

Citizens are advised to avoid panic purchase of petrol, diesel, and LPG as the government is making all efforts to ensure availability of petrol, diesel and LPG. Beware of rumours and rely on official sources for correct information, the ministry said.

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

New Delhi: International Airport will scale up. “Multiple disruptions through FY26, including Middle East-related softness, weighed on airport traffic,” Jefferies said. “The business is currently operating in a weak industry environment, with depressed margins weighing on near term profitability,” Jefferies says. The brokerage expects improvement only as utilisation levels rise and raw material sourcing becomes more stable, supported by recent agreements for long term concentrate supply.Even so, the brokerage sees some support from non aeronautical revenue streams such as retail, cargo and ground handling, which

are expanding across key airports. It also points to the company’s focus on monetising airport led real estate developments in cities like Mumbai and Ahmedabad as a longer term lever.The brokerage attributes the downgrade in target to weaker near-term airport traffic and a slower than earlier expected ramp up in the copper business, which together led to a 3% to 7% reduction in its earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation estimates for FY26 to FY28. Even so, Jefferies maintains that a broad-based scale-up across airports, new energy, roads and copper from FY27 should drive a sharp recovery in earnings, sup-

porting its positive stance. Another factor behind the target price cut is the slower build up in the copper segment, which only began operations recently and is still facing industry headwinds. Despite the near term setbacks, Jefferies continues to see FY27 as a key year when multiple businesses start contributing meaningfully.The brokerage estimates about 30% year on year growth in earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation in FY27, driven by a simultaneous scale up across segments.“While FY26 EBITDA would likely be flat or lower year on year, in FY27 the company would see ramp up across

airports, copper, roads and solar expansion,” Jefferies saidThis means the long term investment case remains closely tied to how these segments scale up.“We believe the new businesses will emerge as industry leaders and that the company will be a key beneficiary of green energy, aviation growth and digital infrastructure,” Jefferies says. The brokerage continues to assign higher valuation multiples to these segments, indicating their expected growth trajectory.Jefferies points to softer passenger traffic as a key drag in the current year, especially due to disruptions that have weighed on travel demand.

Tweaks iron ore rules to boost low-grade ore utilisation



New Delhi: In a move to reduce wastage and promote utilisation of low-grade iron ore, the government has amended rules to revise pricing norms for such ore, the Ministry of Mines said on Tuesday.The amendment provides a framework for pricing iron ore with iron (Fe) content below the threshold level of 45 per cent, including Banded Haematite Quartzite (BHQ) and Banded Haematite Jasper (BHJ), it said.Under the revised rules, the average selling price (ASP) for iron ore, with 35% to below 45% Fe content, will be fixed at 75% of the ASP of 45% to below 51% grade ore. While for ore with Fe content below 35 per cent, the ASP will be 50% of the same benchmark.Moreover, the threshold value refers to the minimum grade below which mined material is typically treated as waste.However, with advancements in beneficiation technologies, low-grade iron ore, including BHQ and BHJ, can now be processed into usable high-grade material for steelmaking.Prior to the amend-

ment, there was no separate pricing mechanism for such low-grade ores.As a result, the ASP of higher-grade ore (45–51% Fe) was used for royalty and other levies, making beneficiation economically unviable, according to the government.It further said that the new framework aims to correct this anomaly and incentivise the scientific and optimal utilisation of low-grade iron ore resources.The government also noted that bringing such resources into the usable category will help address concerns over the depletion of high-grade reserves, ensure steady raw material supply to the steel industry, and support mineral conservation.

The amendment in the new framework has also clarified that in cases where processing of run-of-mine (ROM) ore leads to a reduction in its economic value, royalty will be levied on lumps and finesThe clarification ensures that the economic value of minerals is not artificially reduced under the guise of processing, the ministry said

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

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

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



0.74%, respectively. While Trent, Eternal and Adani Ports were among the gainers on the 30-pack index, which rose up to 2.81%. Five stocks, namely HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, M&M, Titan and Kotak Mahindra Bank, contributed largely to the Sensex’s fall. Among sectoral indices, the BSE Top 10 Banks index fell 0.70% to settle at 16,717.07, while the BSE Auto index slipped 0.22% to

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

CCI clears Adani, Azure in US SECI tender case, ‘no evidence of anti-competitive conduct’ Adani Group and Azure Power

New Delhi: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Thursday dismissed a complaint alleging anti-competitive practices in a solar power tender floated by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), providing relief to multiple entities including the Adani Group and Azure Power.The complaint alleged violations of competition law in the award of solar tenders. It had named several parties, including Adani Enterprises Ltd, Adani Green Energy, industrialist Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, Azure Power India Pvt Ltd, SECI and certain state power utilities.In its order, the CCI said the allegations were not backed by sufficient evidence and failed to establish any breach of the Competition Act. The regulator noted that India’s power generation market remains competitive, with several major public and private sector players operating across segments.“As such and in view of the fact that power generation market in India is comprised of many significant players viz. National Thermal Power Corporation, Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd., Tata Power Co. Ltd., Torrent Power and Reliance Power etc., the Adani Group, prima facie, does not seem to be a dominant player in the power generation market in India,” the CCI said in the order.these segments scale up.

“We believe the new businesses will emerge as industry leaders and that the company will be a key beneficiary of green energy, aviation growth and digital infrastructure,” Jefferies says.The



brokerage continues to assign higher valuation multiples to these segments, indicating their expected growth trajectory. The complainant had raised concerns over certain tender provisions such as the “Green Shoe Option”, tariff revi-

sions and other contractual clauses, claiming they created entry barriers and excluded smaller players. ofalleged bribery linked to power purchase agreements, the CCI clarified that even if assumed, such conduct would not fall within the

scope of abuse of dominance under Section 4 of the Competition Act.Jefferies points to softer passenger traffic as a key drag in the current year, especially due to disruptions that have weighed on travel demand.

BUSINESS

Rupee rises 2 paise to 93.33 against US dollar

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



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

Residents of Tehran return to their destroyed city out of concern that the ceasefire won’t last



Iran: Mehdi, a 36-year-old IT specialist, had left the capital in the early stages of the conflict to stay with family in the north, just like many others in Tehran. When he returned to the city, the roads were still littered with rubble and debris, and the buildings had been bombed out. The explosions caused damage to his house, including broken glass and blown-out bedroom window frames. He was forced to flee for cover after a string of explosions during his first days at home, right before a ceasefire was reached. “I hope you never hear that whistling sound... a missile so close that you don’t know if it’s going to hit your house or your neighbor’s,” he claims. In a matter of seconds, three rockets struck the street. Now Mehdi, along with thousands of other Iranians who have filtered back to their homes or workplaces during the fragile truce, is navigating a city riddled with ruined buildings, destroyed infrastructure, an economy in turmoil and looming anxiety over the approaching ceasefire deadline. “There’s a lot of talk about precision strikes,” he says. “Let me tell you: my favourite fast food place has been hit by a missile. The clinic we used to visit whenever a new wave of Covid or a cold came around is gone. Even the garden where I spent some of the best moments of my childhood was hit.” Mehdi and his wife now sleep in their living room – the least damaged part of the house. He is trying to piece together paperwork for insurance, as they wait for whatever comes next. “Our home is now barely livable. In some sense, we’ve become war

refugees.” The toll on civilian infrastructure across Iran has been immense, says Noor*, an activist based in Tehran who stayed through the US-Israeli onslaught. Explosions have destroyed “schools, universities, pharmaceutical production centres, hospitals ... civilian homes, private cars and city buses”. Now, although the streets are full again, many people, especially those who rely on the internet, have lost their livelihoods. The internet blackout imposed by the Iranian authorities continues and has crossed a 45-day mark, leaving most of Iran’s population cut off from the world, and a few paying large sums to get online through Starlink and VPNs. “Internet shutdowns have destroyed online jobs,” Noor says, “which were a source of income for many people, especially young people.” According to some estimates, about 10 million Iranians depend on internet access to run small businesses or make an income. Iran had an affordability crisis before the war but now, Noor says, medications for patients with serious or chronic illnesses are difficult to find and, while food remains available in shops, “we can’t afford it”. The economic pressure, dire before the bombing began, has now become unbearable, she says. “Almost all food items have become more expensive. Most people can no longer afford red meat and fish. Dairy products have increased in price by more than 40%.” Other people in Tehran say affording basic grocery items has become very difficult. Adding to the worsening economic crisis, Noor says, factories

Iran”, an IRGC official in Tehran said the minimum age for recruits had been set at 12. “Some of them are kids [who look as if they are aged about] 10 or 12, and are armed. One of them told me he was 11 and he had a Kalashnikov,” says Arash, who says he feels devastated that children are “trapped between two wars” – the US-Israeli assault and the regime’s abuse of them. Describing the feeling of facing a repressive state and the prospect of a return to war, Arash says: “You know the story of the person cooking the frog in water and slowly increasing the temperature? That’s how we feel right now. Slowly dying, but not realising.” As the two-week deadline marking the end of the ceasefire nears, all of those who spoke to the Guardian were deeply apprehensive. “Even if we think of rebuilding, we can’t: the ceasefire is fragile and the war can start anytime,” Arash says. “Hope is all we have, but that’s fragile too. I think of what [Donald] Trump said – that he would bomb us back to the stone ages. I am laughing now, thinking about it. But I am deeply worried he thinks that of us. Does he really think that of us Iranians?” Despite the economic hardship and a “fragile ceasefire” that feels like a “ticking timebomb”, Noor says the people of Iran are still hopeful. But she worries that there is no clear plan on how to protect civilians during the war and its aftermath. “We just have to be hopeful in ourselves. We believe in the power of our nation,” she says. The controversial comments by the US president, threatening to “unleash hell” and “destroy Iranian civilisation” are also on the mind of Mehdi, who fears a future filled with “one-tonne bombs, nightly bombardments, the destruction of this country’s infrastructure. It feels like nothing awaits us but [Trump’s threat of] ‘a return to the stone age’.” For Arash, this period stuck in a limbo is “the worst outcome ... the city is in ruins and we are in a worse economic situation than we were in.” “I don’t know who is winning this war, but we know who’s losing,” he says. “It’s us, ordinary Iranians.

Use charts to monitor fuel prices, service station outages, and shipments in Australia

Australia: As Australia fights a fuel crisis, the federal government has released fuel reserves, lowered fuel excise charges, and implemented a national fuel security plan. Although we are aware that there have been price rises and outages, it can be challenging to obtain a whole picture of the situation, in part because there are thousands of separate companies and many governments engaged. We have compiled the most recent information on oil tanker deliveries, outages, and prices. We can see how much costs have increased since the US and Israel’s war on Iran started in late February by looking at the averages for gasoline and diesel in Australia. There can be a huge variation in price and availability, even across a relatively small area. Fuel outages aren’t static – stations can run out and regain stock as governments and companies race to fill gaps in supply chains and release more fuel. The map below shows the number of fuel outages across Australia, day by day. You can hover over the stations for a macro view, and click through the dates where data is available. Since we began collecting data on 27 March, you can see a spike in outages in New South Wales and Victoria on 30 and 31 March. The next chart shows the total number of stations out of at least one kind of fuel on each day. This is an estimate and may be an undercount given the different timescales that each state reports data. At least six fuel shipments to Australia have already been cancelled or deferred, and experts say there will probably be more delays or cancellations. The next chart shows the total number of “port calls” – or stops – at Australian ports by tankers with shipments of fuel and crude oil, which is refined to make fuel. The data does not distinguish between imports and exports, but it does show a slight decline in the number of tankers in February and March compared with the last six years. The same dataset shows a complete collapse in tankers travelling through the strait of Hormuz in the first



weeks of March. Before the war, about a fifth of global oil and a third of fertilisers were shipped through the strait. Early in March the federal government cut the minimum stock levels that fuel companies are required to hold for emergencies. The next chart is a weekly snapshot of fuel reserves compared to the new minimums, and how long this would last at normal consumption rates. Showing stocks of fuel compared to minimum requirements and how many days this would last at normal consumption rates. This data is released weekly. Latest data as of 07 April 2026. As of the beginning of April, Australia’s fuel reserves – measured in the number of days they would last – had actually increased since prewar levels.

Early benefits from Albanese’s visits to important allies include fuel and fertilizer, but “resilience” is on the budget agenda



Australia: The big test may still be ahead, but Anthony Albanese’s fuel diplomacy tour of Asia has already begun to pay off. The prime minister hurried back to Australia from Malaysia on Thursday to assess the damage at one of the country’s few surviving petroleum refineries after rushing to Singapore last week and postponing a scheduled visit. Albanese’s attentiveness to the gasoline situation was demonstrated by the hurriedly planned excursions, which were intended to show a leader on the job. While the number of petrol stations without petrol and diesel has been steadily declining each day, and the government is confident that further fuel imports are now assured into at least June, there are no illusions that Australia is out of the woods yet. The fragile ceasefires in the Middle East, and Trump’s blockade-of-a-blockade entirely plugging up the strait of Hormuz, have done little to assuage fears about ongoing supplies of oil, fuel and fertiliser. It’s why the fire at Geelong’s Viva refinery couldn’t have come at a worse time, even if damage was not as great as first feared. The energy minister, Chris Bowen conceded it was “really bad timing”, as Albanese forecast Viva’s output would see a “slight slowdown”. With little on-shore refining capacity of our own, even a small interruption to one of Australia’s two facilities is not ideal. All this means a couple of small shipments of extra fuel would come in pretty handy. Like the 100m litres from South Korea and Brunei, announced just a day after Albanese’s visit to the latter country. Albanese and Bowen were accused by critics

of being found flat-footed in the early days of the crisis, initially writing off concerns then downplaying impacts on the nation’s fuel supplies. Some of the same critics ridiculed Albanese as having overcorrected with his televised address to the nation. But weeks of diplomatic engagements with partners worldwide, and more recent in-person visits to key allies in our region, have borne early fruits of fuel and fertiliser – with more to come, Albanese foreshadowed. The fact the PM didn’t come back with a shipload of diesel in his checked baggage didn’t mean the trip wouldn’t be seen in future as a pivotal moment. “This is the first of many expected shipments secured under the government’s new strategic reserve powers with the support of Export Finance Australia,” the prime minister said of the 570,000 barrels of diesel bought by Viva Energy. Stirring media pictures of Albanese in protective work gear, inspecting refineries in Singapore and fertiliser plants in Brunei, didn’t hurt either, nor did headlines about the nation’s leader rushing back from overseas engagements to tend to emergencies at home. Of course, 100m litres of diesel is little more than a day’s worth of normal Australian consumption. And the capacity of Viva to use and process that fuel could be constrained by the fire at their Geelong plant. So while every little bit helps, and the government will be happy to have an extra day of fuel in the tanks, Albanese will be hoping extra shipments keep getting won by Australian bidders. The extent of Viva’s slowdown is still to be confirmed, but Alba-

nese said the plant’s owners had said 80% of diesel, 80% of aviation fuel and 60% of petrol production would continue. The plant contributes only 10% of Australia’s total fuel needs, but half of Victoria’s, so the effects in totality may be relatively small. Viva CEO, Scott Wyatt, said the incident wouldn’t have any effect on Victorian supply, that the plant may be able to boost its output to make up any shortfalls, and that the company wouldn’t pass on any extra costs to consumers. That’s a relief. The government might be able to nickel-and-dime its way through the fuel crisis, extracting agreements from key partners that petrol products will keep coming on ships, and snapping up extra supplies where they can. While prices at the pump remain high, fuel reserves are not plummeting, and fewer petrol stations are without petrol. Albanese is still working overtime to project calm, downplaying the prospect of going to higher stages of the emergency fuel plan, and even the Coalition opposition is struggling to articulate a coherent point of criticism. The best Angus Taylor has been able to manage, is vague concerns about a lack of transparency. Bowen, meanwhile, is holding press conferences virtually every day where he gives updates on petrol station outages, as well as a weekly weekend update on fuel reserves, and regular updates on contracted fuel orders (for those keeping track, he told the Nine newspapers “all of May” is covered, and “there have been orders made for June”). But back-to-back overseas trips, when most leaders would be loathe to head out of the country during a crisis, and trumpeting relatively minor new fuel arrangements show there is some level of concern in the government that things could deteriorate. Adding BP to the list of companies that can draw down on the Export Finance arrangements to underwrite fuel purchases, shows the government wants to keep all its bases covered.

Next month’s budget is likely to include new arrangements on fuel security. While boosting our 30-day fuel reserves up to 90 days isn’t expected, Albanese said on Friday that one of the budget’s main themes would be “resilience”, in terms of “leaving us less vulnerable to international events”.

As the fire at Viva’s refinery shows, resilience in our key systems isn’t a given.

US tech companies were successful in persuading the EU to conceal datacenter emissions

Europe: According to an investigation, Microsoft and other US IT corporations successfully persuaded the EU to conceal the environmental cost of their datacenters, with requests to prevent public access to a database of green metrics being nearly verbatim incorporated into EU regulations. After business pressure in 2024, the European Commission nearly verbatim inserted a secrecy clause to their proposal that makes it more difficult to examine the pollution emitted by particular datacenters. Researchers are left with just abstracts of their energy footprints at the national level. The rise of AI chatbots has spurred a boom in the construction of chip-filled warehouses with a hunger for power that is being met, in part, by burning fossil gas. Legal scholars warn the blanket confidentiality clause may fall foul of EU transparency rules and the Aarhus convention on public access to environmental information. “In two decades, I cannot recall a comparable case,” said Prof Jerzy Jendrośka, who spent 19 years on the body overseeing the convention and teaches environmental law at the University of Opole in Poland. “This clearly seems not to be in line with the convention.” Documents obtained by Investigate Europe, an independent journalism cooperative that led the research in collaboration with the Guardian and other media partners, show the rules have already been used to shield datacentres from scrutiny. In an email citing the secrecy clause last year, a senior commission official reminded national authorities of their obligation to “keep confidential all information and key performance indicators for individual datacentres.” “It is really important to reiterate this point as the commission has already received various requests for access to documents by the media or the public in relation to the data,” the official said. “All these requests



have been so far refused.”

The US and China have led the global AI boom but even in Europe datacentres are being built at breakneck speed. The EU aims to triple its datacentre capacity in the next five to seven years as it seeks to position itself as a global leader in artificial intelligence. In a move to increase transparency, the commission updated its energy efficiency directive in 2023 to oblige datacentre operators to report data on key performance indicators. In further guidance, it proposed publishing “aggregated” environmental metrics.

But during public consultations in January 2024, tech companies pushed to classify all individual information on datacentres as confidential, citing commercial interests. The demand means the data cannot even be accessed through freedom of information requests. The final text of the article, which differs by just a couple of words from industry demands, states “the commission and member states concerned shall keep confidential all information and key performance indicators for individual datacentres that are communicated to the data-

base ... Such information shall be considered confidential information affecting the commercial interests of operators and owners of datacentres.” Industry submissions during the public consultation show the groups who lobbied for the change are Microsoft; DigitalEurope, an industry organisation whose members include Microsoft, Google, Amazon and Meta; and Video Games Europe, whose members include Microsoft and Netflix. Ben Youriev, a researcher at InfluenceMap, a not-for-profit organisation that tracks corporate lobbying, said it was an example of how the tech sector was reckoning with a shift towards using more energy. He said:

“Where the industry was previously outspoken in its support for clean energy and emissions reductions, many firms have since fallen silent. Instead, they appear to be prioritising the rapid build-out of datacentre infrastructure globally over supporting clean energy and rapid emissions reductions.” DigitalEurope did not respond to a request for comment. The commission and Video Games Europe declined to comment.

DJI Osmo Pocket 4 review: The only vlogging camera you'll ever need

DJI's Osmo Pocket 3 gimbal-camera was a category-defining camera. Two years since its launch, everyone from vloggers to pro film makers continue to upload how-to guides and gushing reviews to YouTube. When the Osmo Pocket 4 landed at the FCC at the end of 2025 (followed by a credible leak), creator forums and Reddit threads started to chatter with excitement. Over the following months the Pocket 4 leaked again and again, to the point where there's very little that someone with a passing interest and an internet connection doesn't already know about the camera. But DJI chose today to give us the official reveal, so we're here with the full review which, remarkably, does contain some surprises. The Osmo Pocket 4 is still the best pocket-friendly vlogging camera you can buy. With excellent image quality, improved photos, great stabilization and pro D-Log mode, it's incredibly easy to record everything from simple vlogs to near cinematic-quality video. The high level of portability and extended battery life make this an easy camera to reach for whatever you're filming. For those who were waiting for official, confirmed specs and information, here's a rundown of the headline new features of the Osmo Pocket 4. The camera is still 4K, but comes with an updated 1-inch CMOS sensor that DJI says is good for another two stops of low light performance (for a total of 14). The camera retains the 20mm equivalent, f/2.0 lens but squeezes in an improved max framerate of 240 fps (up from 120 fps) for up to 10x slow-mo. The Pocket 4 can also shoot in full, high dynamic range 10-Bit D-Log, upgraded from the more lightweight D-Log-M available on the Pocket 3. Shutter speeds are now expanded and go right down to 1/4 for extreme light effects. Hardware changes are few, but do include two new buttons below the 2-inch display. One is a dedicated zoom button and the other you can assign a function from a selection of common tasks — rotating the gimbal, toggling recording presets and so on. You can assign up to three different controls to this button via single, double and triple clicks. There's also 107GB of internal storage. You can still use SD cards, but you don't need to if you don't want to. That zoom, DJI states, is good for 2x "lossless" zoom while shooting in 4K and 4x in 1080p. The Pocket 3's 2x Mid-Tele zoom had to be activated first, but now you can use lossless zoom any time and/or while using ActiveTrack face-tracking. It's available in Portrait mode, too, but if you'll need to have the screen in the horizontal position to access the buttons, which means your viewfinder/preview will be teeny-tiny as it's rescaled for 16:9. DJI has added on-camera "Film Tones" which are similar, functionally, to film simulations seen on Fujifilm cameras. There are six to choose from at launch and include subtle and not-so-subtle stylized color tones that apply different "moods" to your videos without having to manually color grade or use a LUT after the fact. As for still images, there's an on-screen button for

"Live" photos similar to what you might find on an iPhone. Live photos were sorta-kinda possible on the Pocket 3, but they are a little bit easier this time around. A lot of DJI drones include Gesture Control, which lets you start/stop recording and engage ActiveTrack from a distance, and that's new on the Pocket 4 too. On the audio side of things, the Pocket 4 now has "audio zoom," so if you have two people in a scene and do a close up on one of them, the volume of their voices will be boosted. It's a little crude, but it could be handy in certain situations. The Pocket 4 can also record spatial audio via the three onboard microphones, good for live music and other situations where sound placement might matter. Lastly, the Pocket 4 has a modular component. At launch, there's a magnetic fill light that clips onto the gimbal and can be configured via the camera menus. It's included in the creator combo and opens the door for other modular accessories, though it's limited to things that can sit on the gimbal without causing problems. A shotgun-style microphone, for example, could be possible. Battery life also gets a slight boost



over the Pocket 3 with a 1,545mAh cell — which is almost a 20 percent increase. That translates to an extra 30 minutes or so of recording time for an average of two and a half hours at 4K, more if you shoot in lower resolutions or are using the camera for photos. What we don't see here, an item that you might have been hoping for, is any type of optical zoom. What's more, the max resolution in vertical mode remains capped at 3K. You still have to rotate the camera if you want full-sensor, 4K video in portrait. The popularity of the Pocket series is thanks to its combination of high-quality video and a portable form factor. The Pocket 4 builds on this winning formula with exceptional quality for the camera's size. The new 1-inch sensor is noticeably more detailed than the Pocket 3 and DJI's claim

of improved low light performance is backed up by stellar results. I took the Pocket 4 out at night and it bested its predecessor with far more dynamic range and better exposure in shadowed areas that come out dark or fuzzy on the Pocket 3. Image performance in general is impressive and a definite strong point for a camera of this size. Colors now look more natural than ever without looking over-saturated. Similar shots on the Pocket 3 look a little flatter when viewed side by side. I like that the f2.0 aperture still provides some light bokeh, and when combined with the new D-Log mode, there's plenty of scope for cinematic shots. These would be harder to achieve with a phone and don't require the setup and planning of a mirrorless camera. With the extended shutter speeds you can get some interesting effects

— dramatic light trails in traffic for example — but it's going to over expose any other light source in your shot. So, proceed with caution. The Pocket 3 bottomed-out at 1/25, but the Pocket 4 goes right down to a dramatic 1/4. The 2x lossless zoom surprised me. At first, I was sceptical about DJI's claims of it being lossless, but it does seem to maintain visual quality without noticeable loss of detail. Though if you want to use that 4x zoom in 4K, expect to see some digital artifacts. The Pocket 4's 20mm lens is particularly suited to wider, vlog-style shots, so a usable zoom is a welcome addition. It's worth noting that it's better used for static and tripod shots as any gimbal movements and keeping a subject in frame can feel like steering a ship. Until now, if you were aiming for a more cinematic style, you had to get comfortable

shooting in D-Log-M and boning up on color-grading. DJI provided some filters in the Mimo app for a quick and dirty way to add a mood or vibe to your videos, but that still caused some friction in the workflow. The new film modes are on camera, so achieving something more stylized is now just a menu tap away. I'll be honest, I'm not a huge fan of the selection available right now as they're either too hot or too cold. Of the six, Warm and Movie seem the most usable for cozy-style landscapes or B-roll cityscapes. DJI hasn't shared much about whether these are just on-camera filters or true film simulations. Movie and Retro, at least, were already available as filters in the app. If the full effect is too strong, you can dial down the intensity, but that's the extent of the control. Their addition here expands what you can

get out of the camera without using the app or having to drag things over to your editing software. It's unclear if we'll see more options in the future, but they're there if you need them. One of my main complaints with the Pocket cameras was the zoom. More specifically, controlling it with the joystick. It always looks slow, inconsistent and a bit amateur when zooming in manually. The new button provides an instant punch-in that can be used for an intentional, attention-drawing effect. I can't count the number of times I've ruined a shot because I thought I had the joystick set to zoom, but it was still assigned to panning (you had to toggle its use via an on-screen button). With the physical button, I can close in on a target instantly and never worry about accidental pans. The second, customizable button is also

a real usability upgrade. If, like me, you're constantly recentering the gimbal, you'll know that the usual double-click on the joystick is often unreliable. Now you can assign that action to the button plus two more controls from a selection of common actions. I have it set so double-click switches to one of my manual recording presets and triple-click locks the gimbal so I no longer have to jump into the main menu to switch gimbal modes. It even works while recording if I spontaneously decide I want to keep my horizon level. Changing what this button does is simple: Long-press it and it'll jump into the settings where you can choose its functionality. There's still scope for some refinement, as although a double click can instantly start recording with my preferred settings, clicking again doesn't stop it. You have to use the record button. This makes some sense, but I'm used to using the same button to stop/start recording, so intuitively I thought that might be the case here. Sadly not. Something a little unexpected in the Pocket 4 is the addition of spatial audio. Using the three built-in microphones, the theory is you should be able to hear where sounds are coming from — though you'll need headphones on for the effect to work. In practice, it does create a different audio ambience, one where sounds feel more relative to their location, but it comes at a price. To be fair to DJI, I've never found an audio zoom I truly liked. You can't capture better audio than what the microphone is receiving, so amplifying it in any way isn't going to improve it beyond what you can do with editing software. In a pinch, this might help with interviews when you have multiple speakers, no external microphone and need to publish quickly, but I'm reluctant to recommend it for anything else. The new "Vocal Boost" is a more useful option under the Pro settings menu. When activated, it enhances voices by lowering

background noise and other sounds. Again, it's not a fix for getting good source audio, but in noisy run-and-gun vlogging environments, it can improve your chances of capturing something useful with just the internal microphones. Fortunately, DJI has a much better solution that was already a feature of Pocket cameras — native connectivity with its wireless microphones. The Creator Combo now includes a single DJI Mic 3 transmitter and charging cable, and it's the absolute best way to get YouTube-ready audio from the camera. One nice tweak with the Pocket 4 is that you can now export videos with both the built-in and external mic audio as one 4-channel file. Open this in your video editor and you can mix and cut between mic and ambient audio without having to deal with separate files as before. The fact that there's no real direct competition for the Pocket series is surprising. For true, like-for-like gimbal cameras, expect to find alternatives from brands you're less familiar with — such as Agfaphoto or Feiyu. Most of the nearest competition will be action cameras like the GoPro Mission 1 or Insta360 Ace Pro 2. Both of these are great portable cameras with solid stabilisation, but they unsurprisingly favor that wide, bright and sharp action-style footage. The Pocket 4's nearest rival for stabilized vlog-friendly filming is still the Pocket 3. This raises the question of whether the Pocket 4 (£445) is worth it over the more affordable Pocket 3 (£389) at launch. (DJI can't directly sell the Pocket 4 in the US, so official prices are in British Pounds or Euros.) Both are great, all-purpose, vlogging cameras versatile enough for recording in a variety of situations — though less suited to rugged/action filming thanks to the delicate mechanical gimbal. It's likely that the price difference between the two will expand after the launch window. This raises the question of whether the Pocket 4 (£445) is worth it over the more affordable Pocket 3 (£389) at launch. Both are great, all-purpose, vlogging cameras versatile enough for recording in a variety of situations — though less suited to rugged/action filming thanks to the delicate mechanical gimbal. It's likely that the price difference between the two will expand after the launch window. The Pocket 4 might not bring defining new features like optical zoom or higher resolution, but it's a better camera in every way that matters. There are also several quality of life improvements that make it incredibly compelling. For the extra money, you're getting better image quality that will pay you back over time. The new buttons make the camera even more convenient and that onboard storage alone effectively closes the price gap — not to mention the huge convenience that feature alone brings with it. Hardcore fans might have been hoping for more "dazzle" with the Pocket 4. In reality, DJI delivered a camera that builds on an already winning formula in ways that actually matter: higher quality video, improved usability, modular capabilities and longer battery life. It's hard to argue with that.

Rohan Shankar, author of Saiyaara and Haiwaan, explains the resurgence of the Hindi cinema industry following a hiatus

Mumbai: Writer Rohan Shankar discusses the reasons behind the box office success of recent films in an interview with Hindustan Times. Bollywood has been accused of losing its charm after the success of KGF, RRR, and Pushpa, while movies from the South appear to understand what viewers want. It has led to everything from heated discussions to claims that the Hindi film business only produced movies for “Bandra and Juhu.” Then movies like Chhaava, Saiyaara, and Dhurandhar emerged to dispel these ideas and show everyone what Bollywood was capable of. The Bollywood vs. South debate is discussed with Hindustan Times by writer Rohan Shankar, who coincidentally wrote the dialogue for Mohit Suri’s Saiyaara and recently collaborated with Priyadarshan on the screenplay and dialogue of Bhooth Bangla and Haiwaan. (See Also: Does Bhooth Bangla Resemble Bhool Bhulaiyaa? On set, did Akshay Kumar improvise? Author Rohan Shankar dis-

closes According to Rohan, the discussion has changed since 2026. He explains the current situation by saying, “I don’t think it’s about Bollywood vs. South anymore.” It has to do with telling stories that viewers can relate to. Strong conviction, distinct feeling, and a larger-than-life cinematic experience are characteristics of successful movies, whether they come from Hindi or South Indian cinema. He cites Saiyaara as an example, saying that they were surprised by the movie’s success.

Videos of young, heartbroken lovers worldwide crying and passing out in theaters served as evidence of its effectiveness. Additionally, according to Rohan, writers in the film industry rely on what moviegoers and producers desire. He acknowledges that when a movie succeeds, the idea of making more of them usually follows. “As authors, we don’t actually determine what constitutes a “safe zone.” What audiences and producers react to is



what drives it. If a particular type of movie does well, it becomes popular. I believe that storytelling will become more diverse in the future since modern audiences are receptive to everything as long as it is interesting and truthful. One such diverse film, one hopes, will be Rohan’s next collaboration with Priyadarshan, Haiwaan. The film is an adaptation of the filmmaker’s 2016 Malayalam blockbuster, Oppam, starring Mohanlal. “Adaptations are always tricky because you’re balancing two responsibilities, staying true to the original while making it feel fresh for a new

audience,” says the writer. For Haiwaan, Priyadarshan had a clear vision of how he wanted to adapt the story, he adds. Rohan says that they took the emotional core and structure of Oppam and reinterpreted it with a different context for Haiwaan. “Certain changes were necessary to make the film relevant for today’s audience and also to suit the Hindi film space. The most challenging part is always the tone...making sure the story feels contemporary without losing the essence that made the original special. That balance is where most of the work goes,” he adds.

Masoom Sharma is summoned by the Haryana Women’s Commission due to an incident in Dehradun



Mumbai: Masoom Sharma, a Haryana folk musician, was called in due to alleged verbal harassment at a Dehradun college function. Masoom Sharma, a Haryana folk singer, has been called by the Haryana State Commission for Women. The musician received the summons due to suspected verbal abuse during a college function in Dehradun earlier this month,

according to the most recent information from news agency ANI. In relation to the incident, a police case was already filed. Official records state that the event happened at the college on April 10. Masoom Sharma has addressed the controversy in the interim. The musician claimed that certain individuals who pretend to be criminals have been harassing his family. He said that his mental state was impacted by the pressure and threats, which caused the outburst on stage. The issue is that some individuals who identify as criminals have repeatedly harassed me and are currently harassing my family. He said, “My uncle’s son told me over the phone that they would kill me. “When that mind becomes a puzzle, the irritation increases so much. Then, under stress, I spoke aggressively, and I apologized for what I felt was wrong.” “I also replied to the Women’s Commission’s notice,” he continued. According to the complainant, Pranchal

Nauni, alleged that Sharma’s remarks from the stage deeply hurt the sentiments of both students and members of the public attending the event. The police have registered the case under FIR No. 63/2026, invoking multiple sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including Section 296 (obscene acts and songs), Section 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace), Section 79 (words, gestures, or acts intended to insult the modesty of a woman), and Section 351(3) (criminal intimidation). The Dehradun Police confirmed the FIR and said that statutory legal proceedings will be carried out following a detailed investigation in accordance with the law. No comments have been issued by Masoom Sharma or his representatives at this time. Masoom Sharma is a leading Haryana singer and composer known for blending traditional folk with modern desi pop. He rose to fame with hits like 2 Numbari and Madam Ji.

Day 1 Box Office Collection for Bhooth Bangla Akshay Kumar’s Biggest Opening Ever since Sooryavanshi

Mumbai: Bhooth Bangla is lagging behind a number of recent titles. Last year, Thamma debuted at Rs 24 crore, while Stree 2 broke a huge record with Rs 51.8 crore on its first day. Akshay Kumar’s most recent film, Bhooth Bangla, got off to a great start. Following the release of its preview earlier in the week, it saw a significant increase in collections on Friday. With 12,386 performances, the horror-comedy brought in Rs 12.15 crore, a dramatic 250% increase over its April 16 preview receipts of Rs 3.50 crore. With this increase, the movie’s net domestic collection is currently at Rs 15.75 crore, while its overall India gross has hit Rs 18.90 crore. Bhooth Bangla has already raised Rs 23.90 crore worldwide. When compared to Akshay Kumar’s recent efforts, the film’s opening performance shows a mixed pattern despite the optimistic growth. While Housefull 5 had a far



larger opening of almost Rs 24 crore, his courtroom drama Jolly LLB 3 had debuted at Rs 12.5 crore. At Rs 7.76 crore, Kesari Chapter 2 got off to a somewhat poor start. His biggest debut since Sooryavanshi, which brought in about Rs 26.29 crore nett, is this movie. Bhooth Bangla lags behind a number of recent horror-comedies. While Stree 2 broke a huge record with Rs 51.8 crore on its first day, Thamma started at Rs 24 crore last year. Additionally, the movie is not as successful as Bhool

Bhulaiyaa 2 (which opened at Rs 14.11 crore) and Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3. Ranveer Singh’s Dhurandhar 2, which has been in theaters for a month, is also competing with the movie at the box office. The spy thriller made about Rs 2.70 crore on its 30th day, bringing its total nett collection to Rs 1,105.82 crore. After working together on a number of well-known projects, such as Hera Pheri (2000), Garam Masala (2005), Bhagam Bhag (2006), Bhool Bhulaiyaa (2007), De Dana Dan (2009), and

Khatta Meetha (2010), Priyadarshan’s Bhooth Bangla marks his comeback with Akshay Kumar. Wamiqa Gabbi, Tabu, Rajpal Yadav, and Jisshu Sengupta make up the ensemble cast of the movie. It is presented by Balaji Motion Pictures, a division of Balaji Telefilms, in association with Cape of Good Films, and produced by Akshay Kumar, Shobha Kapoor and Ekta Kapoor. Earlier, Priyadarshan addressed speculation that a song from Bhooth Bangla had similarities with a track from Satyajit Ray’s 1969 film Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne. Clarifying the matter, he said, “The lyricist has written those (words), and that is why we were so confident. There’s nothing wrong in it because our film is Bhooth Bangla. You should also understand there is another film called Bhoot Bangla before, which is with Mehmood and R D Burman. So naturally, that title is repeated now.

As the Academy of Oscars releases his Om Shanti Om clip, Shah Rukh Khan expresses nostalgia, saying “Truly feel like king of the world”

Mumbai: Shah Rukh Khan posted his sentimental response on Instagram after The Academy posted a clip from Om Shanti Om. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences shared a clip from Om Shanti Om, and Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan transformed it into a moment. The actor responded with his usual wit, saying he felt like the “king of the world” after seeing the message. The Academy, widely renowned for organizing the Oscars, released a sequence from Om Shanti Om on Friday that showed Shah Rukh giving his famous statement following an award. “Itni shiddat se maine tumhe milane ki koshish ki hai, ki har zarre ne mujhe tumse milane ki saazish ki hai,” he adds in the scenario. Kehnte hain dil ko shiddat se cha-



ho toh poori kainat usse tumse milane ki koshish mein lag jaati hai. Every particle in the universe has worked together to bring you nearer to me because I have searched for you with such fervor. It’s been said that when you have a strong desire, everything in the universe starts working together to make it happen. “One thing about destiny, it doesn’t miss” was the caption on the video. Shah

Rukh said, “Thank you, The Academy, for sending me down memory lane with Om’s speech,” alongside a screenshot of the article on his Instagram Stories. I genuinely feel like the world’s ruler now. Ha ha, obviously relishing the nostalgic moment. Director Farah Khan also reacted to the post and wrote on her Instagram Stories, “I want to thank The Academy and all those who forwarded

this post to me,” adding the hashtag “picture abhi baaki hai mere dost” (the film is not over yet, my friend). Helmed by Farah Khan, the film featured Shah Rukh Khan in the lead role and marked Deepika Padukone’s Bollywood debut. It also starred Arjun Rampal, Shreyas Talpade and Kirron Kher in supporting roles.

The reincarnation-based film emerged as one of the highest-grossing releases of 2007. Shah Rukh will next be seen in Siddharth Anand’s King. The film also stars Suhana Khan, Deepika Padukone, Abhishek Bachchan, Raghav Juyal, Arshad Warsi and Jaideep Ahlawat in key roles. It is scheduled to release in theatres on December 24, 2026, and will mark Suhana’s big-screen debut.

“I’m a huge Hrithik Roshan fan; Ryan Gosling is awesome,” said Priya Kansara of Project Hail Mary



Mumbai: British actor Priya Kansara discusses her aspirations to collaborate with Hrithik Roshan in an interview with HT City. Last month, audiences saw an unexpected cultural crossover moment between Ryan Gosling and Hrithik Roshan. Prior to Ryan’s Hollywood movie Project Hail Mary’s debut in India, the two had a virtual chat. Hrithik recalled his sci-fi movie Koi Mil Gaya (2003) and his on-screen best friend Jadoo, an extraterrestrial, while Ryan talked about his alien co-star Rocky. Priya Kansara, Ryan’s co-actor who voiced Mary in Project Hail Mary, has recently told us how much she adores Hrithik, his movie, and Jadoo. “Koi Mil Gaya is a classic, like Jadoo... We used to sing ‘Jadoo Jadoo’ when we were little. There’s only a few movies in the world that have wonderful aliens, right? E.T. (E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial), Koi Mil Gaya and Project

Hail Mary. It’s a very niche amount of films that we can rely on. Also, I’m a big Hrithik Roshan fan as well. I’ve watched so many of his movies growing up. Ryan and Hrithik’s video was really cool, like two worlds colliding.” When asked if she would like to share the screen with Hrithik some day, an excited Priya replies, “Oh my God, please. Somebody make that happen. I would be so down for that.” Priya goes on to name Hrithik, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Aamir Khan as her favourites, giving a special mention to Aamir’s Lagaan (2001) and 3 Idiots (2009). Sharing her possible Bollywood plans, the British actor says, “Yeah, never say never. I grew up watching Bollywood movies and they have a very special place for me. So if the right story or the right people came along and something was on the horizon, then who knows? We’ll see.” Sharing her experience of working with Ryan, Priya says, “Oh, Ryan Gosling is awesome. I was nervous because he’s a brilliant actor, so you feel a bit of imposter syndrome, like, ‘Is he going to realise that I’m useless and I can’t do this job or support him?’ But he was so warm and open. I learned a lot working with him.” Talking about how Ryan was on set, Priya reveals, “He is very focused. Ryland’s a funny character, a bit dorky, and Ryan exemplifies that. I appreciated how calm, collected and kind he is all the time. There were some really stressful days on set when there’s so much to shoot, he’s in a wire because he’s doing zero gravity and 15 people are telling him different things. But Ryan never gets overwhelmed, at least not visibly.”

In just one month, Dhurandhar 2 broke every box office record



Mumbai: Whether Dhurandhar 2 broke records is no longer the question. It’s whether any recent movie has shattered this many records so fast. Some movies strive for records. They are flirted with by some. Then there are the exceptional handful who enter theaters and, in a matter of days, make the record books seem out of date. Dhurandhar 2 is definitely in the latter group. With paid previews starting on March 18, this is a thorough analysis of every significant box office milestone the movie has rewritten in its first month of release on March 19. Additionally, the movie established a new standard for pre-release sales. It broke numerous major releases’ prior records by selling about

925,000 tickets in advance across national theater chains. Dhurandhar 2 had already made history before Day 1 officially started. The movie made the most money in Indian history with Rs 43 crore from paid previews. The advance response, which was distributed over thousands of shows, hinted at something much larger than a typical blockbuster. With a Day 1 gross of Rs 102.55 crore nett in India, the movie debuted in theaters and set a new record for a Hindi movie. It was the largest single-day opening for a Hindi-language film ever, with the Hindi version alone contributing Rs 99.10 crore. Its Day 1 domestic total, including previews, was Rs 145.55 crore, making it one of the largest be-

ginnings in Indian movie history. Just behind another significant pan-Indian success, Dhurandhar 2 had the second-largest worldwide opening for an Indian film at the time, earning almost Rs 236.63 crore on its first day. The movie made an incredible Rs 674.17 crore nett in India during its first weekend. Due in significant part to the Hindi belt’s exceptional occupancy, this ended up being one of the highest opening weekend totals ever. In India, Dhurandhar 2 made almost Rs 745 crore by the conclusion of its first week, the largest first-week gross for a Bollywood movie ever. In the first week, its Hindi net alone exceeded Rs 546 crore. The movie maintained its momentum even after a huge start. Its third-week receipts were among the biggest for a Hindi movie ever, surpassing a number of other blockbusters at a comparable point in time. Speed became one of Dhurandhar 2’s defining traits. It crossed Rs 500 crore in Hindi in just 6 days, a feat no other Hindi film had achieved before. The film then raced past Rs 800 crore in India within 11 days, beating previous benchmarks set by major blockbusters.

Instead than sitting around aimlessly, Amitabh Bachchan advises individuals to keep their bodies and minds active

Mumbai: Amitabh Bachchan, who is 83 years old, delivered a message on staying busy and persevering through life’s challenges. One of the most well-known actors in India, Amitabh Bachchan is renowned for his extensive body of work spanning more than fifty years. The seasoned actor manages to wow audiences with his performances while working in multiple languages. Every week, he

also meets fans outside Jalsa, his home in Mumbai. Amitabh expressed his thoughts on deliberately maintaining motivation to work so that there is always a sense of movement in his most recent Tumblr blog post. Amitabh quoted his father, Harivansh Rai Bachchan, saying that time passes quickly. “A few thoughts from Babuji’s works and the days pass by, it was the previous month just now and

the next is upon us... coercing us to be reminded of how time passes away so soon,” he continued. The secret is mobility. Instead of sitting around aimlessly, keep your body and mind active. Your strength of movement will become apparent very quickly. He added, “Patience, be the cross word that needs solution each moment .. even a moment is a test on patience. But it pays and pays well. Not monetarily

speaking, but philosophically. A study on the subject would have been a huge benefit .. actually a study per se on any topic would have been several arrows to pull out through the bow in the terms of battle, or any battle of life. The bow and arrow .. such importance given to it .. and its presence in our lives both within and without .. bow and arrow .. it was the first weapon that fought from a distance .. then

it matured to the cannon .. and now missiles.

The purpose be the same .. battle from distance .. the era of hand to hand or as the present vocabulary expression says, “boots on the ground” a rarity. Sitting miles away and cause the damage results of battle is a nonchalant modern day warfare. There is the tale of my great grandfather and his act on this but will tell some other day for now,

love and peace.” On the work front, Amitabh was last seen in Kalki 2898 AD. Directed by Nag Ashwin, the film also starred Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, and Kamal Haasan in lead roles. Big B’s portrayal of Ashwatthama in the sci-fi drama won hearts, and the film became a massive success, grossing over ₹1,000 crore worldwide. He is currently shooting for the sequel to the film.



Cagliari and Inter Milan will continue their Serie A title run

Italy: Inter Milan easily defeated Cagliari 3-0 on Friday to take a 12-point lead at the top of the league and move closer to winning Serie A. Marcus Thuram and Nicolò Barella's quick goals just after halftime at the San Siro, together with Piotr Zieliński's rocket in stoppage time, put Inter just one game away from winning their 21st league title. The closest rivals, Napoli, will play Lazio on Saturday. Inter might win the Scudetto next weekend at Torino if Napoli fails to defeat Lazio, but they would also need the defending champions to lose their following game against relegation-threatened Cremonese. In any case, Cagliari, who have five games remaining in their season and are six points above the relegation zone and not yet safe from the bottom, were defeated by Inter, who appear destined to reclaim the title from Napoli with weeks to spare. We need to keep working hard and gaining points because it's not finished yet," Thuram stated. You can see that we're a team that enjoys hanging out and playing together on the field." Federico Dimarco's beautiful low cross gave Thuram his first goal six minutes after halftime, which was arguably his easiest finish of the year. The France forward effortlessly guided home his fourth goal in three games. And Inter were ef-



fectively sure of the points two minutes later when Sardinian Barella, who came up through the Cagliari's academy, smashed in the second and held his hands up in apology to his hometown team. Inter fans roared chants about their massive league lead and their distaste for local rivals AC Milan as their team played out the rest of a match without exerting themselves,

with the second leg of their Italian Cup semi-final with Como coming up on Tuesday. Supporters had barely finished bellowing "we're gonna win the league" when Zieliński met Dumfries' knock-down with a perfect shot from the edge of the area which sailed past Elia Caprile and into the top corner. Como head into their cup showdown with In-

ter in downbeat mood after their bid for Champions League football suffered another blow with a 2-1 defeat at Sassuolo. Cristian Volpato's brilliant lobbed finish at the end of a rapid counter-attack and a M'Bala Nzola strike, goals which came within two minutes near the end of the first half, gave Sassuolo victory in Reggio Emilia. A second straight defeat leaves Como fifth, two points behind Juventus who host Bologna on Sunday night and with Roma one point behind in sixth ahead of their clash with Atalanta on Saturday.

"We didn't mark properly and our distribution wasn't good, it just wasn't our day," said Como coach Cesc Fabregas. AC Milan have also been given a reprieve, the seven-time European champions in third and five points ahead of Como but on a run of three defeats in their last four fixtures. Como had looked on course to secure a sensational top four placing at half-time of last week's home match against Inter, a fixture which Fabregas' team led by two just before half-time. But they eventually fell to a 4-3 defeat and Friday's loss leaves the traditionally small club, backed by tobacco giants Djarrum, potentially five points away from the Champions League spots come the end of the weekend.

Police claim, "Phone off, house locked," as the TCS Nashik case becomes more mysterious

New Delhi, Apr 18: While her family maintains that Nida Khan is in Mumbai and not in hiding, police claim she is fleeing. The hunt for Nida Khan, a suspect in the alleged sexual harassment and religious conversion case connected to a Nashik-based Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) BPO unit, has stepped up. Khan's family maintains that she remains in Mumbai at a relative's house and is not in hiding, despite police reports that she is fleeing. Nida Khan's exact location remains unclear amid the ongoing probe. Police said she is absconding and are trying to trace her movements through technical surveillance and field operations. Three independent teams have been deployed to locate her, according to a police statement. "During the investigation, Nida Khan's husband was taken into custody within the jurisdiction of the Mumbai police station for questioning," the statement said. "It has also been observed that mobile phones of both the accused and her relatives were switched off. The search for the accused, Nida Khan, is currently ongoing," the statement said. Police said her husband told them she was staying at a relative's place, but when officers reached, the house was locked. Her family, though, says she has been living in Mumbai with her husband since January 2026 and is not on the run. Her uncle said she was working at the company's BPO unit in Malad until she was suspended earlier this month on April 9. "She is not running away from anything. And I do want to say that so far no police officer has shown up at our door asking for



her whereabouts," said Khan's maternal uncle. According to family members, Khan got married last year and moved to Mumbai earlier this year. She studied in Nashik, completed a degree in commerce, and is currently pursuing an MBA through distance learning. She joined the BPO unit in December 2021 as a process associate. Her family maintains she worked as a tele-caller and did not hold any senior position. While requesting legal protection from detention, Nida Khan claimed to be pregnant. She is expecting her first child and is experiencing emotional hardship as a result of the accusations, according to her relatives, who supported the claim. "We are in the process of filing an anticipatory bail application for Nida," stated Baba Sayyad, Khan's attorney. It will be completed shortly. Before examining the claim's potential legal ramifications, investigators are confirming it using medical records. According to legal experts, courts typically need substantial medical evidence before granting relief on such grounds.

"EWS cannot claim age and attempt parity with SC, ST, and OBC"



New Delhi, Apr 18: In central government recruitments, including Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) exams, the Delhi High Court ruled that candidates from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) cannot claim parity in upper age limit and number of attempts with those from Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and Other Backward Categories (OBC). The court noted that the disadvantages experienced by socially backward classes are different from those resulting from economic deprivation. The ruling was rendered by a bench of Justices Anil Kshetarpal and Amit Mahajan, who also dismissed applications from EWS candidates requesting the same relaxations as those granted to SC, ST, and OBC categories. Different auxiliary exemptions and relaxations should be given to both

socially backward and economically poor strata because it cannot be stated that their disadvantages are the same. In ancillary factors like age relaxation or enhanced efforts, the EWS category cannot automatically claim equity with SC, ST, and OBC, the court ruled. The court noted that EWS hardship arises from limited financial resources, a condition that can change over time, unlike SC, ST, and OBC disadvantages rooted in long-standing social and educational backwardness. It observed that caste-based disadvantage is structural, fixed by birth, and continues to affect individuals throughout their lives. "EWS is concerned only with economic deprivation. The hardship faced by individuals in this category arises from lack of financial resources. It does not stem from social stigma or historical ex-

clusion. In contrast, SC, ST, and OBC categories are rooted in deep and long-standing social and educational backwardness. These groups have suffered discrimination and ostracism for generations, solely on account of their caste. Such a disadvantage is structural and enduring. Caste, unlike economic status, is not a variable; it is fixed by birth and cannot be changed. Economic status, on the other hand, is fluid," the court said. The petitioners challenged the Centre's February 2019 decision granting age and attempt relaxations to SC, ST, and OBC candidates but not to EWS candidates, as well as the Civil Services Examination Notification dated February 14, 2024. Through their lawyer Shivendra Singh, they argued that even after the 103rd Constitutional Amendment introducing 10% reservation for EWS, excluding them from age and attempt relaxations is arbitrary and renders the reservation ineffective. In its 23-page verdict, the court upheld the Centre's decisions, observing that the constitutional framework itself recognises a distinction between EWS and SC, ST, OBC categories. It said the decision was neither arbitrary nor violative of any constitutional or statutory provision. Advocate Ravinder Agarwal represented UPSC.

This player is someone Shreyas Iyer wants to learn how to be a captain

Punjab: Shreyas Iyer, the captain of the Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League, keeps making an impression. Before being let go by the team, he helped the Kolkata Knight Riders win the championship in 2024. After that, Iyer became PBKS's captain and guided the squad to the IPL 2025 final. Iyer is dominating Punjab in the current season and making money once more. With nine points from five games, his club leads the standings. It is noteworthy that in the current IPL season, PBKS is the only team without a loss.

Iyer gave an unexpected response when asked in a Star Sports interview about the captain he would most like to consult. He chose Rajat Patidar, the captain of Royal Challengers Bengaluru, over players like Rohit Sharma and MS Dhoni. On Thursday, April 16, Punjab Kings continued their winning streak with a



seven-wicket thrashing of Mumbai Indians, who lost their fourth straight IPL 2026 match. Prabhsimran Singh and Shreyas Iyer both scored fluid fifties. Even as Quinton de Kock, with a brilliant 112 not out, and Naman Dhir (50) bailed Mumbai Indians out in the first half with a robust 132-run third-wicket stand, the hosts' 195/6 was never challenging enough on a docile track against the rampant Punjab batters. Prabhsimran made a wicketless Jasprit Bumrah (0/41) and MI pay for

a regulation drop early, smashing a strokeful 80 not out off 31 balls (11x4s, 2x6s), while skipper Iyer was in his elements, notching up his third fifty in as many outings with a 66 off 35 balls (5x4s, 4x6s), as the duo stitched a sturdy 139-run stand for the third wicket. Chasing 196, PBKS went over the line with 21 balls to spare, scoring 198/3 as MI bowlers continued to disappoint collectively, with Allah Ghazanfar's 2/31 being the only performance of note.

Worker protests resurface in Noida; traffic is affected, SP and CPIM leaders are stopped at borders



New Delhi, Apr 18: As political activity escalated at the Delhi-Noida borders on Friday, tensions surrounding worker unrest briefly reappeared in Noida, according to officials and leaders. Delegations from opposition parties were stopped by police while attempting to enter the city to meet agitating workers. Police said they were stopped to maintain law and order and prevent "any kind of instigation" in the district. Around nine in the morning, a group of workers gathered outside a company in Sector 8, according to police. "A team and senior police officers arrived at the location after receiving information and provided them with counseling." A senior police officer who was aware of Friday's events but wished to remain anonymous stated, "They later dispersed and returned to work." Police officers have been stationed outside businesses in Noida and Greater Noida's industrial sectors,

according to officials. Additional commissioner of police (law and order) Rajeev Narayan Mishra said the situation appeared to have stemmed from a communication gap. "After brief counselling and clear communication, the situation was brought under control," he said. Mishra added that more than 6,000 police personnel have been deployed across over 100 locations in the district, with sensitive zones identified in Sectors 58, 63, Phase 1, Phase 2, and Kasna in Greater Noida. When HT visited industrial areas in Sector 63, factories were operational with visible police presence, and revised wage charts were displayed at factory gates. "Factories in Noida have resumed operations with 100% workforce," Mishra said. Meanwhile, traffic movement was affected at the Delhi-Noida-Direct (DND) Flyway and the Chilla border between 10am and 11am as political leaders from multiple parties attempted to enter Noida. A Samajwadi Party delegation, led by Leader of Opposition in the Uttar Pradesh assembly Mata Prasad Pandey, was stopped at the DND Flyway around noon and staged a brief protest.

SP MLA Atul Pradhan alleged that workers had been subjected to excesses. "You see so many people have been arrested, so many have been detained by the police. These are helpless people who have faced injustice. We want to meet them and understand their concerns, but the government is stopping us. What is it trying to hide?" he said.

Hyderabad Sunrisers Swoop Former Mumbai Indians star Gerald Coetzee will take his spot Payne, David

byangalora: Payne participated in two IPL 2026 games for SRH. In his IPL debut, he collected figures of 2/35 in 3 overs against the Royal Challengers Bengaluru. According to a statement, Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) have recruited South African pacer Gerald Coetzee for the duration of the current Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season in place of David Payne, who is unable to play due to an ankle injury. Gerald Coetzee has played four Tests, 14 ODIs and 18 T20Is for South Africa and has 67 international wickets against his name. In addition, he has participated in 14 IPL games. He played ten

games for the Mumbai Indians in IPL 2024, however he only played four for the Gujarat Titans in IPL 2025. The South African fast bowler has taken 15 IPL wickets. Payne played two matches for SRH in the IPL 2026. He claimed figures of 2/35 in 3 overs against the Royal Challengers Bengaluru in his IPL debut. He dismissed RCB captain Rajat Patidar and wicketkeeper Jitesh Sharma in that match. Payne went wicketless in the second match that he played, against the Kolkata Knight Riders. A media release from the IPL says, "Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) have signed Gerald Coetzee as a replacement for Da-

vid Payne for the remainder of TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026. Payne - who played 2 games for SRH in the ongoing IPL season and picked 2 wickets from the same - is ruled out of the remainder of the season due to an ankle injury." Coetzee will pay Rs 2 crore to join the SRH camp, according to the release. With 67 international wickets under his belt, Coetzee is a right-arm bowler who has represented South Africa in 4 Tests, 14 ODIs, and 18 T20Is. Coetzee, who takes Payne's place at SRH, has 15 IPL wickets and has participated in 14 IPL matches while playing for the Gujarat Titans (GT) and Mumbai Indians (MI).

Domestic help, aides rob Delhi family of Rs. 30 lakh gold in 20 minutes



New Delhi, Apr 18: For a family in Delhi's posh Golf Links neighborhood, what had started out as a typical evening soon became a horrifying ordeal—not at the hands of strangers, but rather by someone they had only invited into their house a few days prior. A family of four—an older couple, their daughter-in-law, and their little grandchild—were allegedly "held hostage," "manhandled," and robbed of gold and money early on Thursday night between 7:30 and 8 p.m. The ordeal started when the family welcomed their newly hired housekeeper, who had only been with them for five or six days. Also Read: A neighbor fatally murdered a 60-year-old man and his son in Alaknanda, Delhi The men were carrying sticks and house-breaking tools to "scare" the family members, said police, adding that the incident seems to be a "planned". Around 8 p.m. on Thursday, police got a distress call about the

heist. Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Sachin Sharma confirmed the event, stating that the mask-wearing accused physically assaulted the family, held them captive, and then committed the crime. "The primary accused was only recruited last week, but he has been identified. The household did not verify any domestic workers. He and his friends were able to flee with jewelry. Several teams have been sent. He declared, "We have some leads and will apprehend the accused shortly." "The family had hired the accused around five to six days back. He came there around 7:30pm and they opened the door for him. However, they did not know he was followed by five masked men. All the accused gained entry and then manhandled the family members. The family was then held hostage in a room and threatened to give all their jewellery," a senior police officer said.

A cyber fraud scheme was discovered in Delhi



New Delhi, Apr 18: Following the arrest of three men, including the relationship manager of a private bank, senior police officers said on Friday that they had discovered a cyber fraud racket with connections to foreign handlers operating through encrypted social media channels and involved in the use of mule bank accounts for siphoning off money cheated through online investment frauds. The East Police District's special staff squad made the arrests. On April 8, a charge of defrauding and small organized crime was filed at the Pandav Nagar police station under sections 112 and 318 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). According to the officers, investigators are currently working on a reverse trail investigation to uncover the whole cybercrime network associated with the detained individuals, including their international handlers. Deputy commissioner of police (east) Rajiv Kumar said that the case originated from a complaint lodged on the national cybercrime reporting portal (NCRP) by Aman Babu Maurya, a resident of Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, who was duped of

₹10,000 through an investment fraud. Investigations revealed that the cheated money was transferred into an alleged mule account maintained at a private bank in Mayur Vihar Phase-1 in east Delhi. "Details of the account were obtained and analysed. It was learnt that the account was opened in the name of a private firm under proprietorship of a resident of Delhi's Old Kondli, identified as Shokin. Further financial scrutiny revealed that the account was linked with eight more NCRP complaints, indicating its repeated use in cyber fraud activities. Accordingly, a case was registered and investigation was taken up," said DCP Kumar. Police said investigators arrested Shokin and he disclosed that he was induced to open the account by his nephew, Sharuk alias Jojo, who was subsequently arrested. Their interrogation revealed the role of a bank employee in facilitating the opening of mule accounts for monetary benefits. "Accordingly, a raid was conducted at the private bank and a relationship manager, Franshu Kumar, was arrested," added the DCP.

Mahi Mania Hits Hyderabad As CSK Target First Away Win Against Rejuvenated SRH



New Delhi: The Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Uppal is no stranger to high scores and high-octane drama, but Saturday evening promises to be a cracker, with more at stake than just two points. It is the quintessential Southern Derby, a collision of two franchises moving in opposite directions yet meeting at a fascinating crossroads.

For the Chennai Super Kings, it is a quest to prove they can conquer the road; for the SunRisers Hyderabad, it is about proving their recent

Demolition of the league leaders was no flash in the pan. The air in Hyderabad usually carries the scent of Irani chai and biryani, but this week it is thick with the musk of ‘Mahi Mania’. For the first time in the 2026 season, the familiar No. 7 has boarded the team bus for an away fixture. After a frustrating five-match hiatus due to a stubborn groin strain, one that saw him anchored in Chennai while the team travelled to Guwahati and Bengaluru, MS Dhoni has landed in The Nizam’s city. The recep-

Tion for ‘Thala’ at the airport on Thursday was a testament to a legacy that refuses to dim. The roars were deafening, and a massive cut-out near the stadium stands as a sentinel to the fans’ devotion.

However, the romanticism of his arrival is tempered by cold, professional caution. While the excitement is palpable, word from the CSK camp suggests they are not quite ready to throw him into the furnace of a live game just yet. Stephen Fleming and the Medical staff are playing the

long game, preferring a fully fit Dhoni for the business end of the season over a premature cameo in April. Even if he spends the evening in the dugout, his presence alone will be the loudest thing in the stadium. CSK have not won in Hyderabad since 2018, losing on their last two trips to the city. However, they have a positive head-to-head record against SRH, winning 16 and losing only seven of their 23 encounters. On the field, the narrative shifts from nostalgia to raw, modern aggression. The SunRisers’ tactical identity under Daniel Vettori is built on a high-risk, high-reward foundation, spearheaded by Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma. While the duo has not quite fired in perfect unison yet this season, Vettori remains unfazed. In the SRH dugout, there is no Plan B because they believe Plan A is unstoppable when it clicks. “The goal is to be super aggressive. To make that come off every time is impossible. We still want them to stick to their natural games,” Vettori said on Friday.

Shreyas Iyer’s Blinder Against MI Makes Jonty Rhodes Feel Like The Grandfather Of Fielding

New Delhi: The Wankhede Stadium, a venue renowned for its legendary moments, witnessed another historic feat during the high-stakes match between the Mumbai Indians and the Punjab Kings. Amidst the electrifying atmosphere, Shreyas Iyer’s extraordinary athletic display became the talk of the cricketing world, drawing praise from none other than Jonty Rhodes, the icon who transformed fielding into an art form. Rhodes, who once set the benchmark for fielding excellence, was so impressed by Iyer’s performance that he took to social media to express his admiration. In a post on X that rapidly gained traction, the South African legend acknowledged the unprecedented level of athleticism in modern cricket, a standard he never imagined during his playing days.

“Watching Shreyas Iyer perform that acrobatic fielding to assist in taking the ‘team catch’ made me appreciate how fielding has evolved since my retirement,” Rhodes remarked. He humorously reflected on his own legacy, noting that while he was once considered the “father of fielding,” today’s athletes make him feel like the “grandfather of fielding.” The moment of brilliance unfolded with the dismissal of Mumbai Indians’ star Hardik Pandya. Facing a delivery that seemed destined for a six, Pandya connected with power and



Precision. However, Iyer, patrolling the boundary, had other plans. With impeccable timing and awareness, he launched himself into the air, reaching back to intercept the ball even as his body was poised to land beyond the boundary. In a stunning mid-air maneuver, he managed to flick the ball back into play, allowing a teammate to complete the catch.

This gravity-defying act left the cricketing fraternity in awe. The dugout cameras captured the astonishment of Rohit Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav, both known for their own on-field heroics, as they witnessed Iyer’s “hang-time” with wide eyes and open mouths. The Punjab Kings, currently in blistering form, have made this elite level of fielding a

Signature of their IPL 2026 campaign. As the only unbeaten team in the tournament, with four wins and a draw, they sit comfortably at the top of the table. Their all-round excellence, highlighted by efforts like Iyer’s, has turned them into formidable opponents, leaving no room for easy runs or missed chances. With another match scheduled against the Lucknow Super Giants this Sunday, April 19, the Kings are poised to continue their dominant run. With momentum on their side and the “Grandfather of Fielding” watching in admiration, they appear ready to extend their unbeaten streak. Rajasthan have arrived in Kolkata early to acclimatise after their defeat in Hyderabad. will be wary after a collective failure SRH.

Ex-India Captain Says MI Should Pay Chahar And Shardul To Just Go Home

New Delhi: Former India captain Kris Srikkanth did not hold back in his criticism of Shardul Thakur and Deepak Chahar, stating that the two bowlers do not deserve to be part of the Mumbai Indians in IPL 2026. In a forthright comment, Srikkanth urged the Mumbai Indians management to pay the two cricketers and ask them to stay away from the squad for the remainder of the season. Srikkanth’s sharp assessment came after Mumbai Indians lost to Punjab Kings at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday, April 16. Mumbai Indians posted 195 in 20 overs, a below-par total on a good batting pitch. On a dewy evening, Punjab Kings made light work of the chase, reaching the target in just 16.2 overs.

Despite knowing Punjab Kings openers Prabhsimran Singh and Priyash Arya were in fine form, Mumbai did not open the bowling with Jasprit Bumrah. Instead,



Deepak Chahar, who opened the bowling, conceded 21 runs, setting a poor tone for their defence. Prabhsimran attacked the bowling, scoring 80 off 39 balls. He was joined by captain Shreyas Iyer, who was in complete control with his 35-ball 66. While Jasprit Bumrah, under pressure, went wicketless and conceded 41 runs in four overs, Shardul and Deepak gave away 87 runs between

them in just 5.3 overs. The two were hit to all parts of the ground, and captain Hardik Pandya had no choice but to not utilise their full quota of four overs. “I don’t know how MI are playing Deepak Chahar in the XI. I don’t know why they retained him. First over, he gave away 21 runs. In the previous match, it was 22 runs. 2.3 overs, 45 runs,” Srikkanth said on his YouTube

show. Our sir, Shardul Thakur. 3 overs, 42 runs. Combined, they bowled 5.3 overs and 87 runs. “How can you win a match if two of your important bowlers are giving away 87 runs in 5.3 overs? How can you play both of them in the XI? I asked that question in the pre-match show? Are you saying they don’t have any good bowling options? “Send them home. Pay them their money and re-

quest them not to return this season. Tell them if they are needed, they will be called. Yes, you can do this. It’s not wrong,” he stated.

The former chairman of the selection committee also criticised Mumbai Indians for not resting Jasprit Bumrah at the start of the season, especially after the pace spearhead entered the IPL 2026 season following a busy T20 World Cup campaign. Bumrah has gone wicketless in five matches and was heavily punished by Punjab Kings, conceding 41 runs in four overs without taking a wicket. Five matches wicketless. He got hit also. He needs a mental break and physical break. He gave his life and was at the peak of his prowess in the T20 World Cup. He was in the running for the Player of the Tournament award. They are now overburdening him,” Srikkanth commented. “I don’t understand how I rated this bowling attack 9.5 the season.

Frank Lampard Keeps Promise As Coventry Secure Premier League Promotion After Twenty-Five Years



New Delhi: Once in a blue moon, a moment comes along that makes you believe fairytales are real, and one such story has unfolded in a small West Midlands city. Coventry City have ended their 25-year exile from the Premier League, sealing direct promotion with a hard-fought 1-1 draw at Blackburn Rovers. Coventry, one of the founding members of the Premier League in 1992-93, had not played in the competition since their relegation in the 2000-01 season. So when centre-back Bobby Thomas scored the equaliser

in the dying minutes, the 7,500 travelling fans were bound to erupt like kids—crying, going topless, and holding up signs reading, “We’re back.” “It was an incredible moment (when Thomas scored).” Coventry City head coach Frank Lampard told Sky Sports. “We knew we were nearly there, but to finally get over the line after 25 years—wow! It’s amazing. What the fans have gone through.” As the achievement sank in, Lampard, the former Chelsea and England midfielder, also became emotional, as this marked his first pro-

motion as a manager. “This is a serious football club. These boys have achieved something unique. This is right up there for me,” he said. “I was fortunate to be part of great Chelsea teams, winning league titles and Champions Leagues, but to do this—I’m very proud to be their manager.” This promotion to the top tier not only takes them back to the promised land but also brings in broadcast revenues worth around 120 million pounds. Beyond the base revenue, the club will benefit from merit payments.

Sunrisers Hyderabad Sign Gerald Coetzee To Replace The Injured David Payne For IPL

Experienced Coetzee Joins SRH To Replace Injured Payne

New Delhi: The Indian Premier League returns to the M Chinnaswamy Stadium this Saturday for an afternoon clash that feels more like a homecoming than a routine fixture. All eyes will be on KL Rahul, the local favourite and Delhi Capitals’ batting mainstay, as he faces a Royal Challengers Bengaluru side that has looked formidable since winning their maiden title in 2025. Nearly a month into IPL 2026, RCB have evolved into one of the most complete units in the competition.

They will be keen to reinforce that reputation against a struggling Delhi Capitals outfit. Much of the spotlight has been on Virat Kohli, and the batting talisman has delivered, holding the Orange Cap. Yet, this RCB batting line-up no longer revolves solely around him. In a tradition dating back to 2011, Royal Challengers Bengaluru will don their green jerseys for this Home fixture As part of their “Green Initiative.” The move symbolises the franchise’s commitment to



environmental sustainability. Made from recycled materials, the kits underline RCB’s status as a carbon-neutral T20 franchise, while also promoting accountability and encouraging fan participation in eco-friendly efforts. While the green jersey Remains a Fan favourite, it has not always brought luck to Virat Kohli. The current Orange Cap holder in IPL 2026 with 228 runs has endured mixed returns when RCB steps away

from their traditional colours. Kohli’s most memorable outing in green came in 2016, when he smashed 109 off 55 balls against Gujarat Lions. However, despite solid contributions including a 62 in 2025 and a 73 in 2014, RCB have often found themselves on the losing side in this kit. With Kohli in strong touch this season, including a recent 49 off 34 as an Impact Substitute, RCB will hope to finally put the so-called

“green curse” behind them. KL Rahul has consistently thrived at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. Payne’s tenure with the Orange Army was brief, featuring in just two matches where he managed to pick up two wickets. However, the injury has forced SRH to look for a different profile of bowler, leading them to the raw pace and aggression of Coetzee. The Proteas pacer joins the Hyderabad camp for a fee of Rs 2 Crore.

Mumbai Indians Skipper Hardik Pandya Gasps For Breath During Dreadful Run

New Delhi: For Hardik Pandya, IPL 2026 is beginning to unravel at an alarming pace as Mumbai Indians continue to flounder. With four defeats in their first five games, the five-time champions already find themselves staring at a season slipping away far too quickly, and their skipper has looked increasingly out of sorts in the middle of it all.

The strain is beginning to show. Beyond the losses on the field, there’s a sense that the pressure has crept into Hardik’s mindset—his body language betraying frustration, his composure wearing thin. It has been a campaign where things just haven’t clicked, and the toll is visible. Following MI’s seven-wicket defeat to Punjab Kings, Hardik did not hold back, pointing to a lack of application from his batters, with remarks that seemed to be aimed at players like Tilak Varma. With the season threatening to spiral further, the question lingers—would a step back from captaincy offer Hardik the breathing space he needs to reset and return with clarity? Former India batter Manoj Tiwary believes it is high time Mumbai Indians bring back Rohit Sharma as captain to restore stability. Rohit led MI to five titles, but was removed as captain in 2023, with Hardik Pandya taking over the role. Tiwary said that Hardik has not lived up to expectations and that Rohit should be reinstated, adding



that his removal as captain was unjustified in the first place. “If they want a solution for this, then Hardik Pandya should take a break from captaincy, and Rohit Sharma should be brought back in, and given that responsibility. When Rohit Sharma was removed as captain, it was an injustice. The expectation was that Hardik Pandya would deliver a trophy, but the way things are going, it does not seem that he will be able to do that,” Tiwary said on Cricbuzz.

While Hardik has struggled as captain, he hasn’t been at his best on the personal front either. In four games, he has taken only two wickets, conceding at an economy rate of 11.16, which is on the higher side. With the bat, he has managed just 81 runs at an average of 27. From no angle has Hardik looked

like his usual self, with the pressure clearly beginning to show. As if Hardik’s struggles with leadership and on-field performances weren’t enough, his rapport with teammates has also come under the spotlight. Following the match against PBKS, a video went viral showing Jasprit Bumrah visibly unhappy with the skipper. At a crucial juncture in the game, Hardik opted to set the field according to his own plan, a decision that didn’t align with Bumrah’s thinking. The two were seen exchanging words, with Bumrah initially appearing unconvinced, before eventually going along with the call, though his disappointment was evident. Although the current situation looks grim for Hardik and Mumbai Indians, all is Not lost by any means.