

In Brief

Governor, Chief Minister greet people on Eid-ul-Fitr

Imphal: On the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla extended his warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Manipur, especially Muslim brothers and sisters. “Eid-ul-Fitr marks the culmination of the holy month of Ramadan, a period of fasting, prayer, reflection, and charity. The festival signifies gratitude, compassion, and the spirit of sharing with one another. The values of sacrifice, self-discipline, forgiveness, and brotherhood that are reinforced during Ramadan guide us towards building a more inclusive and harmonious society,” the Governor said in his message. “May this Eid bring peace, happiness, and prosperity to all and strengthen the bonds of unity and harmony in the State,” the Governor wished. Chief Minister Y Khemchand also wished the people of the State, especially Muslim brothers and sisters, on the auspicious occasion of Eid ul-Fitr.

Arms and ammo recovered

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AR troops seized drugs worth Rs 23 cr in Mizoram

Aizawl, Mar 20: The Assam Rifles has seized methamphetamine tablets worth over Rs 23 crore from an abandoned vehicle in east Mizoram’s Champhai district. Based on a tip-off, personnel of the Assam Rifles and the police conducted a joint operation during which the contraband weighing 7.9 kg was seized from the vehicle, bearing an Assam registration number plate, near Hmunhmeltha Road on Thursday, an official source said. The estimated market value of the seized drug is Rs 23.73 crore, she said. The peddlers likely fled the scene upon sensing the arrival of the security forces, the official said. The methamphetamine tablets, along with the vehicle, have been handed over to the Excise and Narcotics Department in Champhai for further investigation.

Mizoram government hands Jordan rehab center to Presbyterian Church authority

Aizawl, Mar 20: The Government of Mizoram has officially handed over the Jordan Rehabilitation Center to the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, marking a significant step in strengthening community-based welfare initiatives. The formal transfer was carried out earlier this week in the presence of senior government officials, church leaders, and representatives of local organizations. The Jordan Rehabilitation Center, established to provide care and support for individuals struggling with substance abuse and related challenges, has played an important role in the state’s social welfare framework. By entrusting its management to the Presbyterian Church, the government aims to ensure that the center continues to operate with compassion, efficiency, and a strong community focus.



Officials noted that the Presbyterian Church has a long-standing record of involvement in social service and rehabilitation programs across Mizoram. Its experience in counseling, community outreach, and faith-based support systems is expected to enhance the center’s capacity to deliver holistic care. The church lead-

ership expressed gratitude to the government for its trust and pledged to uphold the mission of the center with dedication. The handover ceremony also highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts between the state and civil society in addressing pressing social issues. Speakers emphasized that rehabilitation is not only

about medical treatment but also about emotional healing, reintegration into society, and restoring dignity to affected individuals.

Community members welcomed the move, expressing hope that the center will expand its services and reach more families in need. Observers noted that the partnership reflects Mizoram’s broader approach of combining institutional support with grassroots involvement to tackle social challenges. The government reiterated its commitment to supporting the center through policy and resource assistance, while the Presbyterian Church assured that it would work tirelessly to strengthen rehabilitation efforts. The handover marks a new chapter in Mizoram’s ongoing fight against substance abuse and its commitment to community welfare.

Mizoram CM calls for Mizo unity at Thangram

Aizawl, Mar 20: Mizoram Chief Minister recently emphasized the importance of unity among the Mizo people across borders while addressing the Thangram meet. The gathering, attended by community leaders, scholars, and representatives from various organizations, provided a platform to discuss cultural identity, social harmony, and regional cooperation. In his address, the Chief Minister highlighted that the Mizo community, though spread across different states and neighboring countries, shares a common heritage and values that must be preserved. He stressed that unity is essential not only for cultural continuity but also for strengthening social and political bonds among

Mizos living in diverse regions. The Thangram meet also featured discussions on cross-border issues, including migration, cultural exchange, and the need for collaborative development initiatives. Participants underscored the role of youth and civil society in fostering dialogue and building bridges across communities. The Chief Minister’s call for unity was welcomed by attendees, who expressed optimism that such initiatives would reinforce solidarity and promote peace. Observers noted that the emphasis on Mizo identity across borders reflects a broader vision of inclusivity and cooperation, ensuring that cultural ties remain strong despite geographical divisions.

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happiness, and prosperity to all and strengthen the bonds of unity and harmony in the State,” the Governor wished. Chief Minister Y Khemchand also wished the people of the State, especially Muslim brothers and sisters, on the auspicious occasion of Eid ul-Fitr. In his message, Chief Minister Khemchand said, “Eid ul-Fitr marks the joyous culmination of Ramadan, a month-long period of fasting, spiritual reflection, and

heightened devotion. It is usually celebrated on the second day of Shawwal, the tenth month of the Islamic Calendar, after the sighting of the new moon, by breaking their fast. The festival creates an atmosphere where one is encouraged to abstain from evil thoughts, words, and action and to become a better person.

Celebrated with joy and festivity, Eid ul-Fitr is observed by offering prayers at Mosques, eating delicious dishes, doing charity, and exchanging gifts with friends and relatives”. “May all our prayers be answered on this auspicious day and may our lives be filled with peace, safety, health, happiness,” the Chief Minister prayed.

UPPK cadre arrested, arms and ammo recovered



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magazines of different arms, two grenades, 194 rounds ammunition, and five Baofeng VHF Radio sets with five USB chargers. Meanwhile, movement of 178 vehicles carrying essential items along NH-37 was ensured. Strict security measures were taken up in all vulnerable locations and security convoy was provided in sensitive stretches in order to ensure free and safe movement of the vehicles. A total of 115 Nakas/Check points were installed in different districts, both in the hills and the valley, however none was detained.

TRAI conducts seminar on ‘Rating of Buildings for Digital Connectivity’ in Guwahati



Guwahati, Mar 20: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Regional Office Kolkata, organized a seminar on “Rating of Buildings for Digital Connectivity” in Guwahati on Thursday. The seminar was held in the backdrop of the “Rating of Properties for Digital Connectivity Regulations” issued by TRAI on October 25, 2024, with the objective of creating awareness among stakeholders about the subject and its implementation.

The seminar was inaugurated by KS Gopinath Narayan, Principal Secretary, Department of IT, Government of Assam, who attended as the Chief Guest. PK Singh, Principal Advisor, TRAI; R Meshram, Additional DG (T), DoT, Assam

LSA, Barnali Sharma, Secretary, RERA; PC Moral, President, Association of Architects, Assam and PK Sharma, President, AREIDA were the guests of honour in the seminar.

The event witnessed participation from senior officers from TRAI, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of Assam (Departments of IT and DoHUA), North Eastern Council, RERA, AREIDA, builders, academia, telecom and internet service providers (TSPs/ISPs), consumer organizations and other stakeholders.

KS Gopinath Narayan, in his address, appreciated the initiatives taken by TRAI and highlighted the importance of implementing these regulations to ensure high-quality

telecom connectivity within buildings, especially in the era of artificial intelligence influencing all aspects of life. Other guests of honour also deliberated on the need and importance of digital connectivity ratings for buildings. Kaushik Mukherjee, Advisor, TRAI RO Kolkata, delivered the welcome address. The seminar deliberations were divided into two sessions. The forenoon session focused on the regulations related to Digital Connectivity Rating (DCR), incorporation of regulatory provisions in building bye-laws, and the process, scope, and challenges involved in rating properties for digital connectivity. The second session covered the subject from the perspective of telecom service provid-

ers, infrastructure providers, and original equipment manufacturers.

Speakers from TRAI, DoHUA, Government of Assam, the Council of Architecture, Digital Connectivity Rating agencies, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), infrastructure providers, and telecom equipment manufacturers delivered presentations during the seminar. They discussed a wide range of issues related to the rating of buildings for digital connectivity. The seminar was organized as part of TRAI’s proactive approach to working collaboratively with governments, industry, academia, and other stakeholders, ensuring that the regulatory framework supports emerging technological developments and trends.

Ropeway Project at Vantawng Falls to Boost Mizoram Tourism

Aizawl, Mar 20: The Mizoram government has announced plans to construct a ropeway at Vantawng Falls near Thenzawl town in Serchhip district, aiming to strengthen tourism infrastructure in the state. According to an official, the project will allow visitors to enjoy a bird’s-eye view of the state’s highest waterfall and is being funded under the Special Assistance to States for

Capital Investment (SAS-CI) scheme.

An amount of ₹34.50 crore has already been sanctioned for the project, and both administrative approval and expenditure clearance have been granted. However, the selection of a contractor to execute the project is still pending.

Located about 92 km from Aizawl, Vantawng Falls is one of Mizoram’s most popular tourist attractions,

drawing both domestic and international visitors.

Officials and local stakeholders believe the proposed ropeway will significantly enhance visitor experience, improve accessibility, and transform the site into a world-class destination. The project is also expected to generate employment opportunities and give a major boost to tourism in and around Thenzawl.

BPF unveils first list of 11 candidates for Assam Assembly elections

Guwahati, Mar 20: The Hagrama Mohilary-led Bodoland People’s Front (BPF) on Thursday released its first list of candidates for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, declaring nominees for 11 constituencies across Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The list comprises candidates for key constituencies such as Gossaigaon, Dotma (ST), Kokrajhar (ST), Baokhungri, Parbotjhora, Sidli-Chirang (ST), Manas, Baksa (ST), Bhergaon, Udalguri (ST), and Mazbat.

The party has fielded Sabharam Basumatary from Gossaigaon, Rabiram Narzary from Dotma (ST), Sewli Mohilary from Kokrajhar (ST), and Rupam Roy

from Baokhungri constituency.

On the other hand, Dr. Rezul Karim will contest from Parbotjhora, while Paniram Brahma has been named for Sidli-Chirang (ST).

The party has also nominated Thaneswar Basumatary from Manas, Maneswar Brahma from Baksa (ST), Maheswar Boro from Bhergaon, Rihon Daimary from Udalguri (ST), and Charan Boro from Mazbat constituency.

With the declaration of the candidates’ list, the BPF, which is contesting the elections as an integral part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), has formally entered the electoral fray, focusing on its core strongholds in the BTR region.

Ukhrul is tense due to reports of new gunfights in many areas

Guwahati, Mar 20: Fresh gunfights were reported at multiple locations in Manipur’s Ukhrul district on Thursday between suspected Kuki armed groups and Tangkhul Naga village volunteers, police said, adding that the clashes were reported at three locations, including Mongket Chepu village.A fresh exchange of fire was also reported at Sanakeithel (Sinakeithei), a Tangkhul Naga village in Ukhrul district, though no casualties were reported.“It could be a coordinated attack, we heard sounds of automatic assault rifles and Kartoos (single-barrel gun) but cannot confirm who are involved. No casualties have been officially reported during the gunfight; however, security has been alerted in the area,” a police officials, requesting anonymity, told the Hindustan Times.According to sources quoting the Sinakeithei village authority, the incident occurred around 3.20 pm when suspected Kuki armed men allegedly opened fire towards the village.The crossfire reportedly continued till around 5.10 p.m. Sources alleged that the firing originated from bunkers located at the Lungter hill range near the village.The incident comes amid heightened tensions between Naga and Kuki groups in Ukhrul district following recent developments, including the abduction of 21 passengers by Kuki groups on March 11 and the recovery of two Kuki bodies after the passengers were released the



following day.Meanwhile, the Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL) expressed concern over reported firing incidents in Sinakeithei, Thawai and Litan areas on March 19.In a statement, Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL) said the incidents created panic among residents and disrupted normal life in the affected villages.It stated that firing was reported from multiple locations during the day and evening.TNL urged authorities to take immediate steps to restore normalcy and ensure the safety of civilians. It also called for deployment of adequate security forces, maintenance of peace, and a thorough investigation into the incidents

Arms and explosives seized along Indo-Myanmar border in Chandel

Imphal, Mar 20: Security forces have intensified anti-insurgency operations along the Indo–Myanmar border in southern Manipur, leading to the recovery of a substantial cache of arms, ammunition and explosives, officials said on Friday. In a separate operation, security forces arrested an active cadre of the proscribed United People’s Party of Kangleipak (UPPK) from the Mantripukhri area in Imphal East district. The individual was identified as Chungkham Kiran Meitei alias Lepshinba (23), a resident of Khumbong Mayai Leikai under Patsoi Police Station in Imphal West district. The operations follow a reported gun battle between rival insurgent groups operating along the border. Acting on intelligence inputs, security personnel conducted searches in the general area of Molcham village under Molcham Police Station in Chandel



district, which shares a porous boundary with Myanmar. Among the items recovered were an AK-47 rifle with two magazines, a 9 mm carbine machine gun with a magazine, two grenades, two grenade detonators, multiple magazines for different weapons,

194 rounds of ammunition, and five Baofeng VHF radio sets along with USB chargers.Security forces stepped up operations after reports that at least four cadres belonging to the Kuki National Army and the People’s Defence Force in neighbouring Myanmar were killed in an exchange of fire with Manipur-based armed groups along the Indo-Myanmar border in Kamjong district. According to sources, the gunfight took place near Border Pillar No. 90 in the vicinity of the Kabaw Valley, between Namli and Minda villages, beginning around 5.30 a.m. on March 18. The clash is believed to have involved armed groups from the Manipur side engaging with forces allegedly linked to the KNA and the PDF. Reports suggested that some weapons may have been seized during the encounter, though this could not be independently verified.

NE Youth Festival a symbol of unity: Gov



Dimapur, Mar 20: The 9th North East Youth Festival 2026 commenced with a vibrant inaugural ceremony at Chümoukedima Football Stadium on Wednesday evening, bringing together youth delegates from across the eight North Eastern states in a celebration of culture, unity and youth empowerment.Gracing the occasion as special guest, Nagaland Governor Nand Kishore Yadav expressed appreciation to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for entrusting Nagaland with hosting the event, terming it a matter of pride for the state and a significant platform for regional youth engagement.He said it was befitting for Nagaland, often called the “Land of Festivals”, to host such an event celebrating diversity and unity. He also welcomed delegates from all eight North Eastern states, along with participants from MY Bharat and the National Service Scheme, noting that their presence reflected the spirit of national integration.

Highlighting the state’s cultural richness, Yadav described Nagaland as a land of vibrant traditions, scenic landscapes and strong community values, adding that its festivals and way of life exemplified harmony between people and nature.

He said the festival, organised by the Department of Youth Resources and Sports under the aegis of the Ministry, aimed to promote unity, cultural exchange and mutual respect. Referring to the theme “Ashtalakshmi: Celebrating Eight Forces of Youth and Progress”, he said it reflected the energy and potential of the region’s youth. The governor encouraged participants to actively engage in various events

and build lasting friendships, while emphasising the role of youth in nation-building and achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.Meanwhile, delivering the welcome address, advisor for Youth Resources and Sports, Keoshu Yimkhiung described the festival as a celebration of unity, diversity and youthful energy.

He welcomed the dignitaries and participants, expressing confidence that the event would provide a platform for youth to showcase their talents, exchange ideas and build lasting relationships.Joint secretary, Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, Shiv Ratan thanked the Nagaland government for hosting the festival and appreciated the arrangements, commending the state’s hospitality.He said the festival was an important platform reflecting the spirit of unity in diversity, adding that the eight North Eastern states formed an integral part of the country’s cultural identity. He stated that the festival aimed to strengthen bonds among youth, promote mutual understanding and create greater opportunities for young people.Earlier, the inaugural programme began with an invocation by Rev. A Temsu Longkumer, pastor, Police Baptist Church, Chümoukedima, followed by introduction and parade of contingents from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim and Nagaland. This was followed by a special performance by students of Grace Academy, Dimapur, and cultural presentations by participating states, including martial arts demonstration by Nagaland Pencak Silat team.

‘No alliance yet’: Akhil Gogoi slams Congress over seat confusion after 4-hour talks

Imphal, Mar 19: Akhil Gogoi, on March 19, expressed sharp disappointment over stalled alliance talks with the Congress, alleging a lack of clarity and approval from the party’s central leadership after a prolonged four-hour meeting.

Addressing the media, the Rajjor Dal leader said it was “surprising” that the Congress had publicly claimed to have offered 13 seats to

his party, while internally those seats had not yet been approved by the All India Congress Committee (AICC). He said the deadlock persisted as the Assam Congress leadership is yet to consult Rahul Gandhi on the matter. Gogoi further alleged inconsistencies in the seat-sharing proposal, stating that even within the 13-seat framework, Congress asked Rajjor Dal to negotiate on certain con-

stituencies. He pointed out that the Congress changed its stance on the Gauripur Assembly seat, expressing reluctance to concede it and instead offering Mancachar or Algapur as alternative “friendly” seats.High-lighting Rajjor Dal’s position, Gogoi said his party had proposed a total of 15 seats to the Congress, including Naoboicha and Dhemaji, which are still pending approval. He added that

Gaurav Gogoi informed them that the matter regarding the 13 seats would be taken up with the AICC, and a final decision on the remaining two seats would follow once approval is secured.

With key issues unresolved, the much-anticipated alliance between Congress and Rajjor Dal remains uncertain ahead of the Assam Assembly elections.

Manipur MP among poorest in Rajya Sabha

Imphal, Mar 20: A king without a kingdom and a man of faith sit at the bottom of India’s upper house wealth table, a new report on Rajya Sabha members has revealed — even as nearly a third of the chamber’s sitting MPs carry declared criminal cases against their names. Maharaja Sanajaoba Leishemba, the ceremonial monarch of Manipur who holds a BJP ticket and a Rajya Sabha seat, has declared assets of just around Rs 5 lakh, making him the second-poorest member of the house. Only AAP’s Sant Balbir Singh, a religious figure from Punjab, edges him out with declared assets of roughly Rs 3 lakh. TMC’s Prakash Chik Baraik, with approximately Rs 9 lakh to his name, rounds out the three least wealthy MPs in the chamber.The findings come from a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), which examined self-declared affidavits submitted by 229 of 233 sitting Rajya Sabha MPs. One seat from Jharkhand remains vacant, and affidavits for three MPs could not be obtained.The contrast at the top of the wealth table is stark. BRS MP Bandi Partha Saradhi leads the pack with



declared assets exceeding Rs 5,300 crore, followed by AAP’s Rajinder Gupta at over Rs 5,053 crore and YSRCP’s Alla Ayodhya Rami Reddy at over Rs 2,577 crore. In all, 31 MPs — 14 per cent of those surveyed — have declared assets running into the billions of rupees.The average declared net worth of a Rajya Sabha MP stands at Rs 120.69 crore, though this figure masks wide variation across parties. AAP members average Rs 574.09 crore per MP, largely driven by its billionaire members, while YSRCP MPs average Rs 522.63 crore. At the other end, TMC MPs average Rs 17.70 crore and BJP MPs Rs 28.29 crore. Congress sits at Rs 128.61 crore per member on average.On criminal cases, 73 MPs — 32 per cent of those analysed — have dis-

closed cases against themselves in their affidavits. Of these, 36 face what the ADR classifies as serious charges. One MP has declared a murder case, four have cases of attempt to murder, and three face charges related to crimes against women.Party-wise, the BJP accounts for the largest absolute number, with 27 of its 99 MPs having declared criminal cases. Twelve of 28 Congress MPs have done so, as have four each from TMC’s 13 members and AAP’s 10 members. Three MPs each from CPI(M) and BRS, have also disclosed such cases.The ADR report, which covers 37 recently elected members within the total analysed, offers one of the more detailed portraits of the financial and legal profiles of India’s upper house.

New entrants preferred over old loyalists Rift in Assam BJP

Guwahati, Mar 20: Rift within the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) resurfaced on Thursday after the party announced candidates for 88 constituencies for the upcoming Assembly elections, dropping several senior leaders while fielding a significant number of turncoats from rival parties. The largest share comes from the Congress, with around 19 candidates having crossed over to the BJP over the years. These include Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma himself, along with senior leaders such as Jayanta Malla Baruah, Pijush Hazarika, Ajanta Neog, Rupjyoti Kurmi and new entrants Bhupen Borah and Pradyut Bordoloi The influx of defectors has, however, triggered resentment among long-time BJP workers and ticket aspirants who say organisational loyalty is being overlooked. Borah, the former Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president who had earlier described the BJP as ideologically incompatible,

joined the party on February 16 and has now been fielded from the 73 Bihpuria constituency. Bordoloi, a sitting Nagaon MP, switched sides just a day before the candidate list was announced.Among the most striking exclusions is Siddhartha Bhattacharya, the former president of the MLA from the 53 Guwahati East constituency. Bhattacharya, who joined the party in 1995, was widely regarded as a key figure in facilitating Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma’s entry into the BJP. The candidate list leaves out 19 sitting MLAs, including Cabinet minister Nandita Garlosa from the 16 Haflong constituency in a reshuffle that has unsettled sections of the party’s old guard.At the same time, the BJP has leaned heavily on leaders who previously belonged to opposition or regional parties. An analysis of the list shows that at least 30 candidates, around 35 per cent are defectors from the Congress and Asom Gana Parishad (AGP).

Assam polls: UPPL chief Pramod Boro files nomination from Tamulpur

Guwahati, Mar 20: United People’s Party Liberal (UPPL) candidate Pramod Boro on March 20 filed his nomination papers for the 43 Tamulpur Assembly constituency at the office of the District Commissioner.Boro was accompanied by his wife Parul Bharali, Minister U.G. Brahma, MLA Jolen Daimari, MCL(A) Wilson Hasda and other party leaders during the filing. Speaking to reporters afterwards, Boro asserted that the party’s decision to contest the elections was final, ruling out any possibility of withdrawal. “Our party’s decision is final. There is no question of withdrawing the nomination papers,” he said.

He said the UPPL was not entering the electoral fray with hostility towards any political party or individual. “We have

no opposition to any political party. We also have no personal enmity with Hagrama Mohilary,” Boro said, adding that he had “even sought blessings from BJP candidate Biswajit Daimary” earlier in the day. Outlining the party’s electoral strategy, Boro said the UPPL is fielding candidates in 15 constituencies within the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and five seats outside it. He expressed confidence in the party’s prospects, stating that it expects to win “10 to 12 seats”

On alliance possibilities, he clarified that no commitments had been made so far. “We have not promised alliance or friendship with anyone,” he said.Taking a swipe at the ruling coalition, Boro remarked, The NDA has a new love today. We have no intention of disturbing that love.”

The governor is briefed on the Garo Hills issue by M'laya CM Chief Minister Conrad Sangma

Shillong, Mar 20: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma on Thursday met Governor C.H. Vijayashankar at Lok Bhavan in Shillong to brief him on the prevailing law and order situation in the Garo Hills region.

Sangma, who had spent nearly two weeks in Garo Hills monitoring developments, said the situation required his full attention. “This required my full attention so I was there in Garo Hills and all this while I was only able to communicate with the Governor on the phone. Therefore I felt it appropriate that I must come and brief him about the current situation and the different incidents that led to the law and order situation that we faced,” he told reporters after the meeting.Asked about arrests made in connection with the violence, the Chief Minister clarified that such matters fall under the purview of the police. “The police are taking steps as per law and as per evidence,” he stated, emphasizing that actions would be taken strictly on the basis of rules and available proof. Sangma, accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong, who is in charge of District Council Affairs, noted that violence had subsided and



normalcy was gradually returning to the region. He further informed that internet services, which had been suspended in five districts, have now been restored.The Garo Hills had witnessed heightened tensions following violent clashes between tribal and non-tribal groups over the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GH-ADC) elections. The violence, which erupted on March 9, resulted in two deaths, significant property damage, and the suspension of internet

services.The controversy stemmed from the GHADC’s decision to bar non-tribals from contesting elections, sparking widespread protests and clashes. In light of the unrest, the state government has postponed the council elections.With the restoration of internet services and a reduction in violence, the government expressed cautious optimism about the return of peace in the region, while reiterating its commitment to maintaining law and order.

Tickets for RR vs CSK match to be sold trough Royals Cricket on Wheels in Guwahati

Guwahati, Mar 20: Rajasthan Royals, home team of the Northeast, has opened a Rs 1,499 ticket stand for the upcoming RR vs CSK match in Guwahati, with tickets to be sold through the Royals Cricket on Wheels across the city. According to the franchise, the mobile activation will visit multiple locations across Guwahati where fans can purchase tickets directly during the scheduled visits. The remaining route plan of the Royals Cricket on Wheels bus will be announced soon. For now, fans can visit the locations listed below during the designated timings to avail the Rs 1,499 stand offer.

The franchise informed that the stand has been released in limited numbers, and tickets will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis during the activation. The move is part of efforts to make match tickets more accessible to fans in different parts of the city ahead of the high-profile fixture.

Route & Schedule (Phase 1):

March 20 – Guwahati College (10 AM) | Handique Girls College (1 PM – 3 PM)

March 21 – March 22 – Brahmaputra River Front (3 PM – 7 PM)



Further locations and timings for the Royals Cricket on Wheels bus will be released shortly. Fans are advised to follow official Rajasthan Royals announcements for upcoming stops.

NCC white water rafting course concludes at Bhalukpong

Tawang, Mar 20: The White Water Rafting Course conducted by 2 AP Battalion NCC, Tawang, in coordination with National Institute of Mountaineering and Adventure Sports (NIMAS), Dirang culminated at the Kameng River in Bhalukpong recently. Group Commander NCC Group Headquarter Tezpur, visited the camp. He reviewed the training of cadets, appreciated their spirit and highlighted the role of adventure activities in building confidence, resilience and team spirit. A total of 50 NCC cadets of NER Directorate successfully completed the 10-day intensive course conducted. During the course, cadets underwent rigorous training in white water rafting, including handling of rafting equipment, river navigation techniques, safety procedures, rescue drills, and identification of river hazards. The training was imparted by experienced instructors from NIMAS, ensuring a high standard of professionalism and safety.



In addition to rafting activities, the cadets participated in a short trek to Phinjuli, and visited the Tippi Orchid Research Centre, gaining valuable insights into the region's biodiversity.

The course provided a unique platform for the cadets to develop confidence, leadership, teamwork and resilience, while fostering a spirit of adventure and environmental awareness.

Mizoram gears up for Aizawl civic polls; campaigns intensify

Aizawl, Mar 20: Mizoram is gearing up for the upcoming Aizawl Municipal Corporation elections, with major political parties intensifying their campaigns across the capital city. The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), Mizo National Front (MNF), Congress, and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have all stepped up their outreach efforts, signaling a competitive contest ahead. Party workers and leaders have been actively engaging with residents through rallies, door-to-door campaigns,

and public meetings. The ZPM, currently enjoying strong grassroots support, has focused its campaign on promises of transparency and improved civic services. The MNF, which has a long-standing presence in Mizoram politics, is highlighting its governance record and pledging to strengthen urban infrastructure. Meanwhile, the Congress is seeking to regain ground by emphasizing social welfare and inclusive development, while the BJP is working to expand its base by project-

ing national-level schemes and highlighting local issues. Observers note that the campaigns have become more visible in recent days, with posters, banners, and social media outreach dominating the city's political landscape. The civic polls are expected to be closely watched, as the outcome will reflect public sentiment on urban governance and the performance of parties at the grassroots level. Authorities have assured that necessary arrangements are being made to ensure free and fair elections.

Guwahati hosts key Army-Railway exercise for national crisis readiness

Guwahati, Mar 20: A high-level scenario planning exercise was successfully conducted in Guwahati under 101 Area and Headquarters Eastern Command, the Indian Army's largest command covering the Northeast region. The conference brought together senior officials from the Indian Army and Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) to enhance coordination and preparedness for handling national contingencies.

The exercise focused on understanding mutual strengths and optimizing available resources between the two organizations. The primary objective was to align operational mechanisms to ensure a rapid and coordinated response during any national crisis, particularly in the strategically sensitive



Eastern sector.

During the session, participants deliberated on a wide range of potential scenarios aimed at strengthening operational readiness. Special emphasis was laid

on the development of dual-use infrastructure, which would not only bolster logistics capabilities but also lead to significant savings in government expenditure through shared resource utilization.

Senior officers from Northeast Frontier Railway, Eastern Command and Army Headquarters actively participated in the discussions, sharing insights and best practices to improve inter-agency synergy. The exercise enabled stakeholders to identify key areas for collaboration and streamline response strategies.

This joint initiative has reinforced confidence among all participating agencies and established a robust framework for seamless integration between the Indian Army and Indian Railways, a statement issued by NFR said.

Such coordinated efforts will play a crucial role in ensuring an efficient and unified response during times of national importance and emergency situations, it added.

Himanta Biswa Sarma leads massive rally to file nomination for Jalukbari seat

Guwahati, Mar 20: In a show of strength, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today took out a massive rally to file his nomination papers to contest the Assembly elections from the Jalukbari constituency in Guwahati. The procession started from the Veterinary College ground at Khanapara and passed through the GS Road before culminating at the Kamrup (Metro) District Commissioner's office, where Sarma submitted his nomination papers to at around 12:30 pm. He was accompanied by his wife Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, son Nandil Sarma, Guwahati MP Bijulee Kalita Medhi and Guwahati Mayor Mrigen Sarania.

Before setting off to file his nomination, Sarma took the blessings of his mother Mrinalini Devi.

A sea of jubilant supporters joined Sarma's nomination rally, many of them dancing and singing all the way. Rallyists were also seen carrying huge cutouts of lotus -- BJP's election symbol -- and caricature of Sarma in the Superman outfit.

After filing his nomination, Sarma exuded confidence that he will win from Jalukbari again and the BJP will return to power in the state.



"I am representing the Jalukbari seat since 2001 and I am sure that this time too I'll get the support of the people," he said. "The BJP will form government in Assam for the third consecutive time as we have people's blessings with us," Sarma said. He said that after March 24, Prime Minister

Narendra Modi will address four poll rallies and Union Home Minister Amit Shah will address 6-8 rallies. He said that some of the party leaders might have been miffed at not getting nomination, but he will personally talk to them and persuade them to extend support the party candidates.

Arunachal's inaugural sports carnival opens in Aalo

Aalo, Mar 20: The first ever Arunachal Sports Carnival 2026 was inaugurated at Aalo in West Siang district on Friday. State Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Kento Jini graced the occasion as chief guest. Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Jini said that the two-day Arunachal Sports Carnival was a landmark event in West Sinag district which has produced many sportspersons who have excelled at the state, national and global events. "Games and sports play a vital role in shaping good health in life."

West Siang has immense scope for tourism and adventure sports such as white-water rafting, trekking, zip lining, etc," the minister said. He urged the youths of West Siang district to give more emphasis on games and sports. The minister further informed that the Aalo stadium would soon be renovated soon and that fundas have been sanctioned for the purpose. "Many developmental projects for Aalo Township will be undertaken very soon," he said. Demonstration of mixed martial arts,



kick boxing, wrestling, cultural show, exhibition featured during the inaugural day. The sports carnival will also feature events such as zip lining, trekking, white water rafting, cultural nights, etc. Earlier, Gumnya Karbak, Director, Sports Authority of Arunachal Pradesh, while welcoming the gathering, said that Arunachal Pradesh has immense potential for sports. He urged the State government to make the Arunachal Sports Carnival a calendar event.

Drugs worth Rs 23 crore seized in Champhai

Aizawl, Mar 20: In a major crackdown against drug trafficking, authorities in Mizoram seized narcotics worth approximately Rs 23 crore in Champhai district. The operation was carried out earlier this week by security forces and excise officials, who intercepted the consignment during routine checks along the Indo-Myanmar border.

According to official sources, the seized drugs included a large quantity of methamphetamine tablets, commonly known as "party drugs," which were being smuggled into India through Champhai. The contraband was hidden in packages and transported with the intention of distribution across different states. The seizure highlights the growing challenge of cross-border narcotics trade in the region.

Following the discovery, a massive manhunt has been launched to trace those involved in the smuggling network. Security forces are coordinating with intelligence



agencies to identify the masterminds and dismantle the supply chain. Authorities have assured that strict measures will be taken to curb such illegal activities, which pose a serious threat to public health and security. Community leaders and civil society groups have welcomed the action, urging continued vigilance along border areas. Observers note that Champhai has become a hotspot for drug trafficking, and sustained enforcement efforts are crucial to protect vulnerable communities from the menace

of narcotics. Observers note that the seizure reflects both the scale of the problem and the determination of enforcement agencies to combat it. Authorities have reiterated their commitment to intensify surveillance and strengthen cooperation with neighboring states and countries to prevent the inflow of illicit substances.

The incident serves as a reminder of the urgent need for coordinated action against drug trafficking, reinforcing Mizoram's role as a frontline state in the fight against narcotics.

PWF disburses Rs 1.56 lakh medical assistance to journalists

Imphal, Mar 20: The Paomee Welfare Foundation (PWF), a trust of the All Manipur Working Journalists' Union, has disbursed a total of Rs 1.56 lakh under its Medical Financial Assistance (MFA) scheme for Phase I of 2025-26, covering treatment expenses incurred between April 1 and September 30, 2025.

Six applications were received during the period and, following scrutiny by its Medical Board and approval from the Board of Trustees, financial assistance was extended to all six beneficiaries.

The distribution ceremony was held at the Manipur Press Club on Thursday in the presence of PWF Chairperson N. Tombiraj, Secretary Borun Thokchom and other Executive members.

Among the beneficiaries, Okram Somendra Singh of Impact TV received Rs 30,000 for treatment involving ORIF with double plating, while Thokchom Anil Kumar of Sangai Express was granted Rs 30,000 for treatment of CAD, Type 2 diabetes and hypertension. Wangkhem Lukhoi of Echel Express received Rs 19,000 for treatment of chronic subdural hematoma, Sapam Aruna of Sangai Express was provided Rs 9,000 for fracture treatment, Adison Nongthombam of Sangai Express received Rs 15,000 for the treatment of her daughter and Maibam Sonalee of Impact TV was granted Rs 15,000 for her medical treatment.

In addition, PWF handed over a cheque of Rs



36,000 to AMWJU as reimbursement for immediate medical relief earlier extended to member journalists, bringing the total expenditure for this phase to Rs 1.56 lakh. Launched in 2017, the MFA scheme provides financial assistance to both serving and retired bona fide members

of AMWJU, with provision for one time aid to an immediate family member. The scheme is disbursed every six months and is funded through interest generated from PWF's corpus of Rs 80 lakh maintained as a fixed deposit with the State Bank of India.

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Editorial

The Need for Stronger Community Bonds

Communities form the foundation of social life. Strong community bonds create environments where individuals feel supported, connected, and secure. However, modern lifestyles have gradually weakened these connections. Urbanisation, busy schedules, and digital communication have reduced face-to-face interaction among people. As a result, individuals may feel isolated even when surrounded by others. This lack of connection can affect both emotional well-being and social cohesion.Strong community bonds are built through interaction and co-operation. Neighbours who know and support each other create safer and more harmonious environments. Shared activities such as cultural events, local initiatives, and volunteer work help strengthen these relationships.Educational institutions and local organisations can play a significant role in fostering community spirit. Programs that encourage participation and collaboration bring people together and promote mutual understanding.Families also contribute by encouraging social interaction and maintaining relationships within neighbourhoods. Simple actions such as greeting neighbours or participating in local events can strengthen connections.Governments and urban planners should consider the importance of community spaces. Parks, community centers, and public events provide opportunities for people to interact and build relationships.Strong community bonds create resilient societies. When individuals feel connected to their surroundings, they are more likely to support one another and work toward common goals.

Iran could be the US's Boer war: a hollow victory that marks the beginning of the end of empire



Nobody gave the Boers a prayer when the war in South Africa began in 1899. It was farmers ranged against the might of the British empire, and the expectation was that resistance would quickly crumble.Eventually, might did prevail. Britain won the Boer war, but it was a hollow victory that took the best part of three years to achieve and came at a high cost. The blow to British prestige – coming at a time when its global hegemony was under threat from fast-growing countries such as the US – was severe. Far from highlighting the extent of Britain’s power, it exposed its limitations.A century and a quarter later, the US risks being embroiled in its equivalent of the Boer war. What should have been a walk-over threatens to become a prolonged conflict. The Iranians are using guerrilla tactics, just as the Boers did, with much success. There is little doubt that, in the end, superior US and Israeli firepower will prevail, but at what price?

The oil market tells its own story. The war in Iran has spilled over into the wider Middle East and shows no sign of ending anytime soon. Fears of a global recession are growing – and they are justified. Oil and gas facilities in the Gulf states have been hit by Iranian missiles. Tankers are unable to pass through the strait of Hormuz. The

What’s worth more: Churchill or a woke badger? Welcome to Britain’s banknote culture war

One day soon we may finally have an answer to a question that has stumped philosophers through the ages: which is worth more, a beaver or a robin? We might be able to place actual monetary values on barn owls or stags, too. Any one of them could even be considered worth more than Winston Churchill.That’s because the Bank of England has announced that the next update of British banknotes will end the half-century tradition of designs featuring historic notables. (Charles III, whose historic notability we won’t be clear on for some time, will remain.) In their place will come representations of patriotic British wildlife, shortlisted by a panel of experts, then chosen by public vote. In a transparent attempt to avoid national humiliation of a “Goaty McGoatface” variety, the Bank’s governor will get the final say. All this is happening, though you wouldn’t know it from the coverage, with the support and encouragement of the British public. A consultation last July found that 60% of the 44,000 responses backed the idea of taking nature as the theme, just in front of “architecture and landmarks” on 56%, and way ahead of “historic figures” at a measly 38%. Whether the public would have been quite so keen if they’d known upfront that “household pets” would be explicitly excluded from possible designs, I’m not so sure.

Nor is this some mad, previously unthinkable idea. In 2024, the International Bank Note Soci-

ety’s prestigious banknote of the year award went to the Bermuda \$5 note, which as well as King Charles (it’s a British Overseas Territory), featured blue marlin, dolphins, butterflies and rather a lot else. Even in the UK itself, you can find legal tender featuring mackerel, otters and red squirrels, in the form of Royal Bank of Scotland banknotes (though good luck spending them down south). And yet, the idea has caused uproar among Britain’s noisy army of self-appointed patriots. Nigel Farage posted a video on X about his fury, with the immortal line: “The Bank of England is proposing replacing Winston Churchill with a picture of a beaver on our banknotes. This is the definition of woke.” Meanwhile, Tom Tugendhat, who is a very serious person (he was in the army, you know), took to the pages of the Telegraph to accuse the Bank of “the weakness of not being able to make tough choices and instead going for bland neutrality”; while the financial commentator Matthew Lynn used a column in the Spectator to describe the end of “the proud tradition of honouring our greatest Brits” as a “travesty” – even if that proud tradition is only about as old as Andy Burnham.

It would be churlish, however, to suggest it is only the right who have concerns. Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey said that Churchill “deserves better than being replaced by a badger” – tell me you don’t want to see that war movie – while even the BBC’s



write-up noted that: “Bosses at the Bank may feel they are less likely to face a backlash with choices of wildlife”.It’s true that the Bank’s own guidelines say it should avoid anything “divisive” (“The theme should not involve imagery that would reasonably be offensive to, or exclude, any groups”) And would you blame officials if – after a long decade that has brought everything from the Rhodes Must Fall campaign to the toppling of the statue of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol, and in which even innocuous subjects can become fodder for the never-ending culture wars – they found themselves tempted to duck the risk of controversy

altogether. Such rows, after all, are not just exhausting but can also get in the way of actually getting things done. Across the Atlantic, the US treasury’s long-stated ambition to replace President Andrew Jackson on the \$20 bill – a man who committed ethnic cleansing, if not full-blown genocide – with the African-American abolitionist campaigner Harriet Tubman have been delayed, at least partly for all the reasons you can immediately guess. Of the seven white men currently pictured on US paper currency, five of them owned slaves.Perhaps none of this really matters. Cash use has declined markedly this past decade: it’s

now the preferred payment method for about 15% of users, a number that seems likely to go only one way. And perhaps, this being 2026, we’re anticipating culture-war fallout where there was never intended to be one. “Not being divisive”, after all, was just one of a whole raft of criteria set out by the Bank: to select images that resonate with the public, that won’t go swiftly out of date, and so forth. One of them, ignored by much of the commentary, is the need to make notes hard to counterfeit. Who among us cannot, at this stage, do a passable Churchill?

But even if the move wasn’t a conscious attempt to avoid a culture war, skirting it by accident might still be a mistake. Someone else who criticised the bank’s plans was the social justice campaigner Prof Patrick Vernon, who noted that the decision would be “deeply disappointing” to thousands who’ve campaigned to see Mary Seacole – or, frankly, any minority Briton – on a banknote. It sent a “troubling message”, Vernon added, “that the institution would rather feature a fox or a flower than confront Britain’s diverse human story”. The reason we fight so furiously about these symbols is because they matter. The monarch, incidentally, has only been featured on banknotes since 1960, when Elizabeth II first appeared on one, a mere decade before other historic figures began to join her. You think this fight is bad? Just wait until they try to change that.

The resignation of Kent: A chance for reflection

One of the aspects that the Prussian General and the author of On War, Carl von Clausewitz, should have included in his concept of “Fog of War” was not only “incomplete intelligence”, “friction” and the “rapid pace of combat”, but also the manner in which a “fifth column” suddenly appears to take the sting out of an ongoing and virulent conflict.Joseph Clay Kent, the Director of the US National Counterterrorism Center, resigned from his position on 17 March 2026. My analysis will not call him a fifth columnist, but I will certainly term and anoint him as a man of conscience. Why else would Kent resign from the Trump administration, protesting the US’ war against Iran, stating that the latter posed no imminent threat to the US, and also that the US was pressured into the war by Israel and its powerful lobby in the US?Kent, a former “Green Beret” and a CIA paramilitary operative, was not only a staunch supporter of Trump but also a committed Republican. His letter of resignation to Trump was bold and conclusive. He wrote to Trump stating, “High-ranking Israeli officials and influential members of the American media deployed a misinformation campaign that wholly undermined your America First platform and sowed pro-war sentiments to encourage a war with Iran. This echo chamber was used to deceive you into believing that Iran posed an imminent threat to the United States... This was a lie...” Incidentally, Clausewitz also includes misinformation as a component that determines the “Fog of War”. In any event, Trump, in his characteristic self-righteous behaviour reacted to the resignation by simply stating that Kent was “weak on security”. The reality is that Kent was too strong for an establishment that demanded blind loyalty over objective analysis. Kent’s resignation acted as a dynamic “fire-wall” for the rash acts that Trump was siring. But the administration refused to be drawn into the “truth of the moment,” prioritising political expediency over transparency and accountability. Instead, Trump termed his leaving as “it’s a good thing that he’s out.” The resignation has to be viewed as an episode that was more than a mere bureaucratic exit. It was a weighty indictment of a foreign policy apparatus that has once again prioritised intangible geopolitical alignment over the safety of not only the American people but also the entire global order. To be sure, by electing to walk away, Kent

has performed the ultimate service to the US. He has exposed the broadening gulf between the “America First” directive and the disastrous slide toward an avoidable conflict with Iran, one which will have far-reaching ramifications for the entire world.The entry of the US into a war with Tehran represents a failure of institutional memory. Kent, a combat veteran who has lived through the “forever wars” in the most visceral manner, comprehended the familiar architecture of a mounting calamity. His departure signals that the intelligence—notwithstanding from where it emanated—was being used to justify a conflict that is being viewed through a distorted lens and was being manufactured to suit a pre-ordained conclusion.By resigning, Kent refused to be the “America First” face for a “World First” one.

He understood that to stay would be to provide a veneer of populist legitimacy to a conflict that is fundamentally at odds with the movement’s core tenets: non-interventionism and the preservation of American resources for American citizens. Kent did the correct thing because he prioritised the truth over a title. In doing so, he has remained a reliable, unblemished voice for the millions of Americans who are weary of seeing their country’s strength hollowed out by conflicts that serve everyone but themselves. His resignation was not a retreat; it was a clarion call for a return to a foreign policy rooted in restraint, reality, and the genuine defence of the homeland.There are certain key lessons for India from this high-profile exit. India must recognise that the current Trump administration’s “America First” doctrine is not a guarantee of isolationism or stability. Kent’s resignation highlights a sharp internal divide where even loyalists who initially supported concluding “never-ending wars” now find themselves at odds with a sudden shift toward major regional conflict. For New Delhi, this underscores the need to maintain strategic autonomy and not over-rely on a single administration’s expected behaviour.I have been a critique of India’s intelligence, especially as it pertains not only to its failures to preempt terror strikes inside the country, but also to its inability to anticipate (and if possible, prevent!) anti-India upheavals in India’s near abroad. Intelligence has to not only have a sound basis (Kent’s threat assessment points exactly to such a failure) but also a character of

its own—one that builds an institutional fortress that views and acts on long-term threats that can envisage (as I had written in The Sentinel, dated 21 November 2025, “Countering Pakistan’s Hostile Ecosystem”) a strategem that is not simply a response to a “done-and-dusted act”, as was the case of Baisaran on 22 April 2025. India, which maintains delicate ties with both Israel and Iran, should view the situation as a cautionary tale about how deeply embedded lobbies (read: Israel’s) can influence a superpower’s trajectory, potentially at the expense of its own stated national interests. India has witnessed diplomatic turbulence in the recent past—from an inimical neighbourhood to tariffs over energy procurement paths. In fact, the US-Israel war against Iran is the right time to war-game diplomacy and economy, especially as there are alarm bells sounding. In other words, India must accelerate its energy diversification and contingency planning for a prolonged West Asian crisis. A critical chokepoint for India’s energy supplies by way of the Strait of Hormuz has already been compromised by the war.Finally, India’s own high-security institutions must reflect on the importance of internal “red-teaming” and the dangers of a system where hierarchies are chosen on the basis of submissive acquiescence and not professional competence. The top echelons of India’s strategic calculus must come to terms with the bitter truth that the Indian system often operates under a pyramidal edifice where challenging the “official line” can be career-limiting. Breaking such a trend is important for India’s development. Furthermore, the ability to comprehend “strategic intelligence” over “tactical noise” has to be uppermost. India stands on the threshold of an era where a complete overhaul of almost all its superstructures has become an imperative for the country’s progress. Therefore, whether it is New Delhi’s Kashmir/Northeast policy, its near-abroad objectives, strategic alignments (including the expected “détente-in-construction” with China) and a “whole-of-government” approach, the watchword is refurbishment. This can be achieved by clearing the “stables of strategic stagnation” that has crept into the system. It is important that India looks toward the beckoning horizon that will prioritise strategic foresight over stale operational history that has straitjacketed its evolution as a regional superpower.

India is working together to permit the movement

Mumbai: “We are aware this matter is being discussed bilaterally by several countries. We have had no such bilateral discussion yet,” Jaiswal said. Meanwhile, the government has taken several measures to ensure domestic fuel availability even as geopolitical tensions persist. According to Sujata Sharma, joint secretary in the petroleum ministry, India’s LPG production has increased by about 36% since March 5, after refineries were directed to maximise cooking gas output. Authorities have also urged households and commercial establishments to switch to piped natural gas (PNG) wherever pipeline networks are available to conserve LPG supplies. “We request consumers to shift to alternate sources of energy wherever available instead of LPG,” Sharma said. The diplomatic engagement comes as instability in the Gulf raises concerns over the safety of vessels passing through the narrow maritime corridor that carries a substantial share of global oil trade and a large portion of India’s energy imports. In addition, two In-

dia-bound tankers carrying a combined 3 million barrels of Iraqi and Arab crude oil transited the Strait between March 5 and March 10, with their transponders switched off during the passage. The movement of these cargoes is significant for India, which depends heavily on energy imports routed through the Gulf. Rajesh Kumar Sinha, special secretary in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, said LPG tanker Shivalik, carrying 46,000 tonne of LPG, docked at Mundra port at around 5 pm, with priority berthing arranged to ensure swift discharge. The ongoing engagement appears to have already helped facilitate the movement of several India-bound energy cargoes through the strategic chokepoint. Rajesh Kumar Sinha, special secretary in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, said LPG tanker Shivalik, carrying 46,000 tonne of LPG, docked at Mundra port at around 5 pm, with priority berthing arranged to ensure swift discharge.

Brokerage begins coverage of NTPC Green Energy shares a “Buy” on renewable growth

Mumbai: Green Energy Ltd (NGEL) with a ‘Buy’ rating and a 12-month target price of Rs 121, citing strong growth visibility driven by the country’s renewable energy push and robust backing from parent NTPC Ltd. “We initiate coverage of NGEL with a BUY and a TP of Rs 121 at 14.5x EV/EBITDA FY29 EBIDTA discounted at 12 per cent to arrive at Mar-28 TP. NGEL is the renewable energy arm of NTPC, India’s leading energy producer, with a strong presence in thermal energy,” the brokerage stated. “Through NGEL, NTPC plans to expand its existing renewable energy operating capacity from ~8GW as of Dec’25 to 60GW by FY32. As of December 2025, NGEL has a presence in nine states, through subsidiaries as well as JVs. NGEL’s capacity addition plans, backed by NTPC’s proven execution,

position it to capture India’s accelerating renewable energy demand,” HDFC Securities added. It underscored the company’s alignment with national energy transition goals and strong parent support as key growth drivers. “Alignment with the government’s 500GW RE plan target by FY30 provides a substantial growth runway, while a clear focus on profitable growth and disciplined capital allocation enhances NGEL’s investment appeal. Strong parent support from NTPC — its vision, resources, and deep industry experience — helps de-risk execution,” it also said. The brokerage also mentioned NTPC Group’s broader strategic roadmap, which strengthens NGEL’s long-term outlook. “NTPC Group’s goal of 45-50 per cent non-fossil portfolio and 60GW RE by 2032 underpins NGEL’s long-



term pipeline visibility. Collectively, these factors position NGEL favourably for sustainable scaling creation of lasting shareholder value. NTPC, via NGEL, aims to build and diversify its expertise and capacity in new energy growth areas like Energy Storage Systems (ESS), Green Hydrogen,

Electrolysers, and Green Ammonia production, which have seen wide industry participation in the form of capacity building and investment commitments in recent years, and are expected to contribute significantly to the Indian economy,” HDFC Securities further stated.

As Saudi reroutes 16 million barrels to India via the Red Sea, Russian oil gains popularity

New Delhi: Saudi Arabia has begun rerouting crude shipments to India via its Red Sea export hub at Yanbu as disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz force Gulf producers to redraw supply routes, with several tankers already heading to Indian ports. The shift reflects contingency planning by the world’s largest oil exporter as tensions in West Asia threaten maritime traffic through the strategic Hormuz chokepoint, through which a significant portion of global oil trade typically passes.

According to Kpler ship-tracking data, four Saudi crude tankers carrying about 6 million barrels of oil are currently on their way to India, with more cargoes expected later this month. Analysts expect volumes to rebound as stranded cargoes seek buyers and policy conditions ease. “Russian barrels bound for India. Post-US waiver, Indian refiners are ramping up fast, about 20 million barrels already delivered, with another around 25–30 million on the way,” Dubey said. For India, the world’s third-largest oil importer, the reconfiguration of supply routes underscores how refiners are adjusting procurement strategies as geopolitical tensions reshape global crude flows. With shipments from the Gulf be-



ing rerouted and Russian cargoes re-entering the market, analysts say Indian refiners are likely to remain key buyers in a rapidly shifting global oil trade landscape. What do analysts say? “Saudi crude loading from ports on the Kingdom’s west coast has increased in recent weeks. Currently, four crude tankers bound for India, carrying approximately 6 million barrels of crude, are en route and are expected to discharge their cargo at Indian ports in the coming week. Additionally, another 9–10 million barrels are expected to arrive in India over the remainder

of the month,” said Nikhil Dubey, senior refining analyst at Kpler. The change in shipping routes comes after disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz, prompting Saudi Arabia to rely more heavily on infrastructure that bypasses the waterway. “Following the disruption around the Strait of Hormuz, Saudi Arabia has been loading more cargoes from its west coast ports, rerouting crude through the East–West Pipeline across the kingdom. Traditionally, Saudi crude exports to India were shipped from the east coast terminals, passing through

the Strait of Hormuz before reaching Indian refiners,” Dubey said. The East–West pipeline allows Saudi Arabia to move crude from its eastern oil fields to the Red Sea coast, enabling exports through Yanbu without transiting the Strait of Hormuz. India could potentially absorb a significant share of these cargoes, analysts say. At its peak in mid-2024, India’s imports of Russian crude exceeded 2 million barrels per day, making Moscow the country’s largest supplier. However, purchases had fallen to around 1.06 million barrels per day by February 2026, according to analytics firm Kpler, after India moderated buying under pressure from Washington. Evolving trade flowsThe evolving trade flows come as Indian refiners also weigh opportunities to absorb additional Russian crude that is currently stranded at sea. According to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), about 6.9 million tonnes of Russian oil — equivalent to 50.57 million barrels and valued at €2.3 billion (\$2.99 billion) — is currently floating on the water, creating opportunities for buyers as supply chains shift following the Hormuz disruption and a temporary US waiver for Russian barrels.

Bank resolves the dispute SEBI on FPI rule infraction

New Delhi: As per the settlement order, Bank failed to report to SEBI, instances of delay exceeding six months in the intimation of material changes relating to beneficial ownership in respect of certain FPIs. Also bank delayed processing of investor grouping changes and in certain cases took as much as 19 to 20 days for intimating the grouping changes to NSDL after receipt of complete documents from the FPIs. SEBI also alleged that bank failed to exercise due diligence to ascertain investor grouping of FPIs. Additionally, the bank granted exemptions from granular disclosure requirements to certain beneficial owners of FPIs without ensuring compliance with the applicable regulatory framework. Standard Chartered Bank has settled a case with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on alleged violation of foreign portfolio investor (FPI) norms. The bank paid ₹57.2 lakh without admission or denial of findings of the regulator. The matter is related to various allegations raised by Sebi, where the lender had acted as a designated depository participant and failed to make timely disclosures about material changes in beneficial ownership of certain FPIs. The order was passed without prejudice to Sebi’s rights to initiate appropriate actions against the bank if it is found that the lender had not made full and true disclosure, violated undertakings or waivers, or there was a discrepancy while arriving at the settlement terms.

Standard Chartered Bank also delayed processing investor grouping changes to the National Securities Depository, in certain cases



19-20 days, even after receiving complete documents from FPIs, as per Sebi’s settlement order released on Tuesday. Allegations against Standard Chartered BankThe regulator also alleged that the bank exempted granular disclosure requirements to certain beneficial owners of Participants Regulations 2018, and certain clauses of Sebi’s master circular. The regulator had initiated the settlement proceedings after the bank submitted an application for the same. This proposal was accepted by Sebi’s high-powered advisory committee in December and then by a panel of whole-time members in January. The markets regulator disposed of the adjudication proceedings after Standard Chartered Bank remitted the settlement in early March.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds Chairman M.P. Ahammad honoured with Business Bhushan Award at Lokmat event



Mumbai: M.P. Ahammad, Chairman of Malabar Group, has been conferred the prestigious Business Bhushan Award at the Lokmat Maharashtra of the Year Awards 2026, recognising his leadership in building one of the world’s largest jewellery retail brands.

The award ceremony was held at the iconic Gateway of India in Mumbai and was attended by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Lokmat Chairman Vijay Darda, along with policymakers, industry leaders and prominent personalities from business and entertainment.

Presented by the Lokmat Media Group, the awards recognise individuals whose vision and leadership have significantly shaped industries while contributing to society. Ahammad’s recognition highlights his role in expanding Malabar Gold &

Diamonds into the world’s fifth-largest jewellery retailer and the largest jewellery retailer of Indian origin. For consumers, Maharashtra has emerged as a key market for the brand, with 34 showrooms currently operating across cities including Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur and Nashik. The company said the expanding retail network has improved customer access to a wide range of jewellery designs and services. The group plans to expand its footprint in the state to 64 stores by 2029. Founded in 1993, Malabar Gold & Diamonds now operates more than 425 showrooms across 14 countries with an annual turnover of \$7.36 billion. The group also allocates five percent of its profits to CSR initiatives focused on education, healthcare, housing support and women’s empowerment across regions of operation.

Why steel stocks are soaring today: Jindal Steel, JSW Steel, Tata Steel

Mumbai: Steel stocks such as Jindal Steel Ltd, JSW Steel Ltd, Tata Steel Ltd and Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) gained up to 5 per cent in Friday’s trade amid a broader recovery in the market, a few brokerages suggesting ‘Buy’ on steel stocks, and hopes of strong results in coming quarters. Tata Steel climbed 4.64 per cent to hit a high of Rs 199.40. HSBC has reportedly suggested ‘Buy’ on the stock with a revised target price of Rs 250 from Rs 235 earlier. Jindal Steel advanced 4.83 per cent to Rs 1,193. JSW Steel gained 4.85 per cent to Rs 1186.90. SAIL also added 4.17 per cent to Rs 158.50. Macquarie has JSW Steel as its top pick. It reportedly maintained ‘Outperform’ on Tata Steel with a target price of Rs 222. The foreign brokerage suggested target price of Rs 1,319 on JSW Steel and Rs 1,193 on Jindal Steel. JM Financial in a note this week noted that domestic steel prices have soared over the past few months supported by the safeguard duty implemented in late December 2025. It expects ferrous players’ Ebitda per tonne to expand to the tune of Rs 4,500 for the quarter. Jindal Steel and Tata Steel are its top picks in the space. Average India HRC price has increased sequentially by Rs 5,900 per tonne, implying recovery of 18 per cent from the trough prior to the duty announcement. Following the HRC prices, rebar soared even higher sequentially. JM Financial said the safeguard duty has helped stabilise domestic pricing and is expected to allow steel mills to gradually pass through higher price during 4QFY26 dispatches. On the raw material side, steel companies have guided for \$15–20 per tonne QoQ increase in coking coal consumption cost in 4QFY26. ICICI Securities said primary players such as Tata Steel, SAIL, JSW Steel and Jindal Steel primarily rely on coking coal and thermal coal for steelmaking in India, with



by-product gases like blast furnace gas, coke oven gas, and Corex gas playing a supplementary role in the energy mix for heating. A rise in the global cost curve, could allow Indian steel players to implement an Rs 1,000–1,500/te increase in steel prices, mitigating the energy cost hit and potentially improving spreads for BoF-based players, it said. “We do not expect any meaningful demand destruction due to the ongoing crisis in steel-user industries, considering majority of India’s energy

requirement is dependent on coal (60 per cent), followed by oil (30 per cent), while natural gas accounts for only 6-7 per cent of the energy basket. A prolongation of the war may eventually trigger some demand correction, potentially equating to the production cuts,” it said. However, purchases had fallen to around 1.06 million barrels per day by February 2026, according to analytics firm Kpler, after India moderated buying under pressure from Washington. Evolving trade flowsThe evolving trade flows come

as Indian refiners also weigh opportunities to absorb additional Russian crude that is currently stranded at sea. According to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), about 6.9 million tonnes of Russian oil — equivalent to 50.57 million barrels and valued at €2.3 billion (\$2.99 billion) — is currently floating on the water, creating opportunities for buyers as supply chains shift following the Hormuz disruption and a temporary US waiver for Russian barrels.

Trump threatens to ‘bomb up’ Iran’s South Pars gasfield if Tehran hits Qatar



Iran: Donald Trump vowed to “massively blow up” the world’s biggest gasfield after Israeli assaults on the Iranian site led Tehran to intensify attacks on energy infrastructure around the Middle East.Israel’s decision to attack the South Pars gasfield on Wednesday signaled a substantial escalation of the conflict, raising concerns of serious disruptions to world energy supply.Iran swiftly replied with more strikes around the region, notably on Qatari liquefied natural gas (LNG) installations, which enraged the US president.

The US “knew nothing” about Israel’s strike on South Pars, Trump said on social media on Wednesday night. US media had previously stated that the US was aware of the strike. According to the Wall Street Journal, unidentified US sources said the president approved it in order to put pressure on Tehran to open the Strait of Hormuz.Abu Dhabi authorities stated they were obliged to shut down operations at its Habshan gas complex and Bab field due to Iranian assaults, which they described as a “dangerous escalation” of the war.Ras Laffan in Qatar, home to the world’s biggest liquefied natural gas terminal,

has sustained “extensive damage” as a result of Iranian attacks, according to state-run QatarEnergy. Early Thursday, QatarEnergy reported “sizeable fires” and major damage at numerous LNG plants in the hub. The Qatari interior ministry later said that all flames had been extinguished. The strike on South Pars amounted to the first targeted attacks on Iranian fossil fuel production since the US and Israel launched the conflict, almost three weeks ago.Qatar, which shares the gasfield with Iran, “was in no way, shape, or form, involved with it [the attack], nor did it have any idea that it was going to happen”, Trump said, adding that Israel would not attack the gasfield again unless Iran attacked Qatari gas facilities again.If Tehran chose to retaliate, Trump said: “The United States of America, with or without the help or consent of Israel, will massively blow up the entirety of the South Pars Gas Field at an amount of strength and power that Iran has never seen or witnessed before.”Trump’s efforts to deescalate the attacks on energy infrastructure, by threatening to destroy South Pars, did not reassure global markets as concern

mounts over the economic impact of the conflict.Oil and European natural gas prices rose sharply, with Brent crude – the international benchmark for oil – rising 3.9% to \$111.51 per barrel. Leading Asian stock markets came under pressure, with the Nikkei 225 falling 2.5% in Japan.Saudi Arabia was also targeted by Iranian ballistic missiles on Wednesday. Any trust with Tehran had been shattered, its foreign minister said. “This pressure from Iran will backfire politically and morally and certainly we reserve the right to take military actions if deemed necessary,” Prince Faisal bin Farhan told a news conference.A spokesperson for the Qatari foreign ministry described the Israeli attack on South Pars as “dangerous” and “irresponsible”, urging all sides not to target energy facilities. The UAE foreign ministry also described the move as a “dangerous escalation”, warning: “Targeting energy infrastructure poses a direct threat to global energy security.”The strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world’s oil supplies and seaborne gas tankers usually pass, meanwhile remains all but closed. Trump’s efforts to build a multinational na-

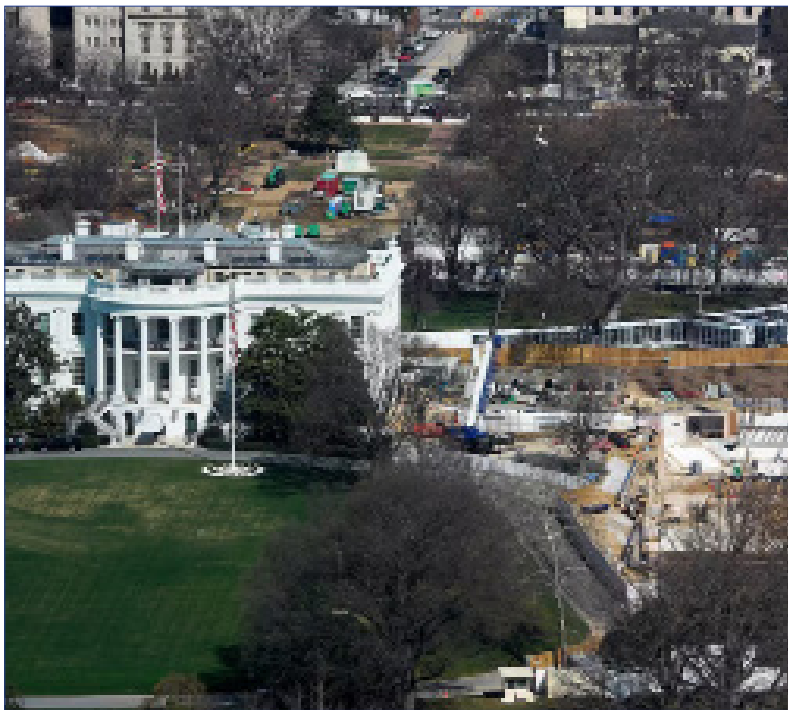
val force to reopen the key waterway have yet to bear fruit.A fire broke out on a vessel near the strait after it was hit by a projectile, the UK Maritime Trade Operations agency said, citing a report late on Wednesday. The ship was off the coast of the UAE.

Emmanuel Macron, the French president, spoke with Trump and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, emir of Qatar, after Wednesday’s strikes on gas facilities. Calling for a moratorium on strikes targeting civilian infrastructure, Macron said: “Civilian populations and their essential needs, as well as the security of energy supplies, must be protected from military escalation.”On another day of violence in the Middle East, the Palestinian Red Crescent said three Palestinian women were killed in an Iranian missile attack in the occupied West Bank late on Wednesday – the first deadly Iranian strike there, and the first to kill Palestinians since the start of the war.The European Union meanwhile urged Israel to “cease its operations” in Lebanon, which French foreign minister Jean-Noel Barrot will visit on Thursday.

Lebanon was drawn into the crisis earlier this month, when Hezbollah fighters launched rockets at Israel. Israel retaliated with strikes that have killed at least 968 people, according to Lebanese authorities, and displaced over a million.More than a week has passed since Trump first suggested the war could be over “very soon”. With no end in sight, some companies are bracing for at least another month of severe disruption.The Hong Kong-based airline Cathay Pacific suspended flights to and from Dubi and Riyadh until the end of April on Thursday, a move it attributed to “the developing situation in the Middle East”.

Judge says he could strike down Trump’s \$400 million White House ballroom proposal

Washington: A federal judge has called Donald Trump’s destruction of the White House’s East Wing and proposal to build a \$400 million ballroom where it once stood “brazen,” and has signaled that he may cancel the project later this month. “I’m struggling to see this as a ‘alteration’,” Judge Richard Leon remarked on Tuesday at a hearing in a lawsuit filed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) to block construction until the president obtains congressional permission and independent reviews. White House attorneys have maintained that Trump does not require outside approval to carry out the project, which began with the demolition of the East Wing in October and is expected to be completed by 2028. He has frequently boasted about the project, which critics have said is a thinly veiled attempt to re-create the opulence of Mar-a-Lago, his gilded Florida mansion, in the capital.His lawyers have advanced a number of arguments in defense of the 90,000 sq ft ballroom, including that it was needed for “national security”, that Congress had already allocated millions of dollars for alteration and maintenance of the president’s residence, and that it was exempt from congressional scrutiny because it was mostly funded by private donors.In October, Trump fired all six members of the independent US Commission of Fine Arts responsible for reviewing the ballroom plan, and replaced them with handpicked designees who gave their unanimous consent last month.The National Capital Planning Commission, a separate federal body reviewing the project, said earlier this month it was postponing its vote of approval to April, citing a need to assess a “large amount of public input”. At Tuesday’s hearing in Washington DC, Thaddeus Heuer, counsel for the NTHP, accused the Trump administration of a “months-long merry-go-round ride” over project responsibility and authority, prolonging the legal procedure until it was too late. “What



they can’t do here is have it both ways,” he stated, according to The Hill.Heuer stated that the government had forgotten the basic law of holes. “When you find yourself in one, stop digging,” according to the Washington Post.Leon, a George W Bush nominee who is scheduled to decide on the preservationists’ complaint by the end of March, was unimpressed with the government’s actions. “This has been a case where there have been shifting theories, shifting dynamics, I regret to say, from the beginning,” he added, adding that the administration had “no track record” of following regular clearance processes.Leon called justice department lawyer Yakov Roth’s claim that the ballroom project had a “dual source of funding and dual source of authority” and so fell beyond the court’s jurisdiction a “brazen interpretation of the law’s vocabulary”.He described the White House as “a special place” and said, “This is an iconic symbol of this nation.” Trump stated that he was not the owner, but rather a custodian on behalf of the nation. Leon has previ-

ously ruled against the NTHP, which contends that the demolition was illegal, and that Trump lacks the legal authority to impose his private whims on the historic building. The judge denied its first request for an injunction last month on procedural grounds, permitting building work to continue, but allowed it to file an amended complaint that he is weighing now.“The [NTHP] should not even be afforded another try,” justice department attorneys wrote in a court filing last week, urging Leon to dismiss the case. Trump posted falsely on social media last month that the judge had “completely erased” the effort to halt the ballroom’s construction.On Tuesday, Leon appeared skeptical of the Trump administration’s argument that previous presidents had made unilateral alterations to the White House, including Gerald Ford’s installation of an outdoor swimming pool in 1975.Leon said in his February order that he expected his decision to be challenged whichever way he ruled, and that he saw the case “squarely” in supreme court territory.

The FBI is investigating a US counter-terrorism head who quit over the Iran conflict



Iran : The resignation of Joe Kent, a top counter-terrorism official who came out against the US war in Iran, took a dramatic turn on Wednesday when it was revealed that he is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for allegedly leaking secret information.According to Semafor and CBS News, the investigation precedes Kent’s retirement on Tuesday from his position as head of the national counterterrorism center, where he oversaw terrorist threat analysis. The FBI refuses to comment on the existence of such an inquiry. The story came as Kent, the first senior administration official to resign over the war, made his first public interview since leaving. Speaking to right-wing journalist Tucker Carlson, he stated that dissident voices were successfully silenced throughout the decision-making process that resulted in US attacks on Iran on February 28.“A good deal of key decision makers were not allowed to come and express their opinion to the president,” Kent stated on The Tucker Carlson Show podcast. “There wasn’t a robust debate.”Kent, a fervent Trump supporter and conspiracy theorist, wore a blue-checked shirt with an open collar and attempted to avoid outright criticizing the president. But he painted a picture of a White House in which Trump relied on a tight inner circle of advisers, sidelining officials who questioned both the intelligence and the strategic wisdom underpinning the strikes.Kent insisted that there was no evidence that Iran was close to gaining a nuclear weapon or posed an imminent threat to the US. “There was no intelli-

gence that said, ‘Hey, on whatever day it was, March 1st, the Iranians are going to launch this big sneak attack – they’re going to do some kind of a 9/11, Pearl Harbor, et cetera, they are going to attack one of our bases.’ There was none of that intelligence.”Instead, Kent alleged, Trump’s hand was effectively forced by Israel. “The Israelis drove the decision to take this action,” he said, claiming that prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli officials lobbied the president with claims that did not align with established intelligence channels. Kent added: “I know how this works. I know the Israeli officials - some in intelligence, some in government – will come to US government officials and they will say all kinds of things that we know from our intelligence just simply isn’t true. They’ll say, hey, I’m giving you a preview, it’s not in intelligence channels yet, but here’s what’s gonna happen, and that doesn’t usually come to fruition.” Such remarks have drawn swift condemnation in some quarters, with critics arguing that references to an “Israeli lobby” veer into offensive tropes. Carlson has come under similar scrutiny, notably after previously interviewing the antisemitic activist Nick Fuentes.Kent, who did not specify who blocked his access to the president, also cited comments by secretary of state Marco Rubio and House of Representatives speaker Mike Johnson as indicative of Israel’s influence over the timing of the strikes.But he noted that the US and Israel have divergent goals. “Most folks right now at the Pentagon and the intelligence agencies, they would say, us

and the Israelis actually have a different objective here.“I don’t believe that our objective has been clearly defined because we’re shying away from regime change. The Israelis are not shying from regime change. They want to knock out, lock, stock and barrel the current government. They don’t seem to have a plan for what comes next. “Kent told Carlson that he decided to resign after it became obvious that his concerns would be ignored. “I know this path that we’re on, it doesn’t work,” he said. “I can’t be a part of this in good conscience.”As a Green Beret, Kent saw combat in 11 deployments before retiring to join the CIA. He also endured tragedy: His wife, a Navy cryptologist, was killed by a suicide bomber in 2019 in Syria, leaving him with two young sons. Kent, 45, has since remarried. Kent’s work at the National Counterterrorism Center was overseen by Tulsi Gabbard, director of national intelligence, who stated on Wednesday that it was up to Trump — and only Trump — to determine if Iran represented a threat.Gabbard, a veteran and former Hawaii representative, has repeatedly denounced discussion of military attacks against Iran. She has not stated her thoughts on the current strikes, and a spokeswoman has declined to react to queries.When Kent quit, the White House responded angrily. Trump slammed him as “weak on security,” claiming that Iran posed “a tremendous threat” and implying that anyone who disagreed lacked judgment. “If somebody didn’t think it was a threat, we don’t want those people,” he claimed.

US headlines irritated Trump He should avoid watching Indian news stations’ reportage of the Iran conflict

Washington:: It doesn’t happen only in India; it happens in the United States of America too. Last week, this column discussed the Indian government’s order to withhold the release of news television viewing ratings (TRPs) for four weeks, believing that this step would reduce “sensational” coverage of the continuing war between the US, Israel, and Iran.On Saturday, March 14, Brendan Carr, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the United States, threatened to withdraw broadcasters’ licenses for what he called “running hoaxes and news distortions.” He then told them to “correct course before their license renewals come up.” For the record, FCC’s authority over content standards is limited to over-the-air broadcasts on independent television stations; it doesn’t extend to other forms of programming, such as cable networks or streaming platforms. However, the FCC does have authority over the purchase and sale of media networks that hold FCC broadcast licences. The FCC chairman’s reprimand came shortly after US President Donald Trump had launched his own personal missile attack against a favourite target: “The Fake News Media.”Enraged by what he called “misleading headlines” about five US tanker planes reportedly hit in Saudi Arabia, he singled out The New York Times (NYT) and The Wall Street Journal for (WSJ) as well as other “Lowlife” newspapers for “terrible reporting” in a tweet on Truth Social. The headline that so offended Trump in the WSJ read: ‘Five Air Force Refueling Planes Hit in Iranian Strike on Saudi Arabia’. The FCC’s threat is strong stuff, stronger than the Indian government’s suspension of TRPs. So strong in fact that The Washington Post published an opinion on the FCC’s overreaction.And the UK news agency, Reuters, analysed the Trump administration’s attack on the news media in this article: “Trump and

his allies use familiar tactic to help Iran war messaging: attacking the press.”At least one commentator on Al Jazeera, Frank Smyth, termed it “unprecedented.” “No FCC has threatened to revoke a licence for coverage the government wants,” he said. This was “dictatorship behaviour,” he added.The FCC warning attracted the attention of the international media. Why, our very own The Times of India thought it serious enough to write an editorial: ‘Wars, Govts, Facts’. It said that President Trump is “cheesed off that...various newspapers and TV news channels continue to report on his actions, independently and critically...American press is doing its job, in digging beyond their govt’s denials.” If President Trump reads Indian news media or watches Indian TV news channels, he will be more angrier (if that’s possible) with American broadcasters and newspapers.Historically, the Indian news media has backed Indian governments in times of strife. From the Kargil War to Operation Sindoor, TV news coverage was especially enthusiastic: ‘Indian Navy strikes Karachi harbor,’ said an India Today headline during Operation Sindoor.In the US-Israel-Iran war, Indian TV news channels and most newspapers have been sympathetic to the Indian government, to the point where last week, TV news channels claimed that India was the only country allowed by Iran to sail its oil frigates through the Strait of Hormuz due to Indian diplomatic efforts. Untrue.

The American news media, on the other hand, has consistently questioned the goals and reasons for Trump’s war on Iran – even staunch Trump supporters such as podcaster Joe Rogan and broadcaster Tucker Carlson have opposed the war. Rogan called it “insane” while Carlson said, “This is not the United States’ war.”The American news media is more critical of US involvement in wars after it was criticised for its role

in promoting the 2003 invasion of Iraq by US-led coalition forces on the false claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. A Poynter Institute study reflected on what happened in this article, “When the press amplified false claims about Iraq, it failed its highest duty — and fueled a war.” This time, the US news media sought clarity of vision and purpose and found them wanting: as The Washington Post wrote: “White House rationale for war keeps changing”.This perhaps explains why the US news media has not given its unqualified support to the Iran war – and why President Trump and the FCC are threatening them. Trump’s attack on the press media during the Iran conflict is consistent with his previous claims. In his social media posts, he continually alludes to and criticizes the ‘fake news media’.He has sued CBS News and the BBC over interviews, the former for a ‘edited’ interview with former US Vice President Kamala Harris and the latter for cutting one of his lectures.ABC (and its parent company Disney) stopped late-night talk show presenter Jimmy Kimmel’s show indefinitely over comments on the shooting of US right-wing activist Charlie Kirk, after the FCC’s Carr warned to take action against ABC and Disney. Trump officials like Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth expressed their displeasure with the US news media. Hegseth went after CNN, saying “...the sooner David Ellison takes over that network, the better”.

Ellison, CEO Paramount, has a bid to acquire Warner Bros who own CNN pending approval from the Trump administration.Under Hegseth, there has been a curtailment of access to the Pentagon when the Department of Defense introduced rules that journalists only publish “approved” information. When NYT, WaPo and CNN refused, they were stripped of their long-standing office spaces in the Pentagon.

The Chinese AI app sending Hollywood into a panic

A new artificial intelligence (AI) model developed by the Chinese company behind TikTok rocked Hollywood this week - not just because of what it can do, but what it could mean for creative industries.Created by tech giant ByteDance, Seedance 2.0 can generate cinema-quality video, complete with sound effects and dialogue, from just a few written prompts.Many of the clips said to have been made using Seedance, and featuring popular characters like Spider-Man and Deadpool, went viral. Major studios like Disney and Paramount quickly accused ByteDance of copyright infringement but concerns about the technology run deeper than legal issues.

What is Seedance - and why the stir?

Seedance was launched to little fanfare in June 2025 but it is the second version that came eight months later that has caused a major stir.“For the first time, I’m not thinking that this looks good for AI. Instead, I’m thinking that this looks straight out of a real production pipeline,” says Jan-Willem Blom from creative studio Videostate.Western AI video models have made progress in processing user instructions to make stunning images, he adds, but Seedance seems to have tied everything together. Like other AI tools - Midjourney and OpenAI’s Sora - Seedance can create videos from short text prompts. In some cases just one prompt seems to be producing high-quality videos. It is particularly impressive because it combines text, visuals and audio in a single system, AI ethics researcher Margaret Mitchell says.Seedance’s impact is being measured by an unlikely benchmark: how well it generates a clip of Will Smith eating spaghetti.Not only can Seedance create a remarkably life-like version of the star tucking into a plate of pasta, it has also spawned viral videos of Smith battling a spaghetti monster - and it looks and feels like a big-budget movie.Many industry experts and filmmakers believe Seedance is a new chapter in the development of video-generating technology.The complex action sequences it is producing look more realistic than its competitors, says David Kwok, who runs a Singapore-based animation studio called Tiny Island Productions.“It almost feels like having a cinematographer or director of photography specialising in action films assisting you.”

The promise - and the challenge

Seedance has run into trouble over

copyright issues, a growing challenge in the age of AI.Experts warn that AI companies are prioritising technology over people as they make more powerful tools and use data without paying for it. Major Hollywood groups have cried foul over Seedance’s use of copyrighted characters like Spider Man and Darth Vader. Disney and Paramount issued cease-and-desist letters demanding that Seedance stop using their content. Japan is also investigating ByteDance for alleged copyright violations, after AI videos of popular anime characters went viral.ByteDance has said it was taking steps to “strengthen current safeguards”. This is not unique to the Chinese firm.In 2023, the New York Times sued OpenAI and Microsoft, alleging they used its articles without permission to train their AI models. Reddit sued Perplexity last year, claiming the AI firm had illegally scraped user posts. Disney raised similar concerns with Google.Clearly labelling content to prevent deception and building public trust in AI is far more important than “cooler-looking” videos, Mitchell says.And that’s why developers must build systems that manage licensing and payments, and



provide clear mechanisms for people to contest misuse, she adds.Disney, for instance, signed a \$1bn (£730m)



deal with OpenAI’s Sora so it could use characters from Star Wars, Pixar and Marvel.Seedance’s developers were likely to have been aware of

potential copyright issues around the use of Western IP and took a risk anyway, says Shaanan Cohny, a computing researcher at the University of

Melbourne.“There’s plenty of leeway to bend the rules strategically, to flout the rules for a while and get marketing clout,” he adds.Meanwhile, for small firms, Seedance is too useful to ignore.Kwok, from Singapore’s Tiny Island Productions, says AI of this quality will allow companies like his to create films that would cost far more than they can otherwise afford. He gave the example of Asia’s booming short-form videos and micro-dramas that typically run on small budgets - roughly \$140,000 for as many as 80 episodes under two minutes each.These productions have been sticking to romance or family drama to keep costs down as they need fewer visual effects. But now AI can “elevate low-budget productions into more ambitious genres such as sci-fi, period drama and, now, action”, Kwok says.

Is China racing ahead?

Seedance once again puts Chinese tech in the spotlight.“It signals that Chinese models are at the very least matching at the frontier of what is available,” Cohny says. “If ByteDance can produce this seemingly out

of nowhere, what other kinds of models do Chinese companies have in store?”Last year DeepSeek, another Chinese AI model, sent shockwaves around the world with its low-cost large language model. It quickly overtook ChatGPT as the most-downloaded free app on Apple’s US store. In the year since Beijing has put AI and robotics at the core of its economic strategy, investing heavily in advanced computer chip production, automation and generative AI as it bids for a technological edge over the US.While Seedance 2.0 was making headlines, other big Chinese firms had lower-profile rollouts of their new generative AI tools ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday.The Spring Festival is increasingly becoming an for a period when millions of people are at home and experimenting with new apps, China analyst Bill Bishop wrote in his newsletter.He predicts 2026 could mark a turning point for mass AI adoption in China - not just chatbots, but also AI agents handling transactions, coding tools incorporated in everyday work, and video creators routinely using AI.

India’s Silent Sleep Crisis: Doctors Warn Poor Sleep Is Becoming A Major Public Health Risk

Sleep has quietly become one of the most neglected pillars of health in modern India. In a country where productivity, long working hours and digital connectivity are often worn as badges of honour, sleep is frequently sacrificed without much thought. Yet doctors across specialties are increasingly warning that poor sleep is no longer just a personal lifestyle issue, it is fast turning into a public health concern.The problem begins early in life. Children, who require significantly more sleep for growth and development, are increasingly missing out on restorative rest.Dr Jayant Khandare, Consultant – Paediatrics and Neonatology, Surya Mother and Child Super Speciality Hospital, feels sleep plays a critical role in childhood development. “Sleep is like the ultimate superpower for kids. It boosts brain power, strengthens immunity and helps them stay happy and focused,” he explains.Yet globally, between 20–60 per cent of children are sleep deprived, a trend that experts say is becoming increasingly visible in urban India as well. Excessive screen exposure, late bedtimes and chaotic routines are disrupting children’s sleep patternsDr Khandare notes that modern habits are largely to blame. Screens before bedtime, irregular sleep schedules and stimulating environments often make it difficult for children to fall asleep. To im-

prove sleep hygiene in children, he advises simple but effective habits establishing a predictable bedtime routine, ensuring bedrooms are dark and quiet, keeping them free of screens and avoiding digital devices at least an hour before sleep.Parents should also watch for warning signs such as snoring, frequent restlessness or disturbed sleep, which may indicate an underlying medical issue that requires attention.However, sleep deprivation is not limited to children. Across the adult population, lifestyle pressures and changing work patterns are eroding sleep quality.Dr Arun Chowdary Kotaru, Unit Head and Senior Consultant – Respiratory Disease & Sleep Medicine, Artemis Hospital, says that sleep is increasingly becoming the most ignored health habit in modern life.“Sleep is very important for good health, but it is one of the habits people pay the least attention to today,” he says. “Stress, long working hours and excessive screen exposure are causing widespread sleep problems in India.”Urban lifestyles have dramatically altered natural sleep cycles. Many people work late into the night, spend hours on phones and laptops before bedtime, and maintain irregular schedules due to professional and social commitments. One major factor behind disrupted sleep is blue light exposure from digital screens, which suppresses melatonin, the hormone re-

sponsible for regulating the body’s sleep cycle.Stress and anxiety further compound the problem. When combined with late meals and irregular routines, these factors make it harder for the body to relax and transition into sleep.The consequences go far beyond feeling tired the next day. Chronic sleep deprivation has been linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity and weakened immunity. Mental health is also affected, with insufficient sleep increasing the risk of anxiety, depression and emotional burnout. In addition, sleep deprivation can impair attention and decision-making, raising the likelihood of accidents and errors in everyday life. This growing health burden is prompting medical professionals to call for a broader recognition of sleep as a fundamental component of public health. Dr Vikas Mittal, Director, Pulmonology, CK Birla Hospital, Delhi, says sleep is now being recognised as a crucial pillar of overall wellbeing, alongside diet and exercise.“Long working hours, excessive screen exposure, irregular routines, stress and urban living conditions have significantly disrupted natural sleep cycles,” he explains. “As a result, sleep deprivation is gradually emerging as an important public health concern in India.”Poor sleep is not merely about fatigue. Over time, insufficient or low-quality sleep can increase the risk of lifestyle

disorders such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease, while also weakening the immune system. Cognitive performance, mood regulation and emotional stability are also affected.Another worrying trend, Dr Mittal points out, is that many people dismiss sleep problems as minor inconveniences rather than medical issues. Disorders such as insomnia, sleep apnea and circadian rhythm disturbances often go undiagnosed for years, silently worsening long-term health outcomes. Doctors are therefore urging people to treat sleep with the same seriousness as nutrition or physical activity. Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule, reducing screen exposure before bedtime, managing stress levels and creating a calm, comfortable sleep environment can help restore natural sleep rhythms. In cases where symptoms persist such as chronic insomnia, loud snoring or excessive daytime fatigue, medical consultation is essential. Ultimately, the sleep crisis reflects a broader cultural shift. In an always-on world that celebrates busyness, sleep has been wrongly framed as expendable. But biology tells a different story. Sleep is not a luxury, it is a biological necessity. And unless individuals, families and workplaces begin to prioritise it, India’s silent sleep crisis may soon become one of the country’s most overlooked public health challenges.

Samsung Galaxy S26 Ultra Delivers The Important Stuff With More Privacy For Users

Samsung Galaxy S26 series was supposed to be a game changing lineup for the company but usual business has continued this year with the same three models announced, including the flagship Ultra version. Samsung has done quite a lot for its foldable last year which made us believe the next Galaxy Ultra model will see a big overhaul. But most of the changes can be ranked as incremental, and even then you will have people eager to know how the latest flagship stands amongst a sea of options, including the iPhone 17 Pro Max in the market this year. Priced at Rs 1,39,999 means the scrutiny and demands will be much higher but does the new Samsung Ultra deliver on all fronts?Samsung has been making subtle changes to the design of the Galaxy S Ultra models and the S26 series is part of that continuation. You get hints of the Fold 7 design elements, especially with the vertical camera module and even the less boxy nature of the body which gives it a better in-hand feel and comfortable grip compared to the previous versions. It is marginally thinner and lighter that you immediately notice and somewhat start to like as well. Having said that, flagships merit overhauls and Samsung has been dabbling in the same design for a while and we expected an almost Fold 7-like approach with the Galaxy S26 Ultra but it seems the wait goes longer.The S Pen still sits on the bottom left which you can take out by tapping on it. The colours have surely gotten brighter these days and the blue shade on the Galaxy S26 Ultra is worth its looks. Samsung has taken an intriguing turn with the display on the Galaxy S26 Ultra and it is focused towards the privacy of users. This is a new layer that seems to have been built into the device (both on software and hardware level) which you can simply enable from the device settings. The privacy display helps you block people around you to stop seeing the screen and its content. This you can also use to

hide any OTP messages or confidential chat you have with someone. The feature can be enabled for select apps or all of them. However, we did notice the greyish tone of the display panel affecting colour reproduction which has always been Samsung’s strong suit for years. Is it a deal breaker, not really and it seems many might accept it offers as a whole. The panel itself is not a problem and despite many reports about the display hurting the eyes we didn’t face any of those issues. The Snapdragon Elite Pull Samsung has used Exynos for the S26 and S26+ models but no such change for the Ultra which is powered by the Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5 SoC available this year. High-grade hardware usually translates into reliable, powered performance and getting it with 12GB or 16GB RAM and up to 1TB storage. Power users get their monies, the regular users get more than enough left in the tank and you also have to factor in the AI equation with Galaxy AI suite. The benchmark scores also highlighted where the S26 Ultra ranks, especially when compared with last year’s Ultra from Samsung. Combined with this hardware you have the new One UI 8.5 version which is also based on Android 16 so the interface isn’t very different from the 8.0 version that came out last year. The Galaxy AI features are gradually expanding but most are still on the functional side and work quite effectively. The Camera Co-nundrum When you browse through the specs sheet, the S26 Ultra borrows the

same camera system from its predecessor. Having said that, the image quality does get some improvements, possibly with the help of new hardware IP and other tweaks made in the software. The main 200MP sensor delivers crisp and detailed images and even in low light we liked what we saw. However, the game has moved far ahead with 1-inch sensors coming to prominence among other imaging tech from other brands and for a flagship people now expect more, especially if the prices are also going to go up every year.Samsung is still not offering a silicon carbon grade battery for its premium devices and we are not sure when it might happen. The Galaxy S26 Ultra does hold up well for most tasks and you can easily get it running with around 7 to 8 hours of screen-on-time which will be subjective for users and their use cases.

Samsung says you can get 75 percent juice with 30 minutes of charge and that pretty much checked out during our tests. But like we said, the phone’s battery doesn’t wow us by any means and is purely a functional part of the device. And somehow still no Mag-Safe charging supported for a flagship model. Samsung Galaxy S26 Ultra is a robust and privacy-focused upgrade from last year’s flagship that has gone up the price ladder but most of the hardware has been retained and the company is slowly living with the virtues of keeping the device stable and giving it other useful tweaks like better rounded software and AI tools.



Despite being offered money, Anupam Kher remembers refusing to have a hair transplant



New Delhi:When Anupam Kher entered the film industry, he wasn’t the “ideal looking” hero. He had no hair. He recently talked about how many hair weaving firms had contacted him about getting a hair transplant.

He stated, “Main har hair weaving company ya doctor ka sapna hoon,” in an interview with Pinkvilla. Bahut saare log paise dene ko teyaar hain ki ek baar aap baal lagwalo humse. Maine yeh mauka unko nahi diya (I am the dream

of every doctor or hair-weaving enterprise). Additionally, a lot of people are willing to pay me for a single hair transplant. However, I never offered them that chance. ”Kitne bhi paison ki zarurat mujhe padh jaaye, main paise nahi lunga kyunki mujhe lagta hai main voh rahunga hi nahi,” he went on. Jab Sikandar bahut chota tha, main ek baar akbar padh raha tha aur mujhe nahi pata tha usmein hair oil ki ad hai. Sikandar ko laga main voh ad dekh raha hoon toh voh kehta, “dad sochna bhi mat” (No matter how much money I might need, I won’t take it because I feel like I wouldn’t be the same person). I once noticed an advertising for hair oil while reading a newspaper when Sikandar was quite small. “Dad, don’t even think about it,” Sikandar remarked, assuming I was staring at the advertisement. I am fortunate to have a funny family, which is quite beneficial.

He also disclosed his relationship with children, whom he insists call Anupam ji or AK.

The actor said he enjoys talking to kids about a variety of subjects, including science, health, and artificial intelligence. The next film starring Anupam Kher is Khosla Ka Ghosla 2, which is directed by Prashant Bhagia.

In addition to Ranvir Shorey, Parvin Dabas, Kiran Juneja, and Boman Irani, it is a sequel to the 2006 movie Khosla Ka Ghosla! and will hit theaters on August 28, 2026.

On the anniversary of her father Krishnaraj Rai’s passing, Aishwarya Rai honors him



Mumbai: In honor of her “dearest darling” father Krishnaraj Rai on the ninth anniversary of his passing, actor Aishwarya Rai posted a number of pictures. She shared multiple pictures of Aishwarya’s daughter Aaradhya Bachchan honoring her late papa on Instagram. Aishwarya shared a garlanded picture frame of her late father in the first image. When Aaradhya saw the picture of her grandfather, she bowed her head. In the final image, Aishwarya was seen standing in front of the camera with her hands folded and her eyes closed.

Aishwarya and Aaradhya were spotted wearing cream clothing. Aishwarya shared the photo and said, “[Sparkles and folded hands emojis] as the caption. I will always love you, Daddy-Ajjaaa (red heart emoji). Love and prayers at all times (two heart emoji). I am grateful for your kind blessings (folded hands, Nazar amulet, emojis of a smiling face with

love and sparkles).” Krishnaraj passed away in Mumbai in 2017 following a protracted illness. Aishwarya never forgets the anniversary of her father’s birth and death because they were very close. The actor’s parents are Brindya Rai and Krishnaraj. Aditya Rai is her brother as well. Aishwarya got married to actor Abhishek Bachchan on

April 20, 2007. They were married in a small ceremony in Prateeksha, one of Amitabh Bachchan’s houses. On November 16, 2011, the couple welcomed their daughter, Aaradhya. The last time Aishwarya appeared was in Mani Ratnam’s Ponniyin Selvan: Part 2.

At the South Indian International Movie Awards (SIIMA) in Dubai, she took home the Best Actress in a Leading Role (Critics) prize for the movie. Mani Ratnam’s epic historical action drama was released in 2023. Vikram, Ravi Mohan, Karthi, Trisha Krishnan, Jayaram, Prabhu, R. Sarathkumar, Sobhita Dhulipala, and Aishwarya Lekshmi were among the other actors who starred in the movie.

It follows the family of Prince Arulmozhi Varman, who would go on to become Emperor Rajaraja I, as they deal with challenges to the Chola Empire. The actor has not yet disclosed her upcoming project.

Due to the Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke song being “against Islamic teachings,” a fatwa was issued in Uttar Pradesh against Nora Fatehi

New Delhi:In Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, a fatwa has been issued against Nora Fatehi due to the contentious song Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke from the Kannada movie KD: The Devil. Her and Sanjay Dutt’s song recently caused controversy due to its offensive lyrics, which the Union government also protested to. Following criticism of the song’s lyrics on the internet, the Muslim Personal Darul Ifta in Aligarh issued a fatwa against Nora. The religious organization informed ANI that the song Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke has material that they deem “objectionable and against Islamic teachings.” Chief Mufti Maulana Ebrahim Hussain issued the fatwa because he objected to the song’s “explicit and vulgar” images. In a statement, he informed India Today that he considered such content to be haram and a gunah-e-kabira (severe sin), adding that it is against religious principles to participate in or promote such content. In Islam, a fatwa is a non-binding legal opinion on a particular matter that is issued by a competent religious law expert, or mufti. The state cannot legally enforce it. The Union government also announced on



Wednesday that the KD song Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke has been banned due to criticism of its lyrics and imagery. In response to a query posed by Samajwadi Party MP Anand Bhadouria, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw made the announcement in the Lok Sabha. The song has drawn criticism ever since it

was released, and some organizations have called for the individuals involved in the song to face consequences. Just days before the issue was brought up in Parliament, complaints seeking a FIR and the song’s removal from circulation were filed, escalating public discussion. Arjun Janya composed the song, and Prem, the film’s director, wrote the origi-

nal Kannada lyrics. Raqueeb Alam translated them into Hindi. The vocals had come from Mangli. Nora asserted that she was not involved in the Hindi rendition of the song in a thorough Instagram video that was shared earlier this week. “I agreed to shoot this song three years ago since it was a part of a big movie and I was working with Sanjay Dutt, a big legend. Who wouldn’t want to work with him? He is very iconic. And it was a remake of Nayak Nahi Khalnayak Hoon Main, which is also a pretty famous song, at least that’s what I believed,” she said. She added that nothing appeared “inappropriate” or “vulgar” when the song’s creators described the translation to her at the time. She added, though, that she had just relied on what the team told her because she does not understand Kannada. She acknowledged that she knew the song would generate controversy when she heard the lyrics in Hindi during the launch. Dhruva Sarja, Sanjay Dutt, Shilpa Shetty Kundra, Ramesh Aravind, Reeshma Nanaiah, and V Ravichandran are among the KD cast members. On April 30, it will be released on screens.

mysterious note from Mammootty’s film writer is about Dhurandhar 2

Mumbai: Aditya Dhar’s film “Dhurandhar: The Revenge,” featuring Ranveer Singh, premiered on Thursday, receiving praise from various celebrities and seemingly recreating the success of its predecessor at the box office. However, criticism arose from Malayalam writer and filmmaker Devadath Shaji, who took to Instagram to share a cryptic message suggesting that a film that uses high-quality production to support a flawed idea transforms technical skills into manipulation tools. Although Shaji did not explicitly mention “Dhurandhar 2,” many interpreted his message as a critique of the film, especially since he referred to a song from the first installment in his note. This sparked discussions on social media, with some agreeing with Shaji’s assessment of the film as propaganda, while others defended it, claiming that dismissing it as propaganda was unwarranted. The narrative of “Dhurandhar: The Revenge” focuses on Jaskirat Singh Ranghi, an Indian spy working undercover in Pakistan to dismantle a terrorist organization while instigating internal chaos.



Divya Dutta discusses Deepika Padukone’s eight-hour shift controversy

Mumbai: Actor Divya Dutta recently traveled to Delhi ahead of the premiere of her new web series, Chiraiya. She talked about her program and what motivates her as an actor in a discussion. Divya also discussed the current 8-hour shift controversy, which started in the movie business when Deepika Padukone left Sandeep Reddy Vanga’s Spirit when her request was turned down.

“The anxiety, the thrill of trying something new, and the need to be relevant in every situation that arises, to feel like a novice on every set and to have butterflies in your stomach. That, in my opinion, is what’s exciting. And I suppose there’s nothing left to want when you truly adore what you do. There’s a



ton more. I believe I’ve just arrived at its coast. There are a plethora of talented directors, excellent production companies, and performers to collaborate with. There is so

much more, so the possibilities are endless.” I just believe that we cannot generalize about any circumstance or problem in life. I recall going for something when a woman

was discussing female rights and some sort of men-bashing was taking place. A man simply stood up and said, “Ma’am, I completely agree with you, but could you please tell whoever it may concern?” Thus, we are unable to generalize these findings.

The other person might not be okay with something that I am. My circumstances are not the same as hers. Who am I to remark on ABC’s predicament, then? It’s between two persons as well. It’s between the producer and the performer. It’s okay if my circumstances require me to leave early and the director agrees. They don’t collaborate if they’re not. That’s how easy it is. “Heeramandi, Kohrra. In my opinion, the characters in these shows have a lot of

depth and beauty. The women who participated performed a fantastic job. But those are lovely parts, Maharani, if you ask me what kind of role you would like. All of these people are my friends. And they’ve done a fantastic job. However, I would love to do it if you ask me. “I suppose each audience will be unique. Everybody will take something from the show that appeals to them. It will be something that will emotionally connect me to every character. It will strike a chord with me. I will say, “Hey, listen, I think I need to rethink a few things in life.” Naturally, there will also be enjoyable moments in between that will make me laugh and smile.

On March 20, Chiraiya will be available on Hotstar.

For Randeep Hooda, festivals are now all about passing on joy



Mumbai: The way life reorganizes itself around fresh starts has a certain poetry to it. The arrival of their daughter on March 10 has subtly changed the celebration schedule for actors Randeep Hooda and Lin Laishram this year. The Hooda-Laishram residence appears to have a fresh sense of calm and glitter as Navratri approaches. “This year feels especially meaningful for us,” says Hooda. We performed a small hawan at home for our daughter on Navratri and Gudi Padwa to commemorate auspicious days and welcome the newborn into her house,” he says kindly. “Our little one arrived just after Holi, carrying forward all that color and joy, and now as we step into Navratri, it feels like our home is filled with a new kind of light and happiness,” the 41-year-old muses. She seems to have united

all these lovely memories for us in the most unique way. Hooda joyfully

announced the birth of their daughter earlier this year, noting that it coincided with his father’s birthday. The couple was married in November 2023. He referred to her as “a little girl and a lifetime of love” in the social media post. “This year, every festival is going to feel extra special for us,” Hooda says with wonder that all new parents can identify with. Every event, including Navratri, is filled with a new type of delight now that our child is here. For our family, it’s a lovely time, and we’re eager to cherish every second with even more affection.

These days, festivals are more than just events to witness; they are also tales to tell the following generation. He grinned and said, “Now we feel like learning more about the festivals and traditions to pass them on to our daughter.”

Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas share a passenger princess moment



Mumbai:Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas took a break to relax together after a busy month filled with movie and music promotions, as well as drawing attention with their striking red carpet attire. Priyanka shared a glimpse of the couple’s romantic retreat as they took a leisurely drive and spent some much-needed time together. Priyanka posted a sweet video of herself having fun as the “passenger princess” on Instagram on Friday, while her husband Nick Jonas was behind the wheel. Nick dressed casually in a blue T-shirt and shorts, while the actress looked effortlessly fashionable in a white co-ord set with a hat. Priyanka gave followers a glimpse into their cozy time together away from the spotlight by sharing the video and writing, “Mommy Daddy days are my favourite.” The couple’s brief vacation follows an especially hectic month at work. While Nick was busy promoting his new album Sunday Best, Priyanka was busy promoting her most recent release, The Bluff. In addition to their professional obligations, the two made eye-catching appearances on international red carpets, such as the Acade-

my Awards and the Golden Globe Awards. Priyanka also presented at the Oscars. Priyanka’s filming for Varanasi will shortly continue. After an eight-year break, she is making a comeback to Indian cinema with this movie. Mahesh Babu and Prithviraj Sukumar play major parts in the film, which is directed by S. S. Rajamouli. A time-travel plot was alluded to in the first look, which was published last year. Mahesh Babu will play Lord Rama in one of the movie’s flashback scenes, according to Rajamouli. With an estimated budget of ₹1,000 crore, the movie is regarded as one of the most costly Indian movies. It will be released in theaters in April 2027 and is presently in production. Supporters have been waiting impatiently for more project updates. Conversely, Nick Jonas’s upcoming film is Power Ballad. In addition, Paul Rudd, Peter McDonald, Marcella Plunkett, Havana Rose Liu, and Jack Reynor play significant roles in John Carney’s musical comedy-drama. On March 1, 2026, the film made its global premiere at the Dublin International Film Festival. It is slated to open in US theaters on June 5.

Alia Batt’s disclosure that Don’t Be Shy is attracting outsiders: Karan Johar

Mumbai: Actor Alia Bhatt made her Bollywood debut in the 2012 film Student of the Year, directed by Karan Johar. With movies like Highway, Raazi, and Gangubai Kathiawadi, among others, she went on to establish herself in the business. Here’s Karan’s response to her previous remarks on launching outsiders with her upcoming production, Don’t Be Shy. She is now a producer. Alia and her sister Shaheen Bhatt attended Amazon Prime Video’s #ItStartsHere event on Thursday, where the OTT platform revealed their 2026 lineup. Alia’s Don’t Be Shy is one of the next original series on Prime Video. She talked about the movie and engaged host Karan Johar in a lighthearted conversation. “You’ve truly mastered the art of being a seasoned producer already, Alia, because your answers seem beautifully independent of my questions for some reason,” KJo said to Alia during the event. “Yes, Karan, because there is a way to launch actors,” Alia retorted. “And obviously I wouldn’t know that, would I?” Karan said in jest. “I’ve never done something like that,” he said, alluding to the way he introduced Alia to Bollywood. “Well, what can I say?” said Alia. The best have taught us. And the greatest have always taught us that everything has its proper time. “I have a very important question to ask you,” KJo continued. It’s not in the script, but it’s vital and important. Are they foreigners? “I’m so proud of you,” KJo said to the actress as she acknowledged that outsiders make up the cast of her future production. The film, which is directed by Sreeti Mukerji, is produced by Alia and Shaheen under the Eternal Sunshine brand in collaboration with Chalkboard Entertainment. It centers on 20-year-old Shyamili “Shy” Das, who thinks she has everything figured out until her well-planned life takes an unexpected turn and starts to go out of control. Both the cast and the release date have not yet been revealed. Alia is now waiting for her next movie, Alpha, to be released. The movie, which is the seventh entry in YRF’s spy universe, was directed by Shiv Rawail. It will be released in theaters on July 10, 2026, and it features Bobby Deol, Anil Kapoor, and Sharvari in important parts. In addition, she is working on Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Love & War, which is presently in production.

India uses the Essential Commodities Act to compel oil and gas companies to submit data during a crisis

New Delhi, Mar 20: The government has invoked the Essential Commodities Act, which requires all organizations “engaged in production, processing, refining, storage, transportation, import, export, marketing, distribution, and consumption of petroleum products and natural gas” to provide their most recent data to the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC), amid an ongoing global energy crisis brought on by the conflict in West Asia, according to an official.”The government issued a Gazette Notification yesterday under Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, designating PPAC as a nodal agency for information collection, compilation, maintenance, and analysis,” said Sujata Sharma, joint secretary in the ministry of petroleum. The oil ministry’s data custodian is PPAC. In any case, PPAC gathers information about the oil and gas industry. However, the latest alert equips it to look for detailed information practically instantly. This will assist the ministry in making emergency plans.Any dis-

obedience to an order made in accordance with Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act is illegal and may result in jail time. Sharma stated in her daily report on India’s energy situation on Thursday that the nation has a sufficient supply of petroleum and that refineries are running at full capacity. According to her, there have been no reports of dry outs and gas pumps are operating regularly.She provided information about the availability of natural gas, stating that supplies of compressed natural gas (CNG) and petroleum natural gas (PNG) are still 100%. “CGD [City Gas Distribution] companies are encouraging commercial LPG [liquefied petroleum gas] users to move to PNG with incentives and quick connections where networks exist,” she stated. In the past two weeks, the government has provided roughly 125,000 new piped natural gas connections (PNG) for both residential and commercial use, she said. “Over 5,600 LPG customers have switched to PNG in the last three days,” she continued. India has significant, long-



term LNG and LPG supply contracts with Qatar, thus Iran’s attack on Qatar’s energy infrastructure at Ras Laffan industrial city in response for an Israeli raid on Iranian South Pars gas station is a serious setback. Approximately 47% of India’s natural gas imports come from the nation. Through its varied sources, India is mostly supplying the energy it needs from West Asia. It imports crude from over forty nations, including the United States, Russia, and Venezuela. Additionally, it imports natural gas from Russia, Norway, Australia, and the United States.Regarding demand-side control, Sharma stated that local and state governments have been enlisted to stop black selling

and hoarding. While oil marketing corporations are performing inspections, states have increased raids and activated control rooms. Online booking is becoming more and more popular, she noted. Since gas cylinders are being supplied to their homes, they are also avoiding panic booking, she said. “Bookings made online have increased to 94%.” She claims that in order to guarantee supplies to the correct customers, around 83% of LPG refills have been delivered using an OTP-based delivery authentication code (DAC).”Bookings for panic have decreased,” she stated. On Wednesday, there were roughly 57 lakh (5.7 million) reservations, compared to the peak of 89 lakh (8.9 million) on March 13.

While the rest of India waits a day longer, Kerala is enjoying Eid today

New Delhi, Mar 20: There is a unique calendar divide this year as millions of Indians get ready to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr: Kerala will celebrate tonight, while the rest of the nation will do so tomorrow. It all boils down to one straightforward, age-old custom: seeing the moon. While the rest of India did not see the moon, Kerala did.Religious officials in Kerala verified that the Shawwal crescent moon was seen on Thursday night in coastal areas and other parts of the state. According to a news agency report, when the sighting was confirmed, clerics declared that Friday would be the start of Shawwal, the Islamic month that begins with Eid celebrations. Committees tasked with tracking the moon, however, reported no definite sightings in the majority of other parts of India, including Delhi and northern states. Because of this, Friday continues to be the last day of Ramadan in some areas, delaying the celebration of Eid until Saturday.

Ramadan and Eid observe the lunar Islamic calendar, which is totally dependent on the crescent moon’s brightness, in contrast to fixed-date celebrations. Different places occasionally start and conclude months on different days because moon sightings might vary depending on geography and weather. This year, Muslims outside of Kerala will fast for 30 days before Eid because the moon was not visible in most of India. On the other hand, Kerala’s ver-

ified sighting ends Ramzan one day early. Last year, there were 29 days in the month of Ramadan.The core of Eid, which is a time for prayer, thankfulness, generosity, and community, is unchanged despite the many dates. Muslims keep a fast from sunrise to sunset throughout the month of Ramadan. Even though celebrations take place on several days around the nation, religious leaders have emphasized the festival’s message of unity. Speaking to reporters, Fatehpuri Masjid Imam Mufti Mukarram Ahmad stated, “On this occasion, we pray that brotherhood and harmony in the country continues to prosper and is strengthened with love.”As a result, even though Kerala is starting its celebrations today, the rest of India will join in tomorrow, spiritually united despite being only one day apart.



A man from Bangladesh was detained for making false bomb threats



New Delhi, Mar 20: A 30-year-old Bangladeshi national was detained for sending fictitious bomb threat emails to several Gurugram schools, frightening parents, teachers, and pupils.

The accused, Saurabh Vishwas, also known as Michael, was living in West Bengal with fictitious documents after entering India illegally

from Bangladesh over nine years ago.The event was made public on January 28 when a number of the city’s schools received emails alleging that bombs had been placed on their property. Police teams, including the fire department, bomb disposal unit, and dog squad, attended the schools right away to investigate the property and found no explosives. The Cyber South Gurugram police unit started looking into the emails’ origin, according to a senior police officer.They were able to apprehend the Gujarati suspect on March 19.Police learned after questioning that Vishwas had been living in India illegally

and had first been employed as a laborer at a car manufacturer.He gained expertise in graphics and digital marketing over time, and he has been working as a freelancer in this area for the previous five years.According to the officer, Vishwas had connected with Mamunur Rashid, a Bangladeshi, through a Facebook group. In exchange for bitcoin in the form of USD, Rashid asked him to supply Gmail IDs.According to reports, Vishwas received about 250 USD and provided about 300 Gmail IDs. The fictitious bomb threat emails were subsequently sent to the schools in Gurugram using one of the Gmail addresses he supplied.

Carlos Alcaraz Will Face Talent from Brazil Joa Fonseca

New Delhi: Iga Swiatek was eliminated in the second round of the Miami Open, losing to fellow Pole Magda Linette with a score of 1-6, 7-5, 6-3. This defeat marks Swiatek’s first opening loss at a tournament since the 2021 WTA Finals, following earlier exits in the quarter-finals at the Australian Open and WTA 1000 events in Doha and Indian Wells. Despite being the defending champion and seeded second in Miami, Swiatek has now dropped to third in the world rankings, overtaken by Indian Wells finalist Elena Rybakina.Linette, ranked 50th, fought back after losing the first set quickly, taking advantage of a dou-

ble fault from Swiatek to convert two break points in the second set. This momentum shift allowed Linette to secure a third set. “I just had to go for a little bit more,” Linette remarked, emphasizing improved serving and hitting as keys to her victory. Swiatek showed resilience, saving multiple match points, but ultimately lost after sending a backhand wide on the final point.Linette will face 20-year-old Alexandra Eala in the third round, who advanced after defeating Laura Siegemund in a long match. Former world number one Venus Williams was eliminated by Francesca Jones in another first-round match, with Jones moving on to face fifth seed Jessica Pegula.

In India, premium gas prices increased by rs. 2 while regular gas prices remained steady

New Delhi, Mar 20: With effect from March 20, the price of premium fuel in India has increased by up to ₹2.35 due to the disruption of global energy supply caused by the Middle East crisis, which was sparked by US-Israeli assaults on Iran.According to a news outlet, the prices of BPCL’s Speed, HPCL’s Power, and IOCL’s XP95 have increased by ₹2.09 to ₹2.35 per litre.However, the cost of ordinary gasoline has not changed as of yet.In the interministerial news briefing on Friday, Sujata Sharma, joint secretary of the ministry of petroleum and natural gas, confirmed the trend by stating that oil marketing companies determine and deregulate the prices of gasoline and diesel. When asked if regular and diesel prices would rise in the near future, Sharma responded, “There is no change in normal petrol price, it remains unchanged for the public...only premium category, it is hardly 2-4%



of entire petrol.”The enormous drone and missile exchange that followed the US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 has disrupted the whole Gulf region and effectively closed off the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway that transports a fifth of the world’s

oil and liquefied natural gas. Please take note that as of right now, the RSP for POWER 95 has been raised by Rs. 2. A message from HPCL management to a petrol pump owner in Himachal Pradesh was accessed by hindustantimes.com. It stated, “Make

sure to display the correct price.”The president of the Mohali Petrol Pump Association of Punjab, Arshwinder Mongia, also confirmed the price increase, stating that the premium petrol cost was previously ₹105.16 and is currently ₹107.13.Following Iran’s attack on the largest LNG facility in the world in Qatar and its warning to destroy the region’s energy infrastructure, oil and gas prices skyrocketed globally on Thursday. Donald Trump also vowed a “massive blow” from the US if such attacks persisted. After Iran bombed Qatar’s massive Ras Laffan LNG complex in response for an Israeli hit on its South Pars gas production, the international benchmark Brent increased 10% before declining, while European gas increased 35%.The attack on South Pars, which provides around 70% of the nation’s natural gas, was deemed a “major mistake” by Iran’s military on Thursday.

Gautam Gambhir’s statement to Shashi Tharoor that Sanju Samson doesn’t have to follow in MS Dhoni’s footsteps

New Delhi:Sanju Samson will be “the one and only Sanju Samson,” so he doesn’t need to be the next MS Dhoni. When Congress MP Shashi Tharoor recalled his own previous statement that Samson would be the next Dhoni, Indian cricket coach Gautam Gambhir said this. Tharoor recalled this exchange with Gambhir in an interview with PTI, praising Samson’s valiant efforts during India’s recent World T20 campaign. Tharoor, who has backed Samson since the beginning of his club cricket career, expressed his immense delight in the player’s accomplishments. “I actually met him when he was 14, he was a young club cricketer, small chap with a big smile, he was already quite muscular, though he was slender

to look at, and tremendous talent, he was already both wicketkeeping and batting.”I had informed Samson that he would be the next Dhoni with a hint of condescension. My buddy Gautam Gambhir told me years later, “No, No, No, he does not have to be the next Dhoni, he will be the one and only Sanju Samson,” and that is precisely what he has become, Tharoor told . The Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram remarked, “Samson has been a terrific success. He is quiet, modest, unpretentious, a good and effective leader who had led the Rajasthan Royals very effectively for many years,” adding that Samson will now play for the CSK in the IPL.According to Tharoor, the steadiness and anchoring he provided for the Indian team at the top of the



order are more significant. ”That core, that essence, that talent was always there,” he remarked. “When I suffered with him as it were during the trials and tribulations, I felt that if he could just compose himself, it would all come back.”When he started the game against the West Indies, I think I saw something in his eyes that made me say, “This guy is not getting out today.” Tharoor added, “I even told him this later because I was watching it on TV, but you

could see his eyes, you could see the calmness in his face, that sense of security, and he went on to score 97 not out, he never got out in that match.” Additionally, he cited Samson’s two following 89-run performances in the semi-final and final.In a selfless gesture, he lost his wicket in both of those innings. He could have said, “Let me just graft for the next 11 runs, hit the ball along the ground, run the singles, maybe a four, but he went for the big shots because the team he felt needed quick runs, and that is Sanju,” Tharoor said. “He is selfless, he is talented, and he is dedicated.” The Congress leader remarked, “I remember he scored a century in an ODI and was dropped after that. He has had the knocks and really has had luck.””But three

innings in a row in a World Cup, that is consistency for you,” Tharoor stated. “This is a guy who has had to take a fair bit of unfairness, and some of his exclusions were justified because he had also been inconsistent.” “That kind of talent deserves its fullest expression in every form of the game,” Tharoor declared. “I would love to see him continue to perform on the big stage both in ODIs and T20s, and one day in a Test match too.”Samson scored 321 runs to win player of the tournament in the most recent T20 World Cup. Sanju’s effort pleased head coach Gambhir, who described him as a unique potential.Kerala now has a cricketing star who transcends societal boundaries thanks to Samson’s efforts in the World Cup.

Amid doubts over the World Cup, FIFA President Gianni Infantino sends Iran a clear message

New Delhi: FIFA president Gianni Infantino stated that soccer plays a crucial role in “promoting peace” in a statement on Thursday that did not specifically reference Iran. However, the sport’s governing organization did nothing to address the complaints made by its Palestinian member federation against Israel. Following the meeting of FIFA’s ruling council, Infantino reaffirmed that Iranian requests to switch the team’s three June World Cup group matches from the

United States to Mexico would not be granted. Since Israel and the United States have been attacking Iran militarily since February 28, Iranian government and soccer leaders have stated that the national team cannot travel to the United States. The club is scheduled to play one game in Seattle and two in the Inglewood stadium of the Los Angeles Rams. Regarding the World Cup matches that were revealed in December, Infantino stated, “We have a schedule, and we want

the FIFA World Cup to go ahead as scheduled.” Additionally, FIFA voted on Thursday not to suspend membership in response to official charges made by the Palestinian soccer federation against its Israeli counterpart in 2024. Palestinian soccer leaders have long claimed that by allowing clubs from West Bank settlements to participate in the national competition, Israel is breaking FIFA regulations.Given that the final legal status of the West Bank

is still an unresolved and extremely complicated topic under public international law in the context of the interpretation of the pertinent clauses of the FIFA Statutes, FIFA should not take any action, the soccer organization stated. “But as our thoughts are with those who are suffering as a result of the ongoing wars, we are dedicated to using the power of football and the FIFA World Cup to build bridges and promote peace,” he stated.

SPORTS

Jaipur Optiemus Achievers Beat Jindal Panther In Rain Hit Indian Open Thriller

New Delhi: A breezy, rain-soaked evening at the iconic Jaipur Polo Grounds set the stage for an engaging exhibition match of the Indian Open Polo Championship between Jindal Panther and Jaipur - Optiemus Achievers. Despite intermittent showers, close to 1,000 spectators—including dignitaries, students from Maharaja Agrasen Medical College and kids from Prayas juvenile aid centre—turned up to witness high-quality polo action, according to a release. Jaipur - Optiemus Achievers got off to a flying start, with Alejo Aramburu and Sawai Padmanabh Singh scoring two goals each in the opening chukker. Jindal Panther responded through Juan Gris Zavaleta and Ramiro Zavaleta, but trailed 4-2 at the end of the first chukker.

The Achievers extended their lead in the second chukker, with Aramburu adding the only goal to make it 5-2, maintaining their early dominance. Jindal Panther mounted a strong comeback in the third chukker as Juan Gris Zavaleta and Naveen Jindal struck once each to narrow the margin to 5-4. However, Jaipur - Optiemus Achievers responded swiftly, with Sawai Padmanabh Singh and Pratap Singh Kanota finding the net to restore a comfortable lead, ending the first half at 7-4. After the break,



Sawai Padmanabh Singh continued his fine form, scoring twice in the fourth chukker, while Juan Gris Zavaleta added one for Jindal Panther as the score moved to 9-5. Persistent rain began to take its toll on the playing conditions, and although the fifth chukker was completed—with Naveen Jindal scoring the only goal—worsening weather made it unsafe to continue. With the sixth and final chukker remaining, the match was called off with no result possible. Despite the curtailed finish, the match delivered thrilling moments and showcased the growing appeal of polo, with fans braving the weather to experience the sport at one of its most historic venues. Speaking

after the match, Naveen Jindal said, “It’s always special to be here at the iconic Jaipur Polo Grounds, one of the most historic venues for the sport in India. Polo has been played on this ground for over a century, and it carries a rich legacy -- including the famous 1922 match between Jodhpur and Patiala, which drew an incredible crowd of over 1.5 lakh spectators.

This ground is not just a venue; it is the heart of Indian polo and home to the Indian Polo Association. Polo, in many ways, is India’s gift to the world -- it originated in our country in Manipur before being embraced globally.” “The Indian Open Championship represents the highest level

of polo in the country -- our equivalent of a World Cup at the 14-goal level. Unfortunately, due to heavy rain, the conditions became unsafe, as wet turf increases the risk of horses slipping and getting injured, which is why the match had to be curtailed,” he added. Further, he said, “Each player here brings 8 to 10 horses, and today we had around 70 to 75 horses on the ground, many of them world-class breeds from Argentina and New Zealand.

These horses are incredible athletes -- built for speed, agility, and endurance -- but they also require immense care, training, and a strong partnership with the rider.” “It’s heartening to see such a great turnout today, with many people experiencing polo for the first time. Watching the sport is one thing, but being on the field -- whether as a player or alongside these magnificent horses -- is a completely different experience. I truly believe polo will continue to grow and reach millions more,” Naveen Jindal concluded. Bringing together some of India’s promising polo talent alongside experienced campaigners, the tournament promises a week of fast-paced action and competitive matchups, according to a release. Featuring seven teams competing across pool stages and knockout Association.

Alcaraz Views Opponents' Aggression As A Compliment Ahead Of Miami Open



Miami: Ahead of his Miami Open title bid, the world number one tennis superstar, Carlos Alcaraz, said that the players trying to play a more aggressive brand of tennis to beat him feels like a “compliment” to him. Sinner, who secured his sixth Grand Slam title by winning his first-ever Australian Open earlier this year, will be aiming to bounce back from his loss in the Indian Wells semifinals will be starting his Miami Open campaign with a clash against Joao Fonseca, the 19-year-old who pushed the eventual champion Jannik Sinner to two tie-breaks at the Indian Wells. The 19-year-old Fonseca will

be aiming to bring his fearless, attacking style against the world number one in their first head-to-head meeting, which will undoubtedly be a fire versus fire clash given the high intensity, aggressive and flashy playing styles of both players. I think I am just trying to take it as a compliment when players try to play their best, more aggressively if they want to beat me,” Alcaraz said in a pre-tournament interview in Miami as quoted by the ATP official website. “I think it is a great thing to know, and obviously, I am just really happy that they are taking us [as] players to try to beat, and we are trying to make them

improve as a player as well. So for me, that is great.” But sometimes when I step on the court and see the opponent playing that level, it is not that funny,” he concluded. Alcaraz said that his focus is on being “one step forward” and “trying to see what their opponent’s next move is going to be before they make it”. “It is like chess in a way. I am trying to be there a little bit earlier or trying to think what is going to happen next. Then I can think about my move. I am trying that or just trying to be more aggressive than them or trying not to let them be in a good spot all the time,” he concluded his point.

Santner Applauds All-Round Display As Kiwis Crush Proteas In Auckland



Auckland: New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner lauded his team’s all-round performance after the Blackcaps defeated South Africa by eight wickets in the third T20I of the five-match series, at Auckland on Friday. South Africa captain Keshav Maharaj, on the other hand, pointed out his team’s inability to adapt but also noted that the team still has a chance to make a comeback. New Zealand’s win was powered by a sensational bowling performance that restricted South Africa to just 136/9 in 20 overs. Lockie Ferguson (1/9 in 4 overs), Mitchell Santner (2/21 in 3 overs) and Ben Sears (2/27 in 4 overs) shone with the ball for the hosts, while Kyle Jamieson,

Cole McConchie and James Neesham also chipped in with crucial contributions.

Chasing, 137, New Zealand openers Devon Conway (39) and Tom Latham (unbeaten 63) made sure the Kiwis got over the line with eight wickets remaining in 16.2 overs. Speaking at the post-match presentation, New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner said the team planned to exploit the conditions by bowling first and making things difficult for South Africa with seam and bounce. He praised the fast bowlers, especially Ben Sears and Kyle Jamieson, for sticking to a simple approach, while also highlighting James Neesham’s crucial

contribution. He acknowledged the chase had its challenges due to sharp bowling from Gerald Coetzee, but credited the openers for handling the pressure well. Overall, he was pleased with the team’s bowling effort and their adaptability in the conditions. A new team to this ground, we wanted to put them in and make it hard for them. There was a good amount of seam, bounce. You look at the depth in our fast bowling, you see, Sears and Jamieson, it was a simple blueprint today: whack the wicket and also some slower balls. Neesham’s three overs were also massive for us,” Santner said. “The chase looked tricky since Gerald bowled rockets but it was good to see the two boys, the openers, soak it up. But you can afford to do it when chasing 137. What was nice was that we were chopping and changing our bowlers, but the boys were raring to go irrespective. We bowled very well in these conditions,” he added.

Keshav Maharaj, on the other hand, admitted South Africa fell behind as they lost wickets early (46/5) and struggled to recover, though the lower order added some respectability to the total. He felt the team lacked adaptability in the first half of the innings, but remained hopeful about a comeback in the series and stressed the need to be more clinical in both batting and bowling. “We lost wickets early and it’s tough to recover from 46 for 5.

Harley-Davidson Motorcycle Prize Adds Thrill As Bholath Hockey Cup Kicks Off In Jalandhar Elite Teams Chasing Cash And Motorcycles



Jalandhar: The Bholath Hockey Cup began today at the iconic Surjit Hockey Stadium, promising an exciting showcase of top-tier hockey talent. Four matches are scheduled on the opening day, drawing strong participation and enthusiasm from players and spectators alike. Adding a unique highlight to the tournament, organisers announced that the Best Player of the Final will be awarded a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, alongside substantial cash prizes for top performers and teams.

Chief organiser Mohanbir Singh Bal, an NRI based in Australia originally from Bholath, Punjab, shared the emotional legacy behind the event. He revealed that his father, Avtar Singh Bal, had initiated a kabaddi cup in Bholath over five decades ago. “It has been 57 years since the kabaddi cup began. My father passed away in 2018, and we did not want his legacy to end. In his memory, we continued the tradition. He was a passionate sports lover

who played both kabaddi and hockey, which inspired us to introduce the hockey cup this year,” Bal said.

He further credited the success of the event to the support of friends and well-wishers, which enabled the organisers to offer significant prize money and prestigious awards. Co-organiser Gurjit Singh emphasized that the tournament aims to promote a vibrant

sports culture in Punjab. The men’s competition features eight elite teams competing in a knockout format, including Indian Navy (Mumbai), CAG (Delhi), Indian Army Red (New Delhi), Punjab Police (Jalandhar), Punjab & Sind Bank (New Delhi), Petroleum Sports Promotion Board, Indian Air Force, and Punjab National Bank. The stakes are high, with the winning team

set to receive Rs 15 lakh, the runner-up Rs 10 lakh, and the third-placed team Rs 5 lakh. Individual accolades include Rs 3 lakh for the Player of the Tournament and the coveted motorcycle prize for the Best Player of the Final. In the women’s category, four teams—CRPF (Jalandhar), BSF (Jalandhar), Round Glass Sports (Mohali), and Guru Nanak Dev Universi.

Ayush Shetty Exits Orleans Masters Following Round Of Sixteen Defeat



Orleans: Indian shuttler Ayush Shetty bowed out of the ongoing Orleans Open badminton tournament with a quarterfinal loss on Friday. Shetty, 20, suffered a two-game defeat to Yudai Okimoto by 18-21, 9-21, as per ESPN. The 2025 US Open champion is still searching for his first title of the year. He is yet to

progress beyond the second round, a finish he achieved in the Malaysian Open this year, with the rest of his exits being in the first round.

However, there is still hope for India as there are three quarterfinal matches lined up further. In women’s singles action, it will be a win-win situation as two compatriots,

Isharani Baruah and Malvika Bansod, will be locking horns with each other. Bansod is yet to progress beyond round of 16 this year, which was her best finish attained during the Indian Open in Delhi back in January. In the other women’s singles quarterfinals, Tanvi Sharma will be battling Japan’s Natsuki Nidaira.

India Women To Return To South Africa For Twenty-Four Year Landmark Test

New Delhi: India Women are set to return to Test cricket in South Africa after 24 years when the two sides meet in a one-off Test in Gqeberha from December 20. On Friday, Cricket South Africa announced the schedule for India Women’s ODI and Test tour of the country.

India Women played their only Test in South Africa way back in 2002 when they won by 10 wickets at the Boland Blank Park in Paarl. It will also be the first time since 2026 when India Women will play three Tests in a calendar Test. India will begin the tour with a warm-up match against South Africa Emerging before the three-match ODI series, which will be played from December 9 to 15. The tour will then culminate in the one-off Test. India are also scheduled to tour South Africa for a five-match T20I series in April as part of their preparations for the Women’s T20 World Cup. Australia will follow in the new year for a full multi-format tour of South Africa in March and April 2027. Their visit will include three T20Is, three ODIs and a one-off Test. The T20Is will be played



in Kimberley, Benoni and East London, before the ODI leg shifts to Gqeberha, Paarl and Durban, with the final ODI set to serve as the annual Black Day fixture. “We are delighted to host

two of the world’s leading teams in India and Australia for what promises to be a blockbuster home summer for the Proteas Women,” CSA Chief Executive Officer Pholetsi Moseki said.

These tours will showcase the very best of international women’s cricket and build on the encouraging rise in fan attendance, as we continue to welcome growing across series.