

## MLA Robindro calls for unity, peaceful coexistence



**Imphal, Feb 21:** A newly constructed community hall at Kok-chai Makha Leikai under the Mayang Imphal Assembly Constituency was inaugurated by the local MLA, Kongkham Robindro Singh. The community hall was built under the MLA Local Area Development (MLALAD) Fund and has been formally handed over to the public. The inauguration programme was attended by several prominent individuals, including social worker Abujam Yaima Singh as the chief guest and President of Bharatiya Janata Party Mayang Imphal Mandal, from Rabi Singh, as a special invitee, along with local leaders and residents. Speaking at the function, MLA Kongkham Robindro Singh stated that the Meitei community has a rich tradition of organising various social, cultural, and religious events in unity and

harmony. He emphasised that maintaining unity and mutual understanding among different communities is essential for peaceful coexistence in the State. He further said that since ancient times, under the leadership of kings, the people of Manipur have lived together in peace and mutual respect. He urged the people, especially the younger generation, to uphold this tradition of unity and harmony among different communities. The MLA also expressed concern that if the Meitei community does not remain united and progressive, its population and influence may decline in the coming decades, while other communities continue to advance. He called upon the people to remain vigilant and united, stressing the need for collective efforts and a strong sense of solidarity for a better future.

## Major Crackdown on Illegal Coal Trade in East Jaintia Hills; 94 FIRs Registered in 52 Days

**Shillong, Feb 21:** In what is being described as one of the most aggressive crackdowns on illegal coal mining and transportation in recent years, the district police of East Jaintia Hills have intensified enforcement under Superintendent of Police Pankaj Kumar Rasgania. The drive, which began during the tenure of former SP Vikas Kumar, has continued for 52 consecutive days and has gained further momentum under the present SP. Officials said the enforcement has been carried out quietly but decisively. Within just five days of the intensified operation led by SP Rasgania, police registered 25 FIRs, seized 1,322 metric tonnes of coal, and arrested six individuals. During this period, 16 trucks were seized across the district, including 12 trucks intercepted during the latest operation alone. On the intervening night of February 20 and 21, district police seized 12 trucks loaded with coal, SP Rasgania informed. Since January 1, a total of 94 FIRs have been registered in connection with illegal coal activities. Over the past 52 days, police have seized 17,322 metric tonnes of coal, made 22 arrests, and recovered 25.5 kilograms of explosives. The figures indicate



a sustained and intensified offensive against the illegal coal trade in the district. The crackdown has been carried out under the supervision of district authorities and in compliance with directives from the National Green Tribunal (NGT), which has repeatedly flagged rampant

illegal mining in Meghalaya. A Special Investigating Team (SIT) is probing the blast incident, while police continue to monitor coal-rich areas to prevent further violations. Officials stated that the enforcement drive is aimed at dismantling entrenched networks of illegal

coal operators and ensuring accountability in the wake of repeated mining tragedies. The district administration has reaffirmed its commitment to uphold environmental and safety regulations, stressing that unchecked coal trade poses both ecological and human risks.

## Shillong Holiday Mourning Syngkon

**Shillong, Feb 21:** The Meghalaya government has declared a public holiday on February 21, 2026, in the Shillong Parliamentary Constituency as a mark of respect for the late Member of Parliament Ricky AJ Syngkon and to enable people to attend his funeral. Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said the holiday would be observed across all districts falling within the constituency. The decision, he noted, was taken to allow the public, supporters and well-wishers to participate in the funeral services and pay their last respects.

The date had earlier been notified as a working day under compensatory holiday arrangements but will now be observed as a holiday in honour of the departed leader. Syngkon, 54, who represented the Voice of the People Party (VPP), died on Thursday after collapsing while playing football in Shillong. He was initially taken to the Community Health Centre in Mawiong and later shifted to Dr H. Gordon Roberts Hospital in Jaiaiw. Despite efforts by doctors, he was pronounced dead at around 8.42 p.m., with suspected cardiac arrest cited as the cause. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over Syngkon's passing, recalling his contributions to public life. Chief Minister Sangma conveyed his condolences, describing Syngkon as a compassionate leader dedicated to public service and the welfare of the people.

## AKRSU Splits Again: New Central Committee Formed in Gossaigaon Amid Growing Dissent

**Gossaigaon, Feb 21:** The All Koch Rajbongshi Students' Union (AKRSU), formed to demand the creation of a separate Kamatapur state, Scheduled Tribe status, and to address various pressing issues of the Koch Rajbongshi community, has once again witnessed a split despite earlier efforts at unification.

After several attempts to bring together the divided factions, a new central committee was constituted on July 29, 2025, at Bongaigaon. The committee was formed with Kshitish Barman as Chief Adviser, Manoj Ray as President, and Balaram Barman as Secretary. However, within a year of its formation, the unified body has fragmented again, leading to the emergence of four separate groups. On Saturday, yet another new central committee was formed in Gossaigaon.

The new 31-member central committee was constituted at the office of AKRSU's West Kokrajhar district committee located at Dalgou

near Gossaigaon town, in the presence of representatives from several district committees. Maniram Ray was elected President, while Mrinal Ray and Keshab Ray were appointed as Joint Secretaries.

Following the representatives' meeting, newly elected President Maniram Ray addressed a press conference. He stated that although AKRSU was unified in the interest of the Koch Rajbongshi community, the committee led by Manoj Ray failed to take effective steps to resolve key issues. He alleged that important demands such as the formation of a separate Kamatapur state and the granting of Scheduled Tribe status were not raised with the necessary seriousness. Despite repeated proposals to discuss community issues and development matters, these were allegedly ignored. Maniram Ray further stated that the unified leadership deviated from AKRSU's core demands and failed to give due importance to the unification process. As a re-

sult, several factions have already emerged, including groups led by Pradip Ray (undivided Goalpara district), Ratul group, Dipen group, and Middle Assam group. He claimed that many members have collectively resigned from the unified committee. Although a new committee has now been formed in the interest of the community, Maniram Ray emphasized that the repeated fragmentation of AKRSU is not beneficial for the Koch Rajbongshi people. He called for the formation of a unification convening committee to review the causes behind the divisions and expressed willingness to cooperate in future unification efforts. Joint Secretaries Mrinal Ray and Keshab Ray also addressed the media, stating that the earlier unification had failed to yield tangible results for the community. They criticized the Manoj Ray-led committee for not taking strong action regarding the Scheduled Tribe status issue, especially after the related report was passed

in the Assembly but not forwarded to the Centre. They also pointed out that no response was made by the unified leadership after the Chief Minister's statement ahead of the Assembly elections that leaders of six communities had not demanded ST status. The newly formed committee announced that, expressing no confidence in the current unified leadership, a central representatives' meeting was convened at the West Kokrajhar district AKRSU headquarters in Gossaigaon. During the meeting, discussions were held on the activities of the present leadership, and a no-confidence motion was adopted. Consequently, a resolution was passed to form a new central committee. The representatives' meeting also expelled current President Manoj Ray, General Secretary Balaram Barman, and Chief Adviser Kshitish Barman from AKRSU with immediate effect, alleging their involvement in unconstitutional activities.

## KCP (PSC) militant arrested, arms recovered



**Imphal, Feb 21:** Security forces arrested a militant belonging to proscribed outfit Kangleipak Communist Party (PSC) in Imphal West district while recovering cache of arms and ammunition in a separate operation, a police statement informed on Saturday. One 21 year old active cadre of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (PSC) was arrested from Tera Lukram Leirak in Imphal West district on Friday. Security forces during an operation at Chingkhel Ching foothill area in Imphal East district recovered cache of arms and ammunition on Friday. The recovered items include one .303 rifle with magazine, one .22 rifle, one 9 mm SMG carbine with magazine, two No. 36 hand-grenades, one improvised bomb, one WP No. 80 MK-1 Grenade, 57 live rounds ammunition of different calibers, three Lethod shells, two SLR empty cases, four INSAS magazines, one SLR magazine, one Pistol magazine, two tube launchers and two .303 charger clips. The arrested cadre and the recovered arms and ammunition were handed over to the concerned police stations for necessary proceedings.

## Meet deliberates on strengthening mental health system in Manipur

**Imphal, Feb 21:** The State-Level Consensus Building Meeting under the Mental Health System Assessment initiative was successfully convened on Friday at Sushruta Hall, Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal. The meeting brought together key stakeholders, policymakers, health officials, and experts to deliberate on strengthening the mental health system in Manipur. The programme was graced by Prof. G. Sunil Kumar Sharma, Director, RIMS, Imphal; Dr. N. Bino Singh, Director of Family Welfare, Manipur; and Dr. N. Hemantakumar Singh, Director of Health Services, Manipur. Brogen Singh Akoijam, Professor of Community Medicine, and Prof. S. Gojendra Singh, Head of the Department of Psychiatry, RIMS, are the Principal Investigators of NMHS-2, while Dr. Mona Nongmeikapam and Dr. Laishram Jalina serve as Co-Principal Investigators. Speaking at the event, Prof. G. Sunil Kumar Sharma expressed pride in RIMS' involvement in NMHS-2, one of the



world's largest mental health surveys. He highlighted the significant mental health burden in India and the recent challenges faced by Manipur. He noted that the assessment will review infrastructure, service delivery, treatment gaps, governance, financing, and policy implementation, while emphasising the need for collaboration beyond data collection. Meanwhile, the Medical Society

of RIMS, Imphal, held its 6th Scientific Session for the academic year 2025-26 at Banting Hall, providing a platform for research presentations and case discussions. Eight papers from multiple specialties were presented, followed by interactive discussions. Senior faculty members moderated the session, reinforcing RIMS' commitment to research, collaboration, and academic excellence.

## Pipping ceremony held for 68 newly promoted Deputy Rangers

**Imphal, Feb 21:** In a significant boost to the State's forest frontline staff, a solemn and dignified Pipping Ceremony for 68 newly promoted Deputy Rangers including six women officers was held on Friday at the state Forest Headquarters, Sanjenthong, Imphal. Newly promoted personnel includes six officers promoted in 2025 and 62 officers promoted in 2026. The ceremony formally conferred rank insignia upon forest force personnel who were recently promoted from the rank of Forester to Deputy Ranger in the Forest Department, Government of Manipur. The ceremony was presided over by Anurag Bajpai, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Head of Forest Force (PCCF & HoFF), who officially decorated the officers with their new rank insignia. Senior forest officials and staff members of the department were present at the headquarters, marking the importance of the occasion and reaffirming the department's commitment to strengthening its field leadership. During the ceremony, Anurag Bajpai and other senior officers ceremonially pinned the rank insignia on the shoulders of the newly promoted Deputy Rangers. The pipping symbolized not only the formal assumption of higher rank but also the enhanced duties, leadership responsibilities, and trust reposed in the officers by the department and the Government. Addressing the gathering, Anurag Bajpai congratulated all 68 officers on their well-earned promotion. He remarked that the achievement was a result of their dedication, perseverance, and commitment to duty over the years. Emphasizing the deeper significance of the occasion, he stated, "This is a moment of immense pride

for the department. However, a new position inevitably brings more responsibilities towards people, state and nation. Our Deputy Rangers are the backbone of field operations, and we look forward to their enhanced contribution toward protecting our natural heritage." He further highlighted that while the promotion marks a milestone of personal achievement, it also carries a greater responsibility toward the department's mission. The stars worn on their shoulders represent accountability, discipline, and the solemn duty to safeguard the forests, wildlife, and ecological wealth of Manipur. He underscored the crucial role of Deputy Rangers in field administration, protection of Forests, prevention of forest offences, implementation of afforestation and conservation programmes, and growth of the forest dependent communities. In the current scenario of Manipur, where forest ecosystems face increasing pressures from illegal felling, encroachment, forest fires, habitat fragmentation, and wildlife-related challenges, strengthening the forest force assumes critical importance. The promotion of 68 Deputy Rangers significantly enhances the department's operational capacity and supervisory oversight across ranges and divisions. With greater authority and clearly defined command responsibilities, these officers will be better positioned to ensure effective enforcement of forest laws, improved monitoring of vulnerable areas, timely response to forest and wildlife offences, and stronger coordination with local communities and enforcement agencies. This development will contribute meaningfully to strengthening forest governance, ecological security, and public confidence in the Forest Department's commitment to sustainable forest management.

After more than a year, Agartala–Dhaka–Kolkata bus service is scheduled to resume; a trial run has begun

Agartala, Feb 21: The international bus service between Agartala, Dhaka, and Kolkata is about to resume after being suspended for almost a year, resurrecting a crucial transportation link for passengers between West Bengal and Tripura, Bangladesh.

Due to the suspension of visa services and the lack of passenger mobility, the Tripura Road Transport Corporation (TRTC) and Royal Maitree services were suspended. Passenger guide Sipon Sarkar told India Today NE that the bus service had been dormant since visas were not being given, which prevented a number of prospective customers from traveling. “We brought the bus here for a test run yesterday, but the service was suspended for over a year,” he stated. The current goal, Sarkar continued, is to resume regular operations so that the public is aware of the route’s



reopening. The bus driver, Fayeg Ahmood, expressed hope that regular operations would resume. “We are now operating the bus as a testing trip. There aren’t any passengers now, but we’re opti-

mistic that this will change shortly,” he said. He added that authorities from the Bangladesh High Commission also said that a crucial prerequisite for cross-border travel, visa processing for tourists, stu-

dents, and other travelers is anticipated to start up again soon. According to Fayeg, a workforce of about 25 is ready to guarantee that services can begin right away once full-fledged operations start.

Hindi and Regional Languages Must Advance Together to Bring People Together: Manik Saha

Agartala, Feb 21: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has stated that Hindi promotion and regional language preservation must go hand in hand, emphasizing that languages should unite people rather than drive them apart. He was giving a speech at the Eastern, North-Eastern, and Northern Regional Rajbhasha Sammelan on Friday at the International Indoor Exhibition Center in Hapania, which was opened by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Saha stated that the Union Home Minister’s initiative led to Tripura being selected as the event’s location and expressed optimism that the Sammelan will inspire stakeholders to promote language peace. The Chief Minister emphasized how crucial language is to governance and claimed that Hindi had greatly enhanced public-government communication.

He insisted that regional languages must thrive alongside Hindi as it continues to expand. “Hindi has been crucial in fostering a close relationship between the people and the administration because it is a language that is widely understood. To ensure that everyone is covered equally, government benefits must be distributed equitably to all citizens. India is a multilingual country, and Hindi serves as a unifying language in the biggest democracy in the world. Simultaneously, he stated, “Hindi promotion and local language preservation should proceed together.” Saha rephrased his comments to say that the goal is to keep local languages alive while Hindi spreads, not to let one language take over.

He added that India is seeing a renewed emphasis on the advancement of Sanskrit and Indian languages



under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s direction. Saha emphasized linguistic variety by pointing out that Hindi has a larger vocabulary than English and that the National Education Policy 2020 has made mother tongue promotion a top priority.” In Tripura, the number of people who can

speak and understand Hindi has been steadily rising,” he stated. Senior authorities and members of the public attended the event, including Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar, MPs Rajib Bhattacharya, Biplab Kumar Deb, and Kriti Singh Debbarma.

Major weaponry cache found in twin operations, arrest of KCP (PSC) cadre



Imphal, Feb 21: On February 20, security forces in Manipur conducted coordinated operations in the districts of Imphal West and Imphal East, recovering a stockpile of sophisticated weapons and explosives and apprehending an active member of the

banned Kangleipak Communist Party (People’s War Group). Chanambam Henba Singh, also known as Lanchenba (21), a resident of Iroisemba Mang Hidden, Lane No. 10, Imphal West district, was taken into custody by security authorities. He was taken into

custody after a targeted operation based on particular intelligence inputs from the Tera Lukram Leirak region under the Lamphel Police Station in the Imphal West district. Security personnel conducted a search operation at the foothills of Chingkhui

Ching under Porompat Police Station in Imphal East district that same day in response to additional information, which resulted in the recovery of a sizable arms haul. One 9 mm SMG carbine with magazine, one.303 rifle with magazine, one.22 rifle, two No. 36 hand grenades, one improvised explosive device (IED), and one WP No. 80 MK-1 grenade are among the found materials. Along with three Lethod shells, two SLR empty cases, four INSAS magazines, one SLR magazine, one pistol magazine, two tube launchers, and two. 303 charger clips, 57 live rounds of ammunition of various calibres were also found. High-grade weap-

onry, grenades, and explosive materials were recovered, according to officials, which suggests that insurgency forces are still trying to reorganize and destabilize the area. The confiscated documents have been turned over to the relevant police stations for additional legal action and forensic analysis. To stop the movement and operations of underground groups, security authorities have increased intelligence-based and combing operations in areas of the valley districts that are susceptible. The origin of the weapons and any potential connections to recent subversive actions in the state are being investigated.

Hydropower will propel Arunachal’s upcoming economic boom: Pema Khandu, CM



Itanagar, Feb 21: With approximately 19 GW of new projects worth Rs 2 lakh crore scheduled to begin in the upcoming years, hydropower will anchor the state’s next phase of economic change, according to Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday. These projects will create enormous revenue, jobs, and long-term energy security. Speaking at the Statehood Day festivities at IG Park, Khandu emphasized the industry’s crucial role in determining Arunachal’s future and stated that the state government has already designated 2025–2035 as the “Decade of Hydro-

power.” At the moment, 4.8 GW of projects are being built, and 1.2 GW of projects are already functioning. According to him, the 2,880 MW Dibang Project is expected to be finished in 2032, while the 2,000 MW Subansiri Lower Project is expected to be finished this year. In addition to producing more than 30,000 direct and 16,000 indirect jobs, the chief minister revealed that the next projects are anticipated to yield Rs 4,000 crore in free power, Rs 750 crore in Local Area Development Funds, and Rs 4,000 crore in dividends yearly. Additionally, the Center has invested on behalf of the state, securing a 26 percent equity stake in hydroelectric projects. Khandu praised the Nyishi community for embracing hydropower projects, pointing to the increased popular support, especially during public hearings for the Kamle hydroelectric project in the districts of Kamle, Kra Daadi, and Kurung Kumey. In order to sustainably utilize the state’s abundant natural resources, he urged locals to adopt a positive mindset. He called on the populace to make a commitment to creating an advanced, independent, environmentally friendly, and globally competitive Arunachal Pradesh.

Two are apprehended by security personnel with 48 brown sugar soap cases

Imphal, Feb 21: On February 19, security personnel in Manipur’s Senapati district cracked down on suspected drug trafficking. They stopped a car at a naka checkpoint and detained two young men who were found in possession of a sizable amount of suspected brown sugar. During normal checking, staff at the Senapati Police Station’s T. Khullen Naka Check Point halted a four-wheeler in response to specific information. Upon examination, the team found 48 soap cases hidden within the car that contained about 660 kg of brown sugar. Rahish Khan, 22, and Mustakim Ahamad, 23, who both reside in Irong Chesaba Mayai Leikai in the Kakching district, have been named as the accused. They were arrested right away. Additionally, two cell phones, two Aadhaar cards, and an I-20 automobile with the registration number AS01AP0631 were taken

away by security personnel. The source and intended destination of the contraband are being investigated further after a case has been filed.

As part of continuous attempts to stop the drug trade in the area, officials indicated that increased checks and monitoring are still taking place along susceptible routes.



A two-day crackdown in two hill areas destroyed thirty acres of illegal poppy planting

Imphal, Feb 21: Under close legal oversight, security forces and the Forest Department carried out a coordinated two-day operation that destroyed 30 acres of poppy plantations spread across two districts of Manipur. An Executive Magistrate was present as joint teams of security and forest officials cleared 20 acres of illegal poppy fields in the Mongken region under the Henglep Police Station in the Churachandpur district on February 20. The devastation was a component of a stepped-up effort to eradicate illicit opium cultivation in susceptible hill areas. Ten acres of poppy plantations were burned in a similar operation carried out the day before, on February 19, in the Senapati district’s



Kangiang Hill Range under the jurisdiction of the Mao Police Station. Three temporary dwellings inside the crop sites were also destroyed during the operation. According to officials, the Executive Magistrates’ presence made sure that the proper legal procedures were followed during the eradication process. The consecutive

operations are a part of a larger plan to stop the production of drugs and break the supply routes associated with illicit poppy farming in the state’s hill districts. To stop the rise of illegal farming activities in isolated forested areas, authorities have reaffirmed their resolve to stepping up enforcement and surveillance efforts.

With fervent devotion, the grand Chamaria Satra festival comes to an end

Boko, Feb 21: As the Tirobhav Tithi (death anniversary) Mahotsav of Borbisnu Ata was celebrated with grandeur, the holy Chamaria Satra in South Kamrup, regarded as one of the leading sites of the Neo-Vaishnavite faith, reverberated with devotional zeal. Numerous devotees from throughout Assam and beyond attended the four-day celebration, which began on February 17 and ended on February 20 amid the chanting of Hari Naam and the rhythmic sounds of taal and khol. On the last day, the Satra prisoners performed a segment of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva’s classic drama Ram Vijay in the traditional



Bhaona style. Both pilgrims and devotees were captivated by this ancient theatrical custom, which has persisted for more than five

centuries. The Mahotsav celebrated the Tirobhav of Borbisnu Ata, the adored student of Mahapurush

Madhavdev, at the exact location where Borbisnu Ata had founded the hallowed Thaan, according to the Satradhikar Nigamananda Adhikari. Devotees from Dhing, Nagaon, Barpeta, Sorbhog, Goalpara, and other parts of Assam participated in the festival. Earlier in the day, the Guru Asana and Bhagavat were ceremoniously reinstalled in the Namghar, and as the Bhaona unfolded, the Satra premises were crowded with devotees. The entire region was transformed into a spiritual sanctuary as the Satra’s gayan-bayan and followers conducted a magnificent procession that filled the air with music and devotional chants.

Amit Shah’s comment regarding the Devanagiri script were criticized by the Tripura LoP

Agartala, Feb 21: Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s purported comments made yesterday in the state were sharply attacked by Tripura Leader of the Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury, who described it as an attempt to impose linguistic and cultural hegemony on the Northeast’s populace. In order to open the Eastern, North-Eastern, and Northern Regional Rajbhasha Sammelans at the International Indoor Exhibition Centre, Hapania, HM Saha traveled to Tripura yesterday. In response to HM Shah’s remarks, Chaudhury, the state secretary of the LoP and CPIM,

stated today that although there is an Official Language Department to promote Hindi and there is no objection to its operation, any attempt to force the people of the Northeast to adopt the Devanagiri script for their languages is unacceptable. He claimed to have attended sessions of the official language committee while serving as a member of parliament. However, he said that the Union Home Minister’s recent statements that development efforts would be dependent on the adoption of the Devanagiri script and that the approximately 40 languages spoken in

the Northeast should utilize it constituted a “direct threat.” “This is really an assault on cultural identity and language diversity. It exhibits a dominant attitude toward culture and language. Such remarks are strongly condemned,” Chaudhury declared. He further asserted that such thinking is consistent with the philosophy of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and restated that the people themselves should make decisions on language and script. Chaudhury stressed the need for communities to have total autonomy over



their mother tongues, including the choice of script, on International Mother Language Day.

“People will choose their language’s script. “We oppose all forms of imposition,” he declared.

# Funeral of Shillong MP Ricky Andrew J Syngkon today; Meghalaya declares holiday in Khasi-Jaintia Hills

**Shillong, Feb 21:** The funeral of Shillong Lok Sabha MP Ricky Andrew J Syngkon, who passed away on the evening of February 19, will be held on Saturday, February 21, with friends, family, well-wishers and political leaders from across party lines expected to attend.

The Meghalaya government has declared a holiday in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills in honour of the departed leader. The 54-year-old MP reportedly suffered a massive heart attack while playing futsal. He was initially rushed to Mawjong Community Health Centre (CHC) and later referred to Dr H Gordon Roberts Hospital in Jaiaw for further treatment. According to hospital authorities, Syngkon

was brought in at 7:40 PM and was declared dead at 8:42 PM. Doctors stated that he had no pulse on arrival and described it as a massive cardiac arrest. Earlier in the day, people from different walks of life queued up at his late mother's residence in Pohkseh to pay their last respects. Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, along with his wife Mehtab Chandee Agitok Sangma, cabinet ministers and several other political leaders, paid homage and remembered Syngkon as a humble and dedicated public representative. Later, his mortal remains were taken to his residence at Nongsder in Ri Bhoi district. He will be laid to rest at Sumer. Syngkon's sudden demise has left a deep void in



the Khasi-Jaintia region, where he was widely regarded as a simple, down-to-earth and God-fearing individual. Before entering politics, Syngkon served as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics at North-Eastern Hill University. He was elected to the Lok Sabha in 2024 as a candidate of the Voice of the People Party (VPP), defeating three-time Congress MP Vincent H Pala by a margin of 3,71,910 votes. Dr. Syngkon, elected to the Lok Sabha in 2024, was regarded as a dynamic leader who championed regional voices and worked to strengthen grassroots democracy. His passing leaves a significant void in Meghalaya's political and social spheres.

## Three arrested with brown sugar, WY tablets

**Imphal, Feb 21:** Security Forces arrested two alleged drug peddlers with brown sugar at T. Khullen, Naka Check Point under Senapati Police Station in Senapati district. According to police report, acting on specific inputs, security forces intercepted a four-wheeler vehicle at T. Khullen, Naka Check Point under Senapati-PS, Senapati district and arrested the drug peddlers with the contraband drug. The arrested persons were identified as Rahish Khan (22) and Mustakim Ahamad (23). Both residents of Irong Chesaba Mayai Leikai, Kakching district. 48 soap cases containing brown sugar weighing 660 gms, one four-wheeler, i20 bearing registration number AS01AP0631, two mobile phones and two Aadhaar cards were seized from their possession.

On the other hand, Manipur Police arrested one Mohammad Warish Khan (28) of Khomidok Masjid Maning, Imphal East district for carrying contraband WY tablets from his locality under Heingang Police Station in Imphal East district on Friday. One three-wheeler (Auto) Black RE, bearing registration number AS-01 NC-0846, and WY tablets weighing 550 grams were recovered and seized from his possession.

## Oinam Sunil, retd Lt Gen Nishikanta appointed advisors to CM

**Imphal, Feb 21:** Ahead of the much-anticipated Cabinet expansion, the State Government has appointed Oinam Sunil Singh and retd Lt Gen L Nishikanta Singh as Advisors to Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand. As per an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, the appointments were approved during a Cabinet meeting held on February 17. Both have been appointed as Advisors to the Chief Minister for a period of one year with immediate effect in public interest. Oinam Sunil was appointed as Media Advisor while retd Lt Gen L Nishikanta was appointed as Advisor (Coordination) to the Chief Minister. The order stated that the appointments are aimed at strengthening advisory support to the Chief Minister's office. A senior journalist, Oinam Sunil has served as the State Information Commissioner of the Manipur Information Commission. Oinam Sunil began his career in journalism in 1988-89 and at the time of his appointment to the coveted post, he was working as the Senior Assistant Editor (North East) with national newspaper- The Times of India. Lt Gen L Nishikanta Singh, commissioned into the Army at the age of 20, and joined the 9th Battalion of JAKLI regiment in 1979. He became the



second Lt general for Manipur in September 2015. He is the third Lt General from northeast since the country's independence. He has completed M. Phil in Defence Studies from Madras University. He was awarded VSM two times and Commendations Card three times. Lt Gen Nishikanta contributed to reforming and revamping the security and intelligence set up of the country. Singh is an also an expert in the field of Intelligence and Security.

## Gauhati High Court Quashes NSA Detention of Victor Das, Orders Immediate Release

**Guwahati, Feb 21:** The Gauhati High Court has quashed the detention of Victor Das under the National Security Act (NSA). Das, who was arrested by city police in September last year, had been detained under an advisory order.

A division bench of the court observed that the State Government had "miserably failed to provide constitutional guarantees to the petitioner under Article 22(5) of the Constitution of India" while carrying out the detention process. The court noted that, in this case, there was an unreasonable and unexplained delay in allowing the petitioner to make a representation before the Detaining Authority, as well as in the consideration and

disposal of the representation by both the State and Central Governments. The government had argued that the detention order was issued based on credible evidence and confidential intelligence inputs indicating that the petitioner had been actively involved in activities intended to create unrest in the State by organizing mass protests under the pretext of seeking justice for the demise of Zubeen Garg.

Hearing a writ petition filed by Das, the court pointed out that the "Grounds of Detention" communicated to the petitioner did not mention his right to make a representation to the Detaining Authority. The bench stated that this valuable right was not properly conveyed, thereby violat-

ing the entire process of preventive detention. The court further observed that the petitioner's representations were not disposed of as expeditiously as required by law by the State and Central Governments. It emphasized that any unexplained delay in preventive detention cases is impermissible. While the State Government took 17 days to dispose of the representation, it failed to provide a convincing explanation for the delay. The court held that such unexplained delay was fatal and gave the petitioner an indefeasible right to liberty.

Accordingly, the court ordered that Victor Das be set at liberty immediately, if not required in connection with any other case.

## CRPF has played a major role in bringing Naxalism to the verge of elimination, says Amit Shah at the force's Raising Day celebrations in Guwahati

**Guwahati, Feb 21:** Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah today participated in the 87th Raising Day celebrations of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Guwahati. On this occasion, Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Director General of CRPF GP Singh and many other dignitaries were present. In his address, Shah said the CRPF has played a major role in bringing Naxalism to the verge of elimination and the country will be free from Naxalism before 31 March.

He said that for 86 years, CRPF has been strengthening the country's internal security with its outstanding performance, valor, patience, bravery and sacrifices. He stated that the internal security of the country cannot even be imagined without CRPF.

He said that since its inception till date, over 86 years, the CRPF has stood as a strong pillar of the nation's internal security due to its dedication to duty and has been delivering results as well. Shah said that 2,270 jawans of CRPF have made the supreme sacrifice to keep the country safe, and the entire nation thanks and pays tributes to them. He emphasized that it is precisely because of this dedication to duty and sacrifices made that the CRPF jawans have protected the nation on numerous occasions. Shah said that 11-12 years ago, the country



had three major hotspots—Jammu and Kashmir, Left-Wing Extremism-affected areas, and the Northeast—which had become sores for the nation's internal security. He said that today, success has been achieved in establishing peace in all three places. He added that in these three hotspots, bomb blasts, bullets, bandhs, blockades, and destruction were once prominent, but now all three regions have become engines of growth, driving the development of the entire country forward. He said that without the sacrifice made by these CRPF martyrs, it would have been impossible to bring these three hotspots onto the path of development. The Union Home Minister said that today's CRPF Day Parade is quite significant from another perspective. He said that in the 86-year history of CRPF, this is the first time the force's Raising Day celebrations are being held in the Northeast, in Assam, which is a matter of pride for all of us and the entire Northeast. He said

that in 2019, it was decided that the annual parade of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) would be held in different parts of the country, and today, the CRPF parade is being held in one of the most important parts of the country—the Northeast. Shah said that today, 14 CRPF jawans have been awarded the Police Medal for Gallantry, 5 jawans have received the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service, and 5 CRPF battalions have been honored with medals for outstanding performance. He said that the journey of the CRPF began in 1939 with just 2 battalions, and today, with 248 battalions and a strength of 3.25 lakh personnel, the CRPF has become the world's largest CAPF. He emphasized that the CRPF has played a key role in protecting internal security and sovereignty of the entire country. Shah said that Naxalism had spread across 12 states and countless districts of the country, and when the Government of India resolved to

uproot this menace, personnel of the CRPF and the CoBRA force played the most crucial role in this effort. He said that such a huge, complex, and difficult task was completed in just three years, and it is because of the CRPF personnel that we can confidently say that by March 31, 2026, the country will be completely free from Naxalism. He said that under Operation Black Forest against Naxalites, CRPF personnel carried out operations for 21 days in extremely challenging geographical conditions, enduring temperatures of 45 degrees Celsius under the scorching sun, and eliminated the Naxalites' stronghold. He added that displaying exceptional courage, CRPF jawans did not retreat even an inch while operating for 21 days on rocky hills heated by 45-degree temperatures, ultimately dismantling the strategic base of the Naxalites. He said that the CRPF and the CoBRA force have made a very significant contribution in freeing the country from red terror.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation said that CRPF jawans have made a significant contribution to the successful conduct of several religious festivals, the Mahakumbh, and the Amarnath Yatra. He added that the CRPF has consistently strengthened and safeguarded the country's internal security.

## Assam Seeks Korea Ayurveda Collaboration

**Guwahati, Feb 21:** The Assam government is exploring a potential collaboration with a South Korean firm for the establishment of an Ayurveda Research and Development (R&D) Centre and a herbal extract processing facility in the State. The proposal was discussed during a meeting between Calvin Yi, Chairman of Wevio Global Group, and the Additional Chief Secretary of Assam. The deliberations focused on long-term investment prospects, technology transfer and institutional partnerships in the traditional medicine and herbal sector. The initiative is proposed to be implemented by Hanstar Pvt Ltd, a subsidiary of Wevio Global Group specialising in Ayurveda herbs research and extraction technologies. The State government has invited the company to explore suitable land for setting up the R&D and processing facilities. Officials said discussions covered the development of internationally compliant processing infrastructure, fa-



cilitation of land acquisition, establishment of a business partner network in the region and registration of intellectual property in India. The possible transfer of patented technologies from Korea to India was also taken up during the meeting. The Assam Industrial Development Corporation and the Indian Chamber of Commerce are expected to assist in identifying project locations and facilitating industry linkages. The proposal is part of broader efforts to enhance

bilateral cooperation between India and the Republic of Korea in trade and technology. Meanwhile, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati has expressed willingness to explore joint research collaboration in herbal studies and product development. If implemented, the project is expected to strengthen Assam's herbal economy through research-driven value addition, employment generation and enhanced global positioning of Ayurveda.

## District TB Forum meeting held in Thoubal



**Imphal, Feb 21:** A meeting of the District TB Forum, Thoubal, was convened to review ongoing activities and to discuss measures for further strengthening the functioning of the Forum. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Commissioner of Thoubal, Yumnam Robita, IAS, who is also the Chairman of the District TB Forum, at her conference hall. During the meeting, the District TB Officer, Dr. Shameen, delivered a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the various initiatives undertaken to control and elim-

inate Tuberculosis (TB) in the district. Speaking at the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Yumnam Robita stressed the need for active participation and collective efforts from all sections of the district to effectively combat and eradicate TB. The meeting was attended by the Chief Medical Officer of Thoubal, Dr. Y. Nokul, Medical Superintendent of District Hospital, Thoubal, Dr. W. Ruhinikumar; District TB Unit Coordinator, Thongam Stephee; and officials including the SDOs, SDCs, and BDOs of Lilong and Thoubal sub-divisions, among others.

## International Mother Language Day Observed at Bangladesh Assistant High Commissions in Guwahati and Agartala

**Guwahati, Feb 21:** International Mother Language Day was observed today at the Bangladesh Assistant High Commissions in Guwahati and Agartala through various programmes marking the significance of February 21.

In Guwahati, the observance began at 10 am with the laying of wreaths at the Shaheed Minar. Assistant High Commissioner Zikrul Hasan Fahad paid floral tributes to the martyrs. This was followed by the singing of Ekushey February songs in chorus.

In the afternoon, a discussion on International Mother Language Day and an Iftar gathering will be organised. The programme will include the reading of messages from the President and Prime Minister of Bangladesh, a discussion on the significance of Mother Language Day, special prayers, and Iftar.

In Agartala, the programme commenced in the morning with the national flag being flown at half-mast. Assistant High Commissioner Hasan Al Bashar Abdul Ulayee paid floral tributes at a temporary Shaheed Minar set up within the mission premises. Students from various schools also offered floral tributes.

Messages from the President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister were read out on the occasion. Special prayers were offered in memo-



ry of the martyrs of the Language Movement, followed by the screening of a documentary on the Language Movement. A cultural programme featuring songs by students was also held.

Later in the afternoon, distinguished guests

will lay wreaths at the Shaheed Minar. After observing a minute of silence in memory of the Language Movement martyrs, a discussion on International Mother Language Day will be organised at the High Commission office.

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The Value of Measured Public Reform

Reform is often celebrated as a sign of progress. However, the success of reform depends not merely on intent but on calibration. Measured reform—carefully sequenced and evidence-based—ensures sustainability. Abrupt structural changes can disrupt established systems. Institutions require adaptation time. Stakeholder consultation strengthens implementation by anticipating obstacles.Measured reform incorporates pilot testing and evaluation. Gradual scaling reduces risk and allows feedback-driven modification. Transparency about transitional challenges builds public trust.Political cycles sometimes incentivise sweeping announcements. Yet durable reform prioritises institutional readiness over immediate visibility. Balanced timelines ensure operational feasibility.Public engagement enhances reform legitimacy. Clear communication regarding objectives and expected outcomes fosters cooperation. Resistance often arises from uncertainty rather than opposition.Measured reform is not synonymous with delay. It reflects disciplined governance. Sustainable transformation integrates ambition with realism.Societies benefit from steady progress anchored in evidence. Enduring reform strengthens institutions without destabilising them.

# Are Bangladesh’s multilingual youth being heard

In a world where globalisation provides unprecedented access to information and opportunities for education, business and social activities, “killer languages” have emerged as a threat to multilingualism. We often hear from parents that they want their children to learn English, or, as the case may be in Bangladesh, Bangla, because they will have better education and livelihood opportunities. This can be based on a false assumption.

Around 40 percent of learners worldwide still lack access to education in a language they understand best, highlighting the scale of the challenge. There is clear evidence that learning in multiple languages, starting with the mother tongue and then gradually adding national and global languages, is good for cognitive abilities and does not impair language skills in second and third languages. Opening the language learning window in young children, an optimal, biologically determined period from birth to the onset of puberty when the brain is most receptive to acquiring languages, strengthens language ability.

During this childhood period, the brain’s ability to create neural networks for language is high, and this has pay-offs for neural development and, hence, cognitive capacity. Neuroscientific research consistently shows that multilingual learning strengthens executive function, memory flexibility, and problem-solving skills. Language is not only for economic gain; it is also central to identity, cultural preservation, and societal cohesion. Preserving and passing on our cultural heritage contributes to local and national identity and enriches the world. Promoting cross-cultural understanding helps us to avoid past mistakes, stimulates innovation, and has significant economic potential.At the heart of this is education that includes mother tongues and other languages. UNESCO defines multilingual



education as the use of at least three languages: the mother tongue, a regional or national language, and an international language in education. In countries such as Bangladesh, where there are mother tongues including indigenous and local languages, the national language Bangla, and then important educational and business languages such as English, the ability to speak multiple languages is clearly advantageous. But it is not necessarily easy to achieve. How does a teacher manage a classroom where students have multiple mother tongues? How does the Ministry train teachers to manage multilingualism? How can resources for multilingual education be developed with input from local communities? These are questions facing educators all around the world. They reflect broader tensions between linguistic diversity and standardised education systems worldwide. UNESCO advocates for approaches that are context-specific and based on the number and status of languages in each country or region, and offers critical areas to guide educators, policymakers, and communities in creating inclusive

# From handsome prince to a ghost behind glass, Andrew’s face tells the story of his downfall

You will have seen the photograph by now: Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, formerly a prince, slumped in the back of a car outside Aylsham police station in Norfolk. His face is corpse-like – his lips tight, stare fixed, eyes turned red by the camera flash. It’s a far cry from Randy Andy, the handsome prince with the big teeth and the easy grin, whose face was once plastered on china cups and plates and commemorative tins, pressed into the soft metal of national affection.Never the heir, but less of a spare than Harry somehow, Andrew’s face was once memorialised in the way that only royalty, Jesus and the saints were: endlessly reproduced as public property. Andrew’s face was part of his – and the royal family’s – brand; he was the warrior prince, the helicopter pilot, the man who had served. He had sweated for us, so much in fact, that he could never sweat again.That face on those cups and plates was not merely decorative but an assertion of something ancient: that lineage writes itself in bone structure; that the face of a royal is not just a face but a symbol, a cipher, a condensed history of power.In antiquity, the ruler’s face was stamped on coins not merely for identification but as a claim: this profile is authority, this jawline is legitimacy, this gaze is the state. By the time of the Tudors, the royal portrait was an act of sovereign self-presentation – as seen by Holbein’s Henry VIII or later in Van Dyck’s Charles I.Andrew’s face was never intended for coinage. Yet its “physiognomy” was a text that would have been read for centuries as royal lineage: that strong jaw asserting resolution and

authority; the broad forehead intelligence; the wide-set eyes openness and clear-sightedness; the full mouth sensuality, which would have worried Johann Kaspar Lavater, the 18th-century founder of the pseudoscience. Why? Because a sensual mouth spoke of negative character traits, including a lack of intellect, sloth and moral degradation.We can’t read faces so easily now. But for centuries, it was used to “prove” how some men, especially rich white men, were morally, intellectually, physically, superior to others. The founder of eugenics, Francis Galton, and the French police officer who developed biometrics, Alphonse Bertillon, measured and photographed the faces of criminals and poor people, sorting humanity into hierarchical categories. The distinction that underpinned their work – compared with the rich tradition of portraiture – mattered enormously: to be portrayed was to have your humanity affirmed; to be catalogued was to have it denied.The widespread democratisation of photography in the late 19th century made it possible for us to take our own portraits. The face became less a symbol of lineage than an index of personhood and individualism. And the royal family got in on the act too. After the death of Queen Victoria’s beloved husband, Prince Albert, the palace released a post-mortem image of his face, still in deathly repose, his jaw held closed by a bandage. But something vital has happened to the image of the monarchy that we can see in the face of Andrew in the back of a police car. Until now, the lens through the car window has been in service of proximity to glamour

– a glimpse, a wave, as people have craned to see Diana and Charles, William and Kate, Harry and Meghan (who, apparently shockingly, opened her own door) and Andrew and Sarah Ferguson as they stepped in and out of waiting cars: state limousines, Bentleys, Rolls-Royces.Never, before Andrew, had we seen a member of the royal family leaving a police station in an unmarked car after their arrest.

And in that photograph, Andrew’s face is not glimpsed but trapped behind glass; no mugshot (yet) but a recumbent image of a man brought low, with a face read anew: he looks “haggard, shamed and haunted”, says the Daily Mail; all dignity lost.Many newspapers reached for Charles I, the last time a member of the royal family was arrested. And there are similarities beyond a public fall from grace. In 1649, Charles I walked to his execution scaffold at Whitehall wearing two shirts – the extra layer so that he did not shiver in the cold; he didn’t want his body shaking, to suggest that he was frightened.Rather less nobly, when Andrew declared on that now infamous Newsnight interview that he couldn’t sweat, supposedly a medical condition from the Falklands, he presented his body as not like other bodies, common bodies, bodies that had not sacrificed themselves for queen and country.Two years later, Virginia Giuffre filed her civil lawsuit against Andrew and that famous photograph of the once prince grinning at the camera, his arm around Giuffre, came to symbolise the case. When the image circulated for the first time in 2011, Andrew wrote to Jeffrey Epstein: “We are in

this together and will have to rise above it.” Fifteen years on, what has Andrew’s face become? The ageing man is there before us, hollow and undone, but in that image there remains the remnants of the Falklands hero, the grinning prince on the china cup, the Newsnight face with its sneer of disdain, the face staring into the camera bent over the body of a young woman or girl, as revealed in the Epstein files.How do we reconcile these faces of a man who for 66 years has been a fixture of the royal family, maintained by the public and consumed by the press?It is perhaps ironic that it is Epstein’s endless cataloguing that has brought us here. Epstein built a Victorian-style archive of surveillance of the rich, alongside a gallery of victims, and that was seemingly for leverage, rather than classification. Now that catalogue, the instrument of bureaucratic power, is turning against power itself. And the public have become the classifiers – poring over 3m pages of files, running AI facial analysis on images of men that look like Epstein, sharing debunked images that show him living in Tel Aviv with a beard. We are all physiognomists now, and we are all archivists. Every face simultaneously a portrait and a document.Andrew once controlled which side of that equation he stood on, or at least, he thought he did. He took his seat before the Newsnight cameras by choice, certain that the interview was just another way of putting his face forward – a portrait sitting, perhaps, with Emily Maitlis as Van Dyck, allowing him to compose his face for posterity. Which did happen – just not in the way he intended.

# Oracle-boss Larry Ellison tops Elon Musk as world’s richest man

**Mumbai:** bShares of Oracle Corp saw a jaw-dropping rise of 43 per cent on Wednesday and finally settled at \$328.33, posting 36 per cent gains for the day. It is the biggest single-day percentage jump since 1992. The stellar intraday rise has added a whopping \$101 billion in Larry Ellison’s wealth, who is now the richest man in the world, piping Tesla’s Elon Musk. Nasdaq listed Oracle Corp unveiled four multi-billion-dollar contracts on Tuesday, amid an industry-wide shift, led by companies such as OpenAI and xAI, to aggressively spend to secure the massive computing capacity needed to stay ahead in the AI race. Shares of the company have witnessed a massive 50 per cent rally in just five sessions and turned multibagger within 6 months.According to a Reuters report on Wednesday citing the Wall Street Journal, OpenAI has signed



a contract to purchase \$300 billion in computing power from Oracle over roughly five years, marking one of the biggest cloud contracts ever signed. A majority of the new revenue Oracle described on Tuesday will come from the OpenAI deal, the report said. Currently, Microsoft, Amazon Web Services and Google Cloud dominate the cloud computing mar-

ket with a combined 65 per cent share, while Oracle, Alibaba, CoreWeave and others hold a smaller slice of the market. Oracle’s first-quarter results lifted shares of Nvidia, Broadcom and Advanced Micro Devices, which supply semiconductors used in data centers.The robust rally in the stock pushed the 81-year-old Larry Ellison to the numero-uno

spot in the global billionaires with a wealth of \$393 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Ellison, who is Chief Technology Officer and executive chairman, owns 41 per cent stake in the Oracle Corp. Elon Musk has moved to the second spot with \$385 billion wealth. On the other hand, Oracle is just shy-off joining the elite \$1 trillion-dollar mcap club along with Nvidia, Microsoft, Apple, Google, Amazon, Meta, Broadcom, Tesla, Berkshire Hathaway. Its total market capitalization stood at \$922.2 billion dollars of its previous close. The Indian entity, Oracle Financial Services Software, surged more than 10 per cent to settle at Rs 9268.15 on Thursday. Promoter Oracle Global Mauritius, a subsidiary of the multinational technology company Oracle Corp, owns 72.56 per cent stake in the Rs 80,000 crore Indian company.

# Unlisted shares of NSE remain stagnant despite IPO buzz, regulatory progress

**Mumbai:** Unlisted shares of National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) continue to remain in a tight range of Rs 2,200-2,300 even after some positive news flow around its IPO. Dealers active in pre-IPO market believe that the current valuations price is the best and prices have not moved up following price band announcement of some other IPO bound companies active in unlisted market. Sandip Ginodia, CEO of Kolkata-based Altius Investech said that the demand and supply metrics match at current price, which is not allowing the stock price to move in either direction. “NSE will always command a premium considering the business model and duopoly status.”

Earlier this week, NSE filed two applications with the market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to settle the persisting co-location and dark fibre cases by offering to pay a total Rs 1,388 crore. If accepted, this would be the highest amount offered by any entity to settle a case till date.

Also, if things go as per planned, NSE may launch its much-awaited initial public offering (IPO) in the second half of the ongoing financial year (FY26), according to a senior spokesperson familiar with the development. Some other sources privy to the matter said that



the leading stock exchange is eyeing to file its DRHP in the next month. Hitesh Dharawat of Mumbai-based Dharawat Securities said that the best of NSE is already priced in and IPO price bands of active unlisted counters like HDB Financial Services, Tata Technologies, Waaree Energies, UTI Asset Management Company were much lower than their unlisted price. This factor is also weighing on the unlisted shares of NSE.

According to sources and media reports, Several critical issues that had stalled NSE’s IPO are close to resolution including ownership of its clearing subsidiary—NSE Clearing Ltd. (NCL) and co-location case with Sebi, which may result in no-objection certificate (NOC) from the market regulator and pave its way to filed draft paper (DRHP) soon afterwards.

The National Stock has been on the radar of investors awaiting its much-an-

ticipated IPO, ever since first announcing its IPO plans back in 2016, the exchange has faced a series of regulatory and governance hurdles that have kept its listing in limbo for nearly a decade. However, that logjam appears to be finally breaking, said InCred Money. “With regulatory clarity improving and legacy issues resolved, the path to listing seems clearer than ever. NSE is targeting a public listing in the Q4FY26. While the timing of NSE’s IPO is yet to be formally announced, what’s evident is this: the stage is finally set for one of India’s most awaited listings,” it added.

NSE on June 26 announced to launch the electricity futures in the next 2-3 weeks. These futures structured as monthly, cash-settled contracts, they bring price certainty to an otherwise volatile short-term market. These contracts are available for all 12 calendar months in a year. These contracts are listed for the current month and next 3 months.

NSE is ranked the biggest derivatives exchange and second largest in equities by number of trades worldwide. NSE is also the fifth largest stock exchange in the world in terms of market capitalization. This solid market capitalization put NSE among the top-10 most valued companies of India ahead of Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever.

# Balanced advantage and multi-asset funds gain traction as investors seek stability across cycles

**Mumbai:** Category-level return data between 2017 and 2025 highlights the sharp divergence between pure equity funds and hybrid strategies. While small-cap funds delivered gains exceeding 50% in strong years and steep double-digit declines in weak phases, Dynamic Asset Allocation Funds (DAAF) and Multi-Asset Allocation Funds (MAAF) recorded comparatively narrower return ranges.

Over the period, mid- and small-cap categories posted higher long-term compounded returns than hybrid funds, but with significantly higher interim volatility. The contrast is evident when annual outcomes are viewed sequentially. Small-cap funds surged in one year, declined sharply the next, and oscillated again in subsequent periods. Mid-cap and flexi-cap categories also demonstrated pronounced swings. In comparison, Dynamic Asset Allocation and Multi-Asset categories generally delivered moderate positive returns even in weaker market years, while participating meaningfully in strong equity phases. This relative stability has strengthened their positioning among investors seeking consistency rather than peak performance.

Multi-Asset Allocation funds are mandated to invest at least 10% each in three asset classes, typically equity, debt and gold. This structure enables built-in di-

versification. As Jeni Shukla, CEO, ValU Wealth Care, explained, “On the other hand, Multi Asset Allocation Funds (MAAFs) have a mandate to invest at least 10% each in at least three asset classes. Usually the three asset classes are equity, debt and gold.” She added that a well-managed multi-asset allocation fund can serve as an ‘all weather’ strategy by reducing overall volatility and eliminating the need for investors to rebalance portfolios themselves, while also offering tax-efficient diversification in many cases.

Dynamic Asset Allocation or Balanced Advantage Funds operate differently. They actively shift allocations between equity and debt based on valuation and market indicators. Shukla noted, “A dynamic asset allocation fund (DAAF) – as the name suggests – dynamically shifts the percentage allocated between equities and debt securities... based on the relative attractiveness of the two asset classes.” She further added that fund managers may vary exposure significantly and often use derivatives to hedge equity risk.

However, she cautioned that individual scheme outcomes can vary widely, and investors must evaluate alignment with their risk appetite and time horizon.From a risk perspective, Vikram Singhvee, Co-Founder at Venn Wealth, underscored the trade-offs. “Dynamic and multi-asset



allocation funds typically maintain a meaningful allocation to non-equity assets. As a result, during strong equity bull markets, they can underperform pure equity funds.” He further added that performance depends on timely asset allocation decisions and on historical correlations between asset classes holding true, factors that can lead to periods of underperformance. Singhvee noted that while dynamic strategies may lag during sharp bull runs, they tend to be more effective during consolidation or bearish phases, and over longer periods investors can reasonably expect moderate annualised returns. He also highlighted tax efficiency, stating that rebalancing within the fund does not trigger a tax event, unlike direct reallocation by individual investors, although premature exits may

reduce post-tax outcomes. Market environment plays a decisive role in outcomes. Shukla observed that these strategies can disappoint in years when both equity and debt markets underperform simultaneously. However, she pointed out that subsequent broad-based recoveries across asset classes have historically improved hybrid fund performance. She added that falling interest rates, easing inflation and strong equity markets tend to support returns for both DAAFs and MAAF, while commodity upcycles may create favourable conditions particularly for multi-asset strategies.Behavioural considerations also influence adoption. Salma Sony, SEBI Registered Investment Advisor, said, “The most common challenge is the fear of losses during market downturns. Market volatil-

ity often triggers emotional responses, leading investors to question their long-term strategy even when their financial plan remains sound.” She further noted that during sharp corrections some investors are tempted to stop systematic investment plans or redeem equity holdings despite no immediate liquidity need. In her practice, she follows a goal-based approach, gradually de-risking portfolios several years before goal timelines to minimise reactive decisions.She emphasised that smoother return patterns can support discipline, but sustained outcomes ultimately depend on consistent investing aligned with clearly defined financial goals.Harish Menon, Co-Founder of House of Alpha, interpreted the narrower return range of hybrids as structural rather than incidental. “Hybrid

funds are structurally designed to moderate volatility by allocating a portion of the portfolio to fixed income instruments alongside equities. This blended approach naturally results in a narrower return range compared to pure equity strategies.” He added that small-cap volatility, while potentially rewarding, can test investor confidence and should form only a modest portion of overall allocation. According to Menon, long-term wealth creation is driven more by disciplined asset allocation than by the performance of any single segment, and hybrid funds often serve as a relatively stable anchor within diversified portfolios. For investors weighing higher long-term CAGR in mid- and small-cap funds against interim volatility, the choice ultimately hinges on risk appetite and time horizon. Equity-heavy portfolios may deliver superior compounding if investors remain invested through cycles. However, for those seeking smoother participation across asset classes without frequent tactical shifts, Balanced Advantage and Multi-Asset Allocation funds provide a structured alternative. In an environment marked by valuation concerns and macro uncertainty, these hybrid strategies are increasingly being positioned as core holdings, with higher-risk exposures layered around them rather than forming the portfolio foundation.

# Tata stock to purchase: Analysts predict additional momentum following a five-day, 18% surge

**New Delhi:** Shares of Tata Investment Corporation, a non-banking financial company (NBFC) promoted by Tata Sons, have been in an uptrend for the last five consecutive trading sessions, climbing 18 per cent. On Friday, the Tata stock opened flat at ₹690 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). A strong buying interest emerged in the counter as the session progressed and the counter made an intraday high of ₹741.70, up around 7.1 per cent.Around 1:45PM, the Tata stock held firmly in the green, quoting 2.2 per cent northward at ₹708. A total of 13 million equities of the company changed hands. On the BSE, Tata Investment shares surged 2 per cent to ₹708.10 with a spurt in volume by more than 6.16 times.The sharp jump in Tata Investment Corporation was likely fueled by reports that N Chandrasekaran could secure a third term as Chairman of Tata

Sons. Tata Sons holds a majority stake of 68.51 per cent in Tata Investment Corporation. Rajesh Bhosale, equity technical analyst at Angel One, said the view on Tata Investment is positive, citing strong recent price action and supportive technical indicators. The stock has gained over 15-16 per cent this week, rebounding sharply from its key weekly 89-EMA support level. “This strong recovery in the counter from a key long-term support reinforces the broader bullish outlook. The stock continues to hold its support firmly,” he said.Importantly, the recent rally has been backed by strong trading volumes, signalling strong market participation, he said, adding that the correction seen over the past few months occurred on relatively thin volumes, indicating limited selling pressure. According to Rajesh, tata Investment has formed a strong bullish candle

on the weekly chart, accompanied by a fresh RSI crossover, further strengthening the positive bias. “In the near term, the stock is expected to continue the upmove and target comes out to be ₹830. Any dip should be viewed as a buying opportunity. Immediate support lies at ₹670-680, with a recommended stop loss at ₹630.” Rajesh Palviya, head - technical research at Axis Direct, said that Tata Investment has taken support at its upward-sloping trendline in place since December 2023 and rebounded sharply, forming a strong bullish candle. The surge in volumes at support highlights renewed market participation and validates the price action. “The stock is poised to extend its upward momentum towards the ₹820-850 zone, while ₹630 and ₹580 are expected to act as key support levels. The weekly RSI has delivered a positive crossover above its reference line, reinforcing

the bullish outlook with a fresh buy signal. Sustained price action above the trendline support strengthens the broader structure and keeps the medium-term bias firmly positive,” the analyst added. Tata Investment Corporation had in October last year announced first-ever stock split. The Tata company had fixed the stock split ratio at 10:1, meaning each share carrying a face value of Rs 10 was split into 10 new shares of Re 1.Tata Investment shares have delivered decent returns in the long-term. According to exchange data, the Tata stock has more than doubled investors’ money in three years by yielding a return of more than 200 per cent. It has skyrocketed over 500 per cent in five years. Tata Investment shares have a 52-week range of ₹1,184 - ₹569.83 and the company commanded a market valuation of more than ₹36,000 crore, according to exchange data.

# IPO Calendar: Three SME offerings are scheduled

**New Delhi:** Primary market activity is set to gather momentum in the week ahead, with four mainboard public issues scheduled to open for subscription starting Monday, February 23, 2026. Clean Max Enviro Energy Solutions will lead the week with a ₹3,100 crore issue, followed by Shree Ram Twistex (₹110 crore), PNGS Reva Diamond Jewellery (₹380 crore), and Omnitech Engineering (₹583 crore), offering investors a diversified mix of opportunities across sectors.

Apart from new launches, listing activity will also remain in focus. Gaudium IVF is slated to close its issue on February 24 and list on the bourses on February 27, 2026. On the SME front, activity remains robust with multiple offerings lined up. Clean Max Enviro Energy, a renewable energy provider, is set to launch its initial public offering (IPO) on Monday, February 23, 2026. The issue will close for bidding on Wednesday, February 25, 2026. The ₹3,100 crore issue is a combination of fresh issue of 11.4 million equity shares aggregating to ₹1,200 crore and an offer for sale of 18 million shares aggregating to ₹1,900 crore. The allotment of shares is expected to be finalised on February 26. The company will make its debut on the bourses tentatively on March 2. The company has set the price band in the range of ₹1,000 to ₹1,053. The IPO of Shree Ram Twistex, a cotton yarn manufacturer, will open for public subscription on February 23 and will close on February 25. The company aims to raise ₹110 crore through a fresh issue of 10.6 million equity shares. The price band has been set at ₹95 to ₹104 per share, with a lot size of 144 shares. Investors will need to invest a minimum amount of ₹14,976 to par-

ticipate in this IPO.

The basis of allotment is expected to be finalised on February 26. The equity shares are likely to be credited to investors' demat accounts by February 27. The company's stock is scheduled to be listed on both BSE and NSE on March 2. PNGS Reva Diamond Jewellery, a jewellery maker, is set to launch its initial public offering (IPO) on Tuesday, February 24. The issue will close for bidding on February 26. The ₹380 crore issue is an entirely fresh issue of 9.8 million equity shares. The allotment of shares is expected to be finalised on February 27. The company will make its debut on the bourses tentatively on March 4. The company has set the price band in the range of ₹367 to ₹386. Omnitech Engineering, a manufacturing and engineering solutions company, is set to launch its IPO on February 25. The issue will close for bidding on February 27. The ₹583 crore issue is a combination of fresh issue of 18.4 million equity shares aggregating to ₹418 crore and an offer for sale of 7.3 million shares aggregating to ₹165 crore. The allotment of shares is expected to be finalised on March 2. The company will make its debut on the bourses tentatively on March 5. The company has set the price band in the range of ₹216 to ₹227.

In the SME segment, Kiaasa Retail, Mobilise App Lab, and Accord Transformer are set to open on February 23, followed by Yaap Digital on February 25. In terms of listings, Fractal Industries will debut on the BSE SME platform on February 24, Yash-tej Industries will list on the BSE SME on February 25, and Manilam Industries is slated to list on the NSE SME on February 27, 2026, keeping the segment active.



## SCIENCE

# Why scientists hope seabed mud could reveal Antarctic Ocean secrets

Why would anyone brave hand-numbing cold, icy winds and rough seas - sometimes working through the night - to dig up mud from the Antarctic seabed? That is what an international team of particularly adventurous researchers did earlier this year in the remote Antarctic Peninsula, on a mission aiming to reveal centuries of scientific secrets about the Southern Ocean. Scientists around the world will now share and analyse these precious mud samples to work out how human activity - including a century of industrial whaling - affected Antarctica and the rest of our planet. The research is part of a global effort to understand the relationship between the ocean and the climate.

## A history of ocean life

Researchers used a special coring drill - a bit like a huge apple-corer - tethered to a research ship, to drill at depths of up to 500m. They collected more than 40 long cores, or tubes, of seafloor sediment from locations around the peninsula. This is one of the richest habitats for marine life in Antarctica, and a focal point for fishing, tourism and - before it was banned in the 1980s - industrial whale hunting. Collecting the sediment gives insight and clues to the past, "like a book of history", explained lead researcher Dr Elisenda Balleste from the University of Barcelona. "What is living in the seas now, what was living in the seas in the past and evidence of our human impact" is recorded in layer upon layer of sediment over centuries, she said. By preserving and dating those layers, and analysing what they contain, researchers can build a picture of the history of Antarctic marine life. Once on board the ship, the cores were frozen and transported to Barcelona and Dr Balleste's laboratory. From there, carefully extracted pieces of this Antarctic mud will be sent out to several academic institutions around the world. Scientists will scan and date the sediment layers, work out what microbial life they contain, measure levels of pollution and calculate how much carbon is buried in the mud. It is part of a mission - the Convex Seascope

Survey - which involves universities and research institutions around the globe working together to better understand how our ocean and climate are connected. Claire Allen, an oceanographer from the British Antarctic Survey who has studied Antarctica's past for more than 20 years, said that cores like these were particularly valuable. "Before 1950 - before there was any kind of monitoring capacity in Antarctica - sediment cores and ice cores are the only way that we can get an insight into any of the climatic or physical properties that have changed over time," she said.

## The DNA fingerprint from whale hunting

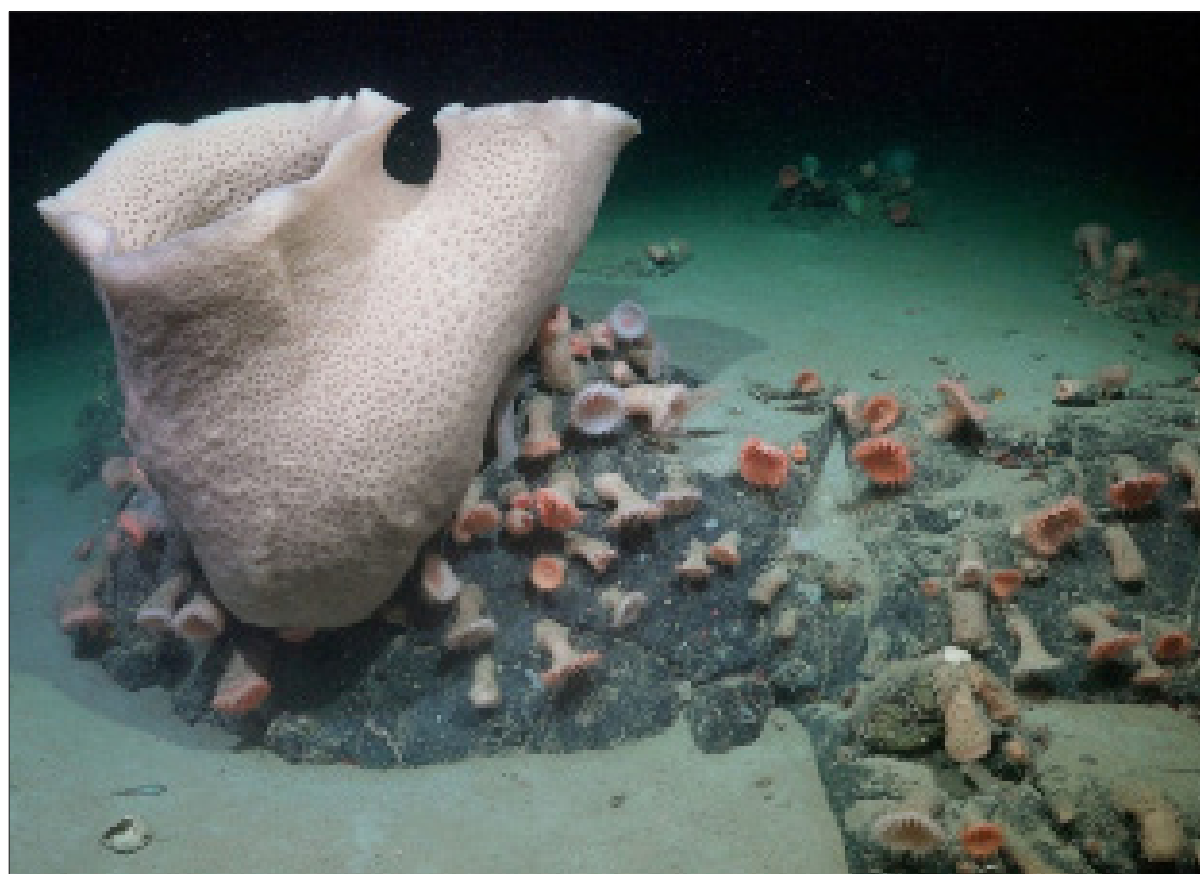
The newly collected samples being stored for DNA analysis have to be kept at temperatures low enough to stop all biological processes. Dr Balleste took



them out of the industrial-sized freezer where they are being stored to show them to us, very briefly. "They're kept at minus 80 degrees to stop them degrading," she explained. These small pieces of the seabed - frozen in time at temperatures that preserve genetic material - will be used for what is known as environmental DNA analysis. It is an area of science which has developed rapidly in recent years. It gives researchers the ability to extract genetic information from water, soil and even air, like a fingerprint of life



left behind in the environment. Dr Carlos Preckler, from King Abdullah University in Saudi Arabia, is leading this part of the research and will be trying to measure how almost a century of industrial whaling in Antarctica affected the ocean and our atmosphere. Carbon - when it is released into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide - warms up our planet like a blanket. So, as the world struggles to reduce those emissions, any processes that absorb and lock significant amounts of carbon might help to rein in global warming. "We know whales have a lot of carbon in their bodies, because they are huge animals," said Dr Preckler. What he and his colleagues want to know is how much of that carbon gets buried in the seafloor - and locked away from the atmosphere - when the animals die. "We can measure whale



DNA and the carbon in the sediment," explained Dr Preckler. "So we can measure what happened before industrial whaling removed most of

the whales in the [Southern] ocean," he added. That, the researchers say, will provide a measure of how much whales - simply by existing, being

huge and living out their natural lives - remove carbon from our atmosphere and help in the fight against climate change.

SpaceX has pulled off a successful test flight of its newest generation rocket Starship, reversing a trend of disappointing failures. The world's largest and most powerful rocket blasted off from Texas just after 18:30 local time (23:30 BST) for a nail-biting 60-minute flight. Parts of the engine appeared to explode at one stage, and flaps on the side of the rocket caught fire and swung from side-to-side. US space agency NASA plans to use Starship to send humans to the Moon for its Artemis programme in 2027. "Great work by the SpaceX team!!", posted SpaceX CEO Elon Musk on X. He will be welcoming the success after three Starship launches ended in failure this year, and one rocket exploded on the launch pad in June. Starship is the largest and most powerful rocket built to date. It is made up of a booster called Super Heavy and the spacecraft Starship. The signs were positive from the start of Tuesday's test flight. All of the booster's 33 engines fired up, and after about seven minutes, the booster separated from the spacecraft and fell into the Gulf of Mexico. Starship continued to ascend, reaching a maximum height of almost 200km above Earth, before coasting around the planet. SpaceX said it intended to put the rocket under stress to test its limits, and parts of the rocket's flaps appeared to burn and swing wildly during the descent. The company has designed



## SpaceX pulls off Starship rocket launch in much-needed comeback

Starship to one day be a fully reusable transport system capable of carrying people to the Moon and Mars. The first version of the rocket had five successful launches, but all attempts to launch the newest version had ended in spectacular explosions. In March, one explosion grounded flights and caused debris to

The success is significant for US space agency NASA, which plans to use a modified version of Starship to send humans to the Moon for its Artemis programme in 2027. SpaceX CEO Elon Musk expressed his satisfaction with the company aimed to put the rocket under stress to test its limits.

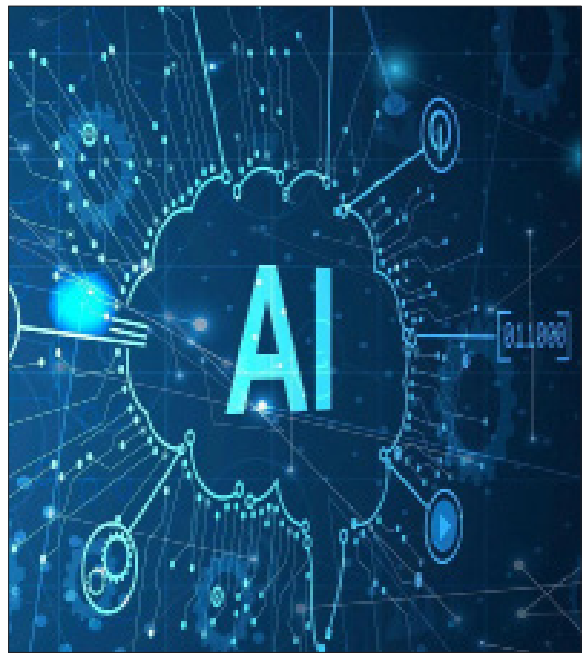
rain down over the Bahamas with pieces landing in the Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean. But SpaceX did successfully execute the "chopstick" manoeuvre that caught the rocket booster in mechanical arms when it returned to Earth. And in June, a Starship rocket exploded

on the launch pad in Texas when preparing for a test flight. It is high stakes for US space agency NASA, too. It has contracted SpaceX to use a modified version of Starship to take humans to the Moon as part of its Artemis programme in 2027, although most observers say that date is almost certain to slip. Mr Musk wants Starship to be certified for human travel as early as next year, and has also suggested it will start uncrewed flights to Mars in the next 12 months. SpaceX's mantra has been to fail fast, learn

fast. Rather than taking a cautious approach, it has always aimed to move quickly and when rockets have exploded, the company says it is simply a chance to collect performance data. But after three failures in a row this year, questions were being asked about the future of SpaceX and about whether Mr Musk had been spending too much time on US politics. The world's richest man was a key supporter of US President in the 2024 election campaign, and until a falling out in June, the two men were close allies.

## CS Graduate Struggles to Find Work Due To AI

Once considered students with the best career path and most secure future, computer science graduates are enduring high unemployment in India and across the globe, with the rising number of artificial intelligence tools affecting their utility and job prospects. An Indian-American tech graduate has highlighted the job struggles of computer science students in the age of AI. Having grown up in California, Manasi Mishra was convinced that her computer science major at college would be the surest means to land a tech job and earn a six-figure salary in the USA. Mishra even learnt coding and built her website when she was still in elementary school. The tables, however, turned on her drastically after the number of AI tools surfaced in the market. "The rhetoric was, if you just learned to code, work hard and get a computer science degree, you can get six figures for your starting salary," Mishra said in a viral TikTok video, as quoted by The New York Times. But even graduating from Purdue University in May didn't guarantee her a proper job, as AI continues to replace computer science experts at multiple



tech companies. "The only company that called me for an interview was Chipotle," stressed Mishra, who had to decline the Chipotle gig after the company offered her 10 hours of work a week, knowing she would not have made enough from it to make ends meet. For much of the past two decades, a computer science degree was expected to guarantee graduates a job in the global tech scene. Even tech giants and billionaires encouraged students to pursue a computer science degree and learn coding, promising that it would earn

them higher salaries, big bonuses and great job security. It is understood that computer science majors in the US soared and nearly doubled between 2014 and 2024, when the job scene in tech was thriving. However, with AI tools capable of generating code, entry-level coders are now finding it increasingly difficult to land a job in the country. Among degree holders in the US, computer science (6.1 per cent) and engineering (7.5 per cent) graduates face some of the highest unemployment rates, as AI curtails their wings.

# The Hidden Edo Foundations of the World’s Largest Megalopolis



Tokyo may be a futuristic metropolis, but its roots run deep in the 17th century when the city was known as Edo—then one of the world’s largest urban centers, with a population of over 1 million, that flourished with commerce, entertainment, and culture. Street-side stalls serving nigiri sushi evolved into today’s counter-style dining, while former daimyo gardens and kabuki theaters took on a distinctly Edo identity that helped shape the city’s character.

Edo also faced major disasters, most notably the Great Fire of 1657 which destroyed more than half of the city. Out of these trials grew a spirit of resilience and ambition that lives on in modern initiatives such as the TOKYO Resilience Project, designed to strengthen the city’s preparedness against future natural disasters.Centuries on, today’s Tokyo has some remnants from the imprint of Edo in the shape of its distinct neighborhoods, canals, and roads laid down by its former city planners.From districts organized by social roles to canals that shaped commerce, Edo’s urban planning continues to inform the capital’s modern landscape. When Tokugawa Ieyasu established Edo as the seat of his shogunate in 1603, the city was organized along social hierar-



chy and occupation. WSamurai families and feudal lords were concentrated near Edo Castle—today’s Imperial Palace—land that later became home to public facilities such as government offices and universities. Surrounding these areas were the quarters for merchants and artisans. This zoning reflected the hierarchy of the Tokugawa era and laid the groundwork for modern Tokyo’s neighborhoods, many of which still recall their original roles.

Nihonbashi, a bustling commercial hub in the Edo period, remains an economic center, now home to the Tokyo Stock Exchange and the Bank of Japan. Ginza, no longer home to the shogunate’s silver mint, still shines as Tokyo’s district for luxury shopping, dining, and entertainment. Asakusa still carries its Edo legacy as an entertainment center once filled with kabuki theaters, geisha houses, and teahouses, while Ryogoku remains synonymous with spectacle—still the home of sumo to Wurnaments.

Originally a residential quarter for lower-ranking samurai, Jimbocho gradually diversified as schools and temples took root, giving it an intellectual and spiritual character. Today, Jimbocho is celebrated as the world’s largest secondhand book district, its streets lined with hundreds of specialty bookstores, publishing houses, and cafes—a legacy that reflects its Edo-era origins.

Catastrophic fires were a constant threat in Edo, where buildings were made of wood—and planners responded with built-in defenses. After the Great Fire of Meireki in 1657, Edo authorities instituted firebreak plazas and widened thoroughfares like Ueno Hirokōji to inhibit flames from spreading, and they protected temples with tall, tiled walls, which can still be seen at temples around Tokyo. At the same time, some neighborhoods embraced labyrinthine lanes—for instance, in districts like Kagurazaka—which would slow enemy intrusion. Those same meandering alleys now contribute to Tokyo’s historic charm. Edo was built around the shogun’s castle with major roads radiating outward like spokes on a wheel. Nihonbashi, the official zero point from which the Gokaidō—the Five Routes—branched across Japan, became the principal business and transport hub of Edo, and later Tokyo. Some of those same thoroughfares shaped later transit lines like the Yamanote Line, which crossed the old ‘kaido’ roads converging on the castle and turned post stations such as Shinjuku, Shibuya, Shinagawa, and Ueno into the major hubs of Tokyo’s modern rail network.

## Rail Wars 2026: Europe’s New Sleeper Networks Take Aim at Short-Haul Flights

When you’re standing in a big-city railway station, scanning the departure board for your train, it doesn’t matter whether you’re a seasoned traveler or a nervous newcomer. Few travel moments match that brief tingle of anticipation, as the possibilities for adventure flicker through your mind.Standing beneath the giant electronic screens at stations in Zurich, London, Vienna, Tokyo or Shanghai, it’s hard not to daydream about scrapping your plans altogether and boarding a train to some far-off city.As new routes open and high-speed rail networks expand across much of the world, it’s becoming easier than ever to give in to that impulse and escape by train.From budget overnight services to hyper-luxury “land cruises,” the range and quality of rail travel continue to expand. Together, they offer a snapshot of how rail travel is changing — and why 2026 may prove a particularly exciting year for trains, both practical and indulgent.Grace, pace and space” was the tagline for Jaguar’s luxury cars of the 1950s, but it could just as easily apply to a new generation of high-speed trains. Among the best in the world are the sleek red trains operated by Trenitalia and its privately owned rival, Italo.Having transformed intercity travel in their home country by reducing fares, increasing frequencies, and putting domestic air routes out of business, both companies are now eyeing Europe’s largest rail market: Germany.Italo has also reportedly applied for an operating license and could invest “several billion euros” in a fleet of up to 40 high-speed trains to provide frequent services between cities such as Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt and Hamburg.The moves pose a major threat to Deutsche Bahn — once regarded as a beacon of German efficiency and technological superiority, but now suffering unprecedented punctuality and reliability woes.

However, a note of caution for the new entrants: much of the unreliability of German long-distance trains is caused by crumbling infrastructure, poor planning and network congestion. Adding more trains to maxed-out tracks may cause more problems than they solve. As demand for night trains in Europe continues to outstrip supply, the realities of delivering these complicated and expensive-to-operate services are hitting home.In December, Austrian rail operator ÖBB ended its much-trumpeted Nightjet trains from Paris to Berlin and Vienna, despite them being frequently fully booked.The reason? Both services relied on financial support from the French government, and when this was withdrawn, the thrice-weekly trains were no longer viable.However, Belgian-Dutch cooperative European Sleeper, which hit the rails in 2023 with a Brussels–Berlin–Prague overnight route, has stepped into the breach. In March 2026, it will revive the Paris–Berlin route, also running three days a week and routed via Brussels.Despite difficulties in gaining long-term schedules and route plans, and disruptions caused by short-notice track repairs in Germany, European Sleeper is working to establish new routes.Renovated carriages feature sleeping compartments, couchette beds and reclining seats, with modern touches such as charging points and Wi-Fi aimed at travelers on different budgets.Another plus for European long-distance travelers in June 2026 will be the launch of a brand-new route linking Amsterdam and Brussels with Switzerland and Italy’s fashion and industrial powerhouse, Milan. The 680-mile (1,100-kilometer) journey across four countries will be the first regular overnight service between Italy and this corner of Europe in many years. Another new venture by Dutch-Belgian startup European Sleeper it will run three nights per week in each direction, calling in Cologne, the Swiss capital Bern and the Alpine transport hub of Brig — convenient for visitors to Zermatt, Saas Fee and for the “world’s slowest express train,” the Glacier Express. Trains will also call at Stresa, close to Italy’s Lake Maggiore, on their way to and from Milan.



# The six best places to ski in 2026

As the barometer drops in the northern hemisphere, skiers everywhere are preparing to shred black diamonds and show off their mountain ‘fits. Tried-and-true hotspots like Aspen and Courchevel never lose their appeal, but according to Sara Haney, head of travel for concierge service Velocity Black which organises bespoke skiing experiences for travellers, skiers in 2026 “want a sense of discovery, not just lift access”.This season, snow reliability also remains a top priority. According to Cat Iwanchuk, vice president of business development at Ski.com, skiers are changing their plans to coincide with optimal snowfall. Favourable early forecasts boost the season’s top contenders. From exciting new openings to the chilliest après ski, here are our picks of the six best places to ski in 2026.

### Alta Badia, The Dolomites, Italy

The Dolomite Mountains, famed for their dramatic limestone peaks and perfect pink sunsets, have traditionally been an “Italians-only” ski destination. Thanks to hosting this year’s Winter Olympics, ski-related searches from the US have risen 82% compared to the same timeframe in 2024 and up 16% in the UK, reports Herrmann Global Tourism Insights.The focus is mostly on Cortina d’Ampezzo, which will host many of the Games’ events, but “Cortina d’Ampezzo is only but a fraction of the vast Dolomites,” says Agustina Lagos Mármol, owner of Italian travel operator Dolomite Mountains. The Dolomiti Superski stretches for 3000 sq km, encompassing a dozen different ski areas (one pass gets you into all 12).To catch the Olympic buzz (without blowing your budget), Mármol recommends exploring other parts of the region, where accommodation is more accessible. Alta Badia, a stunning valley 50 minutes west of Cortina, is up and coming thanks to the July 2025 opening of the 51-room chalet-style luxury hotel Aman Rosa Alpina. Picturesque villages like Corvara (Alta Badia’s adventure hub) offer easy access to 130km (81 miles) of skiing. Paired with stick-to-your-ribs South Tyrolean dishes like golasce y polenta (goulash with polenta) at Maso Runch Farm and après-ski bombardini (Italian-style egggnog) at Club Moritzino, you’ve got all the ingredients for an Italian ski holiday.



### Big Sky, Montana, US

Can a hotel opening define an entire season? The November 2025 debut of One&Only Moonlight Basin just might. Caroline Hansen, trip designer for Indagare, reports the opening “has put Big Sky even more on the global luxury map.” In addition to 73 upscale rooms and 19 cabins, the hotel flaunts world-class dining and a stargazing observatory.Big Sky’s ascent from under-the-radar cult favourite to one of the US’ most popular resorts has been a decade in the making, thanks to updated lift infrastructure (from Ramcharger 8’s heated seats to weatherproof bubbles) and a hospitality scene glow up. Foodies will love this winter’s residency from Chicago’s two-starred Michelin restaurant Alinea, and until 31 March 2026, head chef Grant Achatz and his team will run M x Big Sky Resort, highlighting alpine cuisine. None of this overshadows the area’s true appeal: 5,850 acres of some of the least crowded slopes in the American West. Big Sky still feels blissfully untouched by the heavy commercial footprint you see in other mountain towns,” says Steve Orens, president of luxury travel agency Froesch. “Once you arrive, the scale and quiet hit you immediately. Also, it’s not just for skiers. Think snowshoeing through Yellowstone and horseback adventures.” Don’t miss the DJ-fuelled après at the Village Plaza.

**Banff, Alberta, Canada**

Despite its location in the heart of the Canadian Rockies, Banff has traditionally been considered a summer travel destination thanks to its hiking trails and crystalline lakes. But

this season’s expansion plans might be poised to change that. On 17 December 2025, Lake Louise Ski Resort unveiled Richardson’s Ridge; 200 new acres of beginner-, intermediate- and tree-skiing terrain serviced by the high-speed quad chairlift that debuted in 2024. This season also welcomes wellness venues: Basin at the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise is a 19,000 sq ft indoor-outdoor thermal bath on the shores of Lake Louise, while Everwild is a design-forward new hotel with a Nordic Spa in Canmore. But to experience the region’s rugged roots, head to Rose & Crown, a 40-year-old local favourite with nightly live music. For Iwanchuk, what makes Banff best-in-class is the snow. “The combination of a location far north and high altitude means that snow conditions are typically among the best in the world,” she explains. “You can feel confident booking in advance.”Two of Banff’s ski areas – Banff Sunshine Village and Lake Louise Ski Resort – had such promising early snowfall that they were the first Canadian resort to open for the 2025-2026 season.

### Hokkaido, Japan

From 2024 to 2025, Niseko, a town in Japan’s northernmost Hokkaido region known for its fluffy, plentiful “Japow” (Japan powder), had a record-breaking season, welcoming more than 11 million visitors. Interest in skiing in Japan continues to grow, but ski travel advisor Alli Widman of The Avant Ski



champions the lesser-known village of Furano, which has a 28-run ski resort located about two hours east of Sapporo. Its season started with a bang, receiving 190cm (75 inches) of snow as of 15 December 2025. “By August this year, I had booked more Furano trips than in any previous season,” Widman reveals. Pair mornings on the mountain with a bowl of spicy Hokkaido soup curry at Furanoya or try the area’s traditional post-ski treat at a Hokkaido-style ice cream making class at the Furano Cheese Factory. Given Furano’s size (just 415 acres), Widman often builds multi-mountain itineraries, adding Asahikawa and Mt Asahi-dake, Hokkaido’s highest peak with “incredible backcountry access”.Orens recommends an island road trip from Niseko to Iwanai and

then to Rusutsu. “Each stop gives you a completely different view, snow and feel,” he says. “At Iwanai Resort, you can go snowcat skiing straight into untouched powder, and in the mornings, they’ll hand you hot coffee and doughnuts before you even clip in. Rusutsu caps the trip with some of the area’s most consistent snow.”

### Méribel, France

In the French Alps, Chamonix, Val d’Isere and Courchevel get the most attention, but this year, train your skis towards Méribel, which makes up one-third of the Les 3 Vallées ski area. This quaint ski town with wood chalet architecture has access to 600km (373 miles) of trails, a lively après-ski scene (slopeside cabaret at La Folie Douce, anyone?) and gorgeous views of the Les Allues valley.“We’ve seen a significant uptick in Méribel enquiries this season – around 50% more interest than last year,” says Nickie Mabey, founder of Mabey Ski. She adds that snow reliability comes with “a more grounded, authentic Savoyard feel [for guests who] want private mountain guides who know which refuges serve the best hay-matured raclette, torch-lit forest dinners and wine tastings with local sommeliers”.This season, the Côte Brune lift, which connects Meribel to Val Thorens, has been updated into a lightning-quick 10-person gondola. Forty-year-old Les Rhodos, too, has been given a €10m (£8.7m) makeover, and a new green run debuts at Rhodos mid-station to the Rond Point. The First Track experience will be taking place every Wednesday from Roc de Fer, a World Cup downhill ski course.

### Queenstown, New Zealand

Eager to extend the snow-cap fantasy beyond March? Head to Queenstown, home to one of the world’s longest winter sports seasons, stretching nearly five months from June to October. Four distinct resorts – all within a short drive of the city’s downtown – offer beginner-friendly tracks, free-style parks and plenty of backcountry fields. Winter 2026 also marks the first full season of the Soho Basin expansion, which added another 370 acres to the Cardrona Alpine Resort trail map, making it the country’s largest commercial ski resort.ROKI Collection, a luxury hotel that opened on the banks of Lake Wakatipu on 1 September 2025, is within striking distance of the slopes on The Remarkables ski area. Queenstown’s winter season is also full of events, including the 10-day Winter Pride in August – the Southern Hemisphere’s largest LGBTQIA+ winter festival. “I think people tend to approach Queenstown differently,” Mabey says. “It’s often booked as part of a broader New Zealand winter trip. The town itself is such a major draw with adventure activities, wine regions and that stunning lakeside setting that skiing becomes one element of a multi-faceted holiday.”

ENTERTAINMENT

Hrithik Roshan gives a moving  
homage to filmmaker MM Baig



**New Delhi:** Actor Hrithik Roshan recalls the skills he learned from filmmaker M M Baig. The filmmaker, known for his contributions to Hindi cinema and as the father of former child star Baby Guddu, was discovered dead at his home earlier this week. Hrithik took to his X account to express how the filmmaker came into his life at a crucial point and helped him gain confidence as an actor. In the tweet, Hrithik stated, “My beloved Baigji, I will eternally be thankful to you for being the instructor I

so desperately needed at the beginning of my career as an actor. You helped me build confidence in my words and performance, and you were important in shaping the actor within me. For helping me overcome my shyness while also strengthening my vulnerability. I was lost. And you helped me find my path. Back then I was just 18 years old. I’m still practicing the teachings to this day. “I’ll miss you.” According to his publicist, Hanif Zaveri, Baig had been ill for some time

and was living alone. “He had been ill for quite some time. Because he hadn’t left the house in 4 to 5 days, the neighbors complained to the authorities about a bad odor emanating from his house. The cops entered the door, discovered Baig sahab’s dead body, and told his daughter. They then transported his remains to Cooper Hospital for a post-mortem at roughly 1:30-2:00 a.m. He was a loving man. Hanif told PTI, “I pray for his departed soul.” The director was in his seventies.

Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda have  
flown out of Hyderabad for their wedding in Udaipur

**New Delhi:** Rashmika Mandanna’s appearance at the airport, following Vijay Deverakonda’s sighting, has fans speculating if they had departed for Udaipur. The speculation mill around Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna’s wedding is in overdrive, with the couple set to marry this month in Udaipur. While the stars have opted to remain silent, their recent appearance at Hyderabad’s airport has further fueled the speculation. On Saturday, Vijay was observed at the airport, keeping a low profile. He wore a laidback look, layering an unbuttoned grey shirt over a beige T-shirt and matching grey pants. He strolled into the airport with a mask on and his head slightly down. Vijay went rapidly through the terminal, without pausing for pictures. Rashmika was later sighted arriving separately at the same airport. Surrounded by her security officers, she elected not to speak with or pose for the cameras, keeping things low-key. The actor went for a minimalist style, wearing a longline gray blouse with traditional black pants. A ‘tikka’ was also apparent on her brow. She also donned a mask. Rashmika’s appearance at the airport, following Vijay’s earlier sighting, has sparked speculation on social media over whether they had gone for Udaipur. “Vijay & Rashmika heading for their wedding?,” one said, while another added, “5 days to go.. my dream.” Rashmika and Vijay exchanged rings in Hyderabad on October 3, 2025. The actors had been rumored to be dating since they appeared together in Geetha Govindam (2018) and Dear Comrade (2019). In December, a source close to the pair revealed to Hindustan Times that Rashmika and Vijay will marry on



February 26 in a heritage palace in Udaipur. They will also host a reception for their industry buddies in Hyderabad. The pair, however, has made no public rearks on the matter. A paparazzi recently shared a video of his meeting with Rashmika at the airport. In the footage, the star is seen waving to admirers who are chanting her name. She eventually removes her disguise at the paparazzo’s request to pose for him. When the paparazzi exclaims, “Congratulations, ma’am,” Rashmika grins broadly and answers, “Deniki ra?” (For what?). When he says, “Wedding, waiting for the 26th, ma’am,” she does not correct him. She simply nods her head and

blushes. Rashmika was recently asked by Prema if rumors about her marrying Vijay were genuine, including the alleged wedding date and venue. The actor said, “It’s been four years since these rumours started, right? Also, many have been asking the same thing. Everyone has been waiting for the same thing.” Rashmika and Vijay have been photographed wearing rings since their engagement was announced in October 2025, but they have yet to discuss it. They led the 43rd India Day Parade in New York and attended an event called Bharat Beyond Borders last year. The pair also had a New Year’s getaway with their pals.

Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan are all swag  
in epic face-off for promoting Nelson flick



**New Delhi:** Nelson’s project, which will begin filming shortly, will bring Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan together for the first time in

47 years. It’s official now! After four decades, Kamal Haasan and Rajinikanth will meet for a new film! Red Giant Movies had promised

a promotional film featuring the two screen legends on Friday, and the formal announcement video was released on Saturday (Feb-

ruary 21). Kamal and Rajinikanth appeared in the entertaining advertisement, as did director Nelson and music director Anirudh. The commercial opened with Nelson standing outside the rooms, in the corridor, pondering which star’s room to visit first. Anirudh enters and asks him to select between two fingers, even though he is unsure which raag to chose! The scene shifts to Rajinikanth and Kamal taking turns asking Nelson if the other has picked this jacket, that belt, or that watch. If he chooses the first choice, the other star choose the second option! Kamal and Rajinikanth

get ready and emerge from their rooms to face one other, dressed differently. They stroll side by side, and their swag draws the attention of the women in the garage. Kamal drives, while Rajinikanth sits alongside him. Nelson and Anirudh enter from the rear, with the music composer announcing that the theme song is ready! But Kamal insists that would come later; first, he wants to know who the hero is. Rajinikanth interrupts and begs Nelson to respond: “Yes, tell him who the hero is!” The title card then reads: ‘KH \* RK renuion’. Nelson wrote and directed the picture, and shooting will begin soon.

Shahid Kapoor’s response to trolls:  
‘Aapke bolne ki aukat’



**New Delhi:** Being an actor in the Indian film business has both advantages and disadvantages. While millions of followers admire them, there are some who hide behind their computers and mock celebrities for everything they

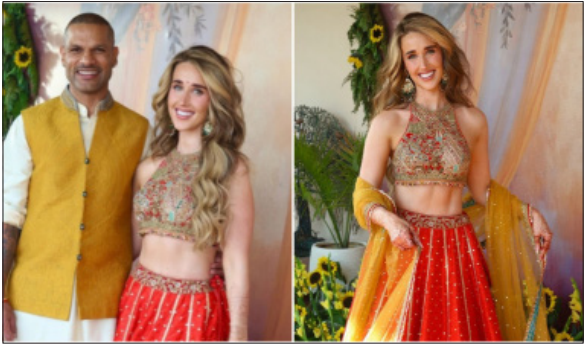
do, whether it’s a personal viewpoint, a film, a performance, or an outfit. Celebrities are being assessed for everything, with netizens keeping a careful eye on every action they do. During a recent interview on The Right Angle with

Sonal Kalra, actor Shahid Kapoor expressed his thoughts on the subject, as his film O’Romeo hit theaters. When asked how he cope with all the teasing, Shahid Kapoor replied, “Anyone who says I’m not affected, I don’t know if they’re living under a rock.” People who say that, you know, it truly impacts me, are putting themselves in risk. Speaking of praise and trolling, Shahid added that one should not seek validation just from others. He said that it is critical to understand how you feel about something. However, in order to connect with your audience, you must also understand how others feel.

Sophie Shine looks wonderful  
as the Indian bride

**New Delhi:** Sophie Shine looks lovely in a red and gold lehenga in her recent pre-wedding photos with Shikhar Dhawan. Her outfit combines contemporary elegance with Indian culture. Shikhar Dhawan, a former Indian cricketer, and Sophie Shine, his fiancée, are getting married. Sophie has offered a look inside their lively pre-wedding festivities, leaving fans and fashion aficionados in awe of her metamorphosis into the ‘quintessential bride’. Shikhar Dhawan’s bride

Sophie rejects traditional Indian attire for modest tank top as she exhibits mehendi before the wedding. On February 20, the bride-to-be turned to Instagram to share a series of candid, happy photos from a recent pre-wedding ceremony, most likely a haldi party. Sophie Shine looked lovely in a classic red and gold lehenga, just like a bright Indian bride. The beautiful embroidery on her halter-neck choli and the vibrant colors of her outfit nicely suited the joyous environment.



Emmanuel Macron named Anil Kapoor  
as his favorite Bollywood celebrity

**New Delhi:** During his tour to India with First Lady Brigitte Macron, French President Emmanuel Macron made headlines for both his diplomatic engagements and his friendly interactions with Bollywood superstars. Macron has now revealed his favorite Indian actor, giving a filmy spin to the excitement. During an interview with Brut India, Emmanuel Macron was asked to choose his favorite Bollywood star, and he did not hesitate to share his choice. During a rapid-fire portion, Macron was asked to identify his favorite Bollywood star. To which he said, “I mean, yesterday I mentioned Jai Ho, so I would say Anil Kapoor.” Earlier French week, President Macron shared numerous photos from his meeting with Bollywood actors on Instagram, captioned “Aux côtés de légendes du cinéma indien.” “La culture nous rassemble,” which translates to “Along with Indian movie luminaries. “Culture unites us.” The first photo featured President Macron and Bridgitte smiling beside Manoj



Bajpayee, Anil Kapoor, Zoya Akhtar, Richa Chadha, Shabana Azmi, Ricky Kej, and others. Some photos show Anil and Richa talking with the President and dignitaries, while another shows the group standing near the Gateway of India. Meanwhile, Anil had also shared special moments from the meeting on X, formerly

known as Twitter. Sharing the pictures, Anil wrote, “Spent an inspiring afternoon with President Emmanuel Macron and his gracious better half, Brigitte exchanging thoughts on cinema, culture, and the powerful bridge between India and France. Here’s to India x France. And to many more stories waiting to be told.”

Prabhas flew lunch cartons of food  
from Chennai to Mumbai for Om Raut



**New Delhi:** Prabhas mentioned in a recent encounter that he ‘Swiggy’s’ his meals from other states on cheat days, as an example. Prabhas is well-known for his love of eating, in addition to his acting career. The typically timid actor even opens out in conversations about food. Prabhas said in an interview with Santosh Shobhan and Manasa Varanasi as part of the marketing for their latest film, Couple Friendly, that he frequently ‘Swiggy’ cuisine from

neighboring states on cheat days. During the encounter, Santosh questioned Prabhas if it was true that he ‘Swiggy’s’ cuisine from other states whenever he felt like it. Confirming it, Prabhas cheerfully stated, “When I was shooting in Mumbai for Adipurush, it was my cheat meal day.” I was with Om Raut and promised him that instead of Mumbai, I would fetch him delicious meals from somewhere else. I promised him I will grab him some Chennai food.

Ram Kapoor says he was a ‘absent parent’ for over a decade

**New Delhi:** In retrospect, actor Ram Kapoor gave all credit to his wife, Gautami Kapoor, for holding down the fort at home. The couple has two kids together. Actor Ram Kapoor has revealed that his career’s high demands sometimes came at a personal cost, saying that he was a “absent father” for about a decade, to the point that his own children scarcely knew him growing up. Reflecting on those years, the actor praised his wife, Gautami Kapoor, for holding down the fort at home. Ram discussed his personal life at an episode of Love Unscripted season 2 on YouTube, when he appeared alongside his wife and performer Gautami Kapoor. They have two kids together. During the show, Gautami admitted that they did not intend to have a kid when they had their elder daughter, Sia. Ram described Gautami as “scared of everything new.” But I was thrilled.” Gautami said, “I was like, ‘Are we going to have a baby?’” What are we going to do? He said,

“You leave it to me.” I said, “What do I leave to you?”” Gautami went on to say that she conceived Sia during a period of significant growth in Ram’s profession. She said that he was preoccupied with work at the time, saying, “Ram wasn’t there. Ram’s career took off during my pregnancy with Sia. It felt as though (goddess) Lakshmi had come. My pregnancy announcement altered Ram’s destiny forever.” Ram claimed that it was around this period that he received Kasamh Se, which went on to become a massive success. He acknowledged that he never looked back at television after that, and that Sia brought him all his luck. During the conversation, Ram acknowledged that his children did not know him for at least ten years after their birth. He remarked, “She is the single reason I am who I am. She took care of the children and the home so well that I didn’t have to worry about them for a single day. That is why I

was able to devote 15 years to my job and achieve my goals. She is Mother India. She truly needs no one. She does it everything and won’t let anyone get near. Any successful man is successful because he has a strong lady who has helped him succeed. Otherwise, it is impossible. I’ve never had to fear about my child. That is why I was missing. My children didn’t actually know me for ten years.” Ram and Gautami fell in love on the set of their program, Ghar Ek Mandir, which ran from 2000 to 2002. They married on Valentine’s Day (February 14), 2003, and have two children: daughter Sia and son Aks. They have also appeared together in films such as Karan Johar’s Student of the Year and Saket Chaudhary’s Shaadi Ke Side Effects. Gautami’s most recent work includes the film De De Pyaar De 2 and the online series The Bads of Bollywood. Meanwhile, Ram was seen as a lawyer in Jolly LLB 3. He also appeared in the online program Mistry.



## Win-win collaboration: PM predicts bilateral commerce between Brazil and India will surpass \$20 billion



**New Delhi, Feb 21:** Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Prime Minister Narendra Modi met bilaterally on Saturday in New Delhi with the goal of enhancing the two important Global South countries’ multidimensional partnership. Over the next five years, India hopes to increase bilateral trade beyond USD 20 billion, according to the Prime Minister, who characterized the alliance as a “win-win.”“We discussed moving forward in all areas with a common goal and goals during our talks today. India’s biggest Latin American trading partner is Brazil. In the next five years, we aim to increase our bilateral trade to more than \$20 billion. Following the discussions, the prime minister declared, “Our trade is not just a number; it is a reflection of trust.” The Prime Minister added that cooperation in technology and innovation would be important not only for Brazil and India but also for the larger Global South, adding that the talks included collaboration

across industries with common goals and aspirations.”The agreement on rare earths and critical minerals is a significant step in creating a robust supply chain,” he continued. Additionally, our collaboration in the defense industry is continuously expanding. This is an excellent illustration of strategy alignment and mutual trust. We’ll keep fortifying this mutually beneficial alliance.He also highlighted the expansion of defense cooperation as a result of the discussions, characterizing it as a manifestation of the two nations’ growing mutual confidence and strategic alignment. The prime minister went on to say that there was a lot of room for cooperation in the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries. In addition to promoting Ayurveda and traditional medicine to encourage holistic healthcare approaches, he stated that India would endeavor to expand the supply of reasonably priced, high-quality medications to Brazil.He declared that Brazil and India, two dynamic

and powerful democracies, will keep collaborating to promote the goals and objectives of the Global South on the international scene.The two nations are “not just the two biggest democracies of the Global South,” according to President Lula, who also emphasized the significance of bilateral ties. He called the partnership “a meeting of the world’s pharmacy with the world’s barn, and a digital superpower with a renewable energy superpower.” “We both support multilateralism and peace, and we are incredibly diversified nations and centers of the cultural sector. Prime Minister Modi’s invitation to both this state visit and the AI Impact Summit demonstrates the mutual trust and synchronicity that unite us,” he continued.Speaking only to India Although Lula warned that any move away from the dollar-dominated global economy would require time and careful planning, he stated today on Friday that Brazil and India can trade in their own currencies and are not dependent on the US currency for bilateral transactions.PM Modi added that President Lula’s inspired leadership and forward-thinking approach have long benefited India-Brazil relations. The relationship between the two countries is anchored in shared democratic values and a commitment to inclusive economic growth. They collaborate in various international forums such as BRICS and G20. During Prime Minister Modi’s visit to Brazil in July 2025, a Trade Minister-level review mechanism was established, aiming for a bilateral trade target of USD 20 billion by 2030. Bilateral trade reached USD 15.21 billion in 2025, with significant Indian investments in Brazil. Energy cooperation, particularly in hydrocarbons and biofuels, is vital, along with expanding collaboration in digital technology and AI. People-to-people ties are fostered through scholarships and training programs, supported by a small Indian diaspora in Brazil.

## President of Sri Lanka, PM Modi Meet at the AI Summit to Strengthen the Push for Connectivity

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** On the fringes of the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with President Anura Kumara Dissanayake of Sri Lanka on Friday. They reviewed the growing scope of their bilateral cooperation and reaffirmed their shared commitment to connectivity, technology-driven development, and stability in the Indian Ocean Region.This was President Dissanayake’s second trip to India since taking office, and he was there to attend the AI Impact Summit held by the country. His most recent tour, a State tour in December 2024, highlighted the increasing vigor of high-level discussions between the two neighbors. In addition to acknowledging the transformative power of technology, PM Modi and Dissanayake discussed potential areas of convergence in the application of AI for development. Both leaders concurred that, when used properly, AI can promote inclusive growth, enhance service delivery, and further developmental objectives, especially in poor nations.The topic of

India’s crisis aid to Sri Lanka occupied a large portion of the conversations. Following Cyclone Dityah, which left parts of the island nation severely damaged, President Dissanayake thanked India for its prompt and unwavering assistance. In its capacity as Sri Lanka’s first responder, India provided emergency relief supplies in a hurry and assisted with search and rescue efforts under the name “Operation Sagar Bandhu.”

The two leaders expressed satisfaction with the advancements made as a result of India’s continued aid package of USD 450 million for restoration and rebuilding operations. New Delhi’s ongoing commitment to Sri Lanka’s long-term recovery and economic resilience is reflected in the package, which aims to restore vital infrastructure and livelihoods.In addition to their strategic and economic collaboration, PM Modi and Dissanayake emphasized the two nations’ longstanding cultural and civilizational bonds. The leaders praised the successful conclusion of the Exposition of the Holy Devnimorī relics in

Sri Lanka and emphasized that the partnership between India and Sri Lanka is strengthened by common heritage and interpersonal ties. They pointed out that these kinds of cross-cultural interactions foster goodwill and understanding at the local level.

In order to meet Sri Lanka’s sustainable development needs and promote peace and stability in the larger Indian Ocean Region, the two presidents committed to collaborating closely in the future.

They emphasized that improved technology cooperation, development cooperation, and connectivity would promote regional security and prosperity in addition to helping the two nations.

In addition to reiterating Colombo and New Delhi’s intention to develop a forward-thinking, resilient, and people-centric bilateral relationship, the meeting held on the fringes of the AI Impact Summit underscored India’s twin position as a reliable regional partner and a technological convenor.

## Pakistani coach Mike Hesson finally addresses the ‘Argument’ video with captain Salman Agha



**New Delhi:** A viral video of a heated exchange between captain Salman Agha and head coach Mike Hesson during Pakistan’s most recent game against Namibia caused conjecture. Agha lost his temper about something in the publicly available video, with head coach Mike Hesson standing next to Babar Azam. Hesson appeared astounded in the video while Agha tossed a bottle out of annoyance. Agha nodded as the head coach continued to speak

to him about maintaining composure. But Hesson has finally made it known. His explanation of the exchange’s background was, “I’ve actually got sent that video, and you guys have really got that wrong,” he remarked. “I was going over to talk to Salman about getting Nawaz to put the pads on as a left-hander, and Agha was upset that he just got out, so he threw the bottle into the ground,” the Pakistani coach disclosed. It had nothing to do with what we were discussing. After the left arm spinner was done, we talked about shutting up, going, and getting his pads on so he could come in later. As I mentioned before, it was a very basic discourse that he was frequently not even involved in. It was in the crossfire, and he was just standing there, feeling a little bummed that he was out. It’s incredible what individuals can decipher at times. New Zealand has won two of the T20 World Cups, whereas Pakistan has won five of them. The Men in Green have won 24 games overall in the shortest format, while the Black Caps have won 23. In response to inquiries on Pakistan’s advantage, given that they have defeated New Zealand

five times out of seven T20 World Cup meetings—the most recent loss being in 2016—Hesson emphasized that quality, not past performance or mentality, determines victory. “I don’t believe that games are mentally won or lost.

They won by skill, but I believe they lost. In recent years, New Zealand has played a significant role on the subcontinent. Generally speaking, Sri Lanka spins slightly sharper than India does. And at SSC, we witnessed that to some extent. Here the other night, we witnessed that specifically during the opening innings. Therefore, I don’t think anyone has a psychological advantage. I recall the 2016 game, of course. At the time, I was present. I recall that, and I recall that we were rather well-prepared to face Pakistan. We faced numerous threats. That being said, the past is the past. “We’re excited to get off to a strong start in the Super 8s tomorrow,” Hesson said.In Twenty20 Internationals, Mark Chapman of New Zealand has an excellent record against Pakistan. In 25 games and 22 innings, the Kiwi batsman has scored 663 runs at an average of 41.43.

## Gautam Gambhir laughs uncontrollably as Abhishek Sharma energizes Team India



**New Delhi:** The best dressing room is the one that wins. The current head coach of India, Gautam Gambhir, is renowned for having spoken these comments. With only positive sentiments among the T20 World Cup defending champions’ camp ahead of Sunday’s Super 8s encounter against South Africa at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, this is finally becoming a reality. Ahead of the match against the Proteas, Abhishek Sharma, who has yet to make an impression in the competition despite recording three consecutive ducks, recently delivered the squad a motivational speech on their first day of practice at the location.

Everyone, including Gambhir and skipper Suryakumar Yadav, smiled at Abhishek’s manner during the speech. The team is genuinely at ease and in the appropriate frame of mind going into the tournament’s business end, as evidenced by the antics of the entire camp. Abhishek stated that he would only try to inspire the lads before delivering the pep talk in order to keep the momentum going.”I’m just going to inspire the guys.” I’m just going to maintain the momentum. Before speaking to the rest of his squad, Abhishek added, “I hope it helps.” Then, Abhishek hurried into the team meeting and urged his teammates to keep up the excellent work and concentrate on mastering the fundamentals. He emphasized the Sikh jaikara, “Jo Bole So Nihaal, Sat Sri Akal,”

as he wrapped up his remarks. Gambhir and Suryakumar started laughing as soon as the team as a whole uttered the slogan.”It indicates a winning squad. Let’s continue to appreciate one another’s performances. Right now, that’s the best thing we’re doing. We are playing with incredible intensity in every game. And winning every game is our goal. In the motivational speech, Abhishek stated, “Let’s continue to have fun and remember that “Jo bole so nihaal, sasriya kaal.” The top-ranked T20I batter in the world, Abhishek, has been out for ducks in each of his three T20 World Cup appearances thus far. During the competition, he has lasted eight balls in total.Wearing the jersey of Mohammed Siraj, Abhishek attempted to turn the tide of the match against the Netherlands by coming out to bat, but it was unsuccessful as he was bowled by spinner Aryan Dutt in the first over.A stomach illness had previously prevented Abhishek from playing against Namibia in New Delhi.

The team management decided not to risk him for the match against Gerhard Erasmus’ squad since he was admitted to the hospital the night before. The encounter between Pakistan and New Zealand will kick off the T20 World Cup Super 8s on Saturday. India will play the Proteas on Sunday, February 22. They are in Group 1 with South Africa, Zimbabwe, and the West Indies.

## Navy slapped by court for late protest to high-rise near military base



**New Delhi, Feb 21:** While considering the Navy’s challenge to the construction of a more than 20-story structure close to INS Shikra in Colaba, which the force believes could pose a threat to the naval facility, the Bombay High Court on Friday noted a “failure of Naval Intelligence.”

The court said that if the construction, which started in 2024, had not been reported until now rather than sooner, it would represent a failure on the part of the Navy. “Prima facie, this clearly indicates failure of intelligence on the part of the Navy,” the ruling of a bench consisting of Justices Ravindra Ghuge and Abhay Mantri stated. Additionally, the bench ordered the developer to hold off on creating any third-party rights until the Navy’s Local Military Authority’s petition was finally heard.We are shocked that the petitioner intelligence could not detect the building’s developer’s

development, which progressively added floors until it reached Ground plus 19 in 2024, given that these tower buildings are being built to a height of 63 meters,” the court stated. The bench expressed worry that the building overlooks the naval property and ordered the developer and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to submit responses to the Navy’s appeal.The bench discovered from the records that the developer’s building had been 69.94 meters high since 2024. Several VVIP movements between 2024 and February 2026 cannot be denied by the petitioner. However, if this building has remained undetected, we discover that this can only be ascribed to the Colaba Station’s naval intelligence failure.The bench noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was supposed to be in Mumbai when the Navy finally became aware of the

building’s existence. The developer will develop its property at its own risk, the court said. “We would order the destruction of the aforementioned floors if we ultimately determine that NOC is required. “The court stated that if we ultimately determine that the municipal corporation has either been complicit or has been negligent, or if the facts show that they have made a mistake by granting permission, by granting OC/CC without taking the petitioner’s NOC,”The court cautioned that “if the circumstances so indicate, we would not hesitate to direct prosecution of the officers of the municipal corporation.”

According to the bench’s directive, the developer must properly notify buyers of the petition’s status, the temporary injunction, and the possibility of any unfavorable conclusion, which also applies to these buyers. The developer is also prohibited from selling apartments or establishing third-party rights for floors higher than 53 meters.The Navy stated that it had been contacting the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) since last year to find out how clearance for such a towering building with an aerial view of INS Shikra was given. It only went to court after months of not hearing back.

## Floyd Mayweather makes a U-turn from retirement

**New Delhi:** Floyd Mayweather Jr. has stated that he plans to return to professional boxing after his recent run of exhibition matches. The statement is made as Mayweather gets ready to face Mike Tyson in an exhibition bout that is tentatively set for April 2026 in Congo. For the former champion, who hasn’t engaged in a professional fight since retiring in 2017 after defeating Conor McGregor and earning a 50-0 record, this is a major change. After defeating McGregor in a well watched crossover bout in 2017 via tenth-round TKO, 48-year-old Mayweather formally hung up his gloves. Since then, he has continued to be active by participating in demonstrations against a range of opponents, such as celebrities, professional fighters, and MMA contenders.Keeping up his public image while preserving his unbeaten professional record, Mayweather’s most recent fight took place in Mexico in August 2024 against John Gotti III, the grandson of notorious criminal John Gotti. Mayweather stated in 2025 that he has signed a deal to face the 59-year-old Mike Tyson in what is anticipated to be a blockbuster boxing contest. Two of the most well-known athletes in the sport, who are 107 years old together, will face off in the competition.Mayweather, though, has hinted that this fight might mark a return to professional combat. According to the legendary boxer, he still has the capacity to set more records in the sport.In a statement, Mayweather stated, “I still have what it takes to set more records in



the sport of boxing.”“No one will have a bigger gate, a larger worldwide broadcast audience, and more revenue with each event than my events, from my next Mike Tyson event to my next professional fight after that. And I intend to continue doing it.It would be Mayweather’s first formal professional appearance in almost nine years if the comeback is confirmed. His longest break from officially sanctioned professional boxing since the start of his career is ending with the possible fight.

Given his record as an undefeated five-division world champion and the ongoing attention his bouts garner, Mayweather’s choice to return to the ring will be widely monitored.

## Following the Lashkar Delhi terror plan warning, two IEDs were discovered in Punjab and Kashmir

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** Security agencies issued a high alert, warning of a potential terror strike by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in Delhi, after discovering two IEDs in Punjab and Kashmir. The timing of the episodes has caused anxiety, even though investigators have not connected the IED recovery to the terror plot alert. On Friday, an IED was discovered in a suspicious suitcase close to the Rayya police station in Amritsar, Punjab. According to the police, the IED was diffused after the bomb disposal unit was dispatched to the scene. There was a strange bag near the police chowk. The bomb disposal squad was contacted right away, and they verified that it was an IED. It was later dispersed in accordance with protocol, SSP Sohail Qasim Mir told India Today. Another

IED was discovered near Safapora in the Ganderbal area of Kashmir on the same day. The IED was found and defused in a matter of hours by the army’s bomb detecting squad (BDS) and J&K police.In the past week, North Kashmir has seen the detection of three IEDs. IEDs were discovered in Baramulla and on Tangmarag Road on Thursday. The development follows security authorities’ warnings of a potential Lashkar terror plot targeting Delhi’s tourism and religious attractions.According to sources, the group lead by Hafiz Saeed was purportedly trying to exact revenge for the suicide explosion that occurred at a mosque in Islamabad on February 6 and killed over thirty people. Nonetheless, the attack was attributed to the Islamic State. In particular, the intelligence inputs have indicated that one of

the possible targets may be a shrine in the Chandni Chowk neighborhood of Old Delhi. Terrorists may be plotting an IED strike in and around important areas, such as the Red Fort, as part of the conspiracy.Three months ago, the Red Fort was the target of a terrible car explosion that killed twelve people and injured more than twenty others close to the famous tourist destination. The explosion was carried out by a white-collar terror module supported by Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind and the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).The United Nations counter-terrorism monitoring team recently discovered a connection between Jaish and the Red Fort explosion.Security has been tightened around the Red Fort and key temples and marketplaces in the nation’s capital in response to the most recent alarm.

# FIH Men's Pro League: India lose 0-2 to Spain in Hobart opener, starting campaign with defeat



**New Delhi:** The Indian men's hockey team suffered a 0-2 defeat against Spain in a closely contested encounter, with the Spanish side capitalising on their chances while India were unable to convert promising opportunities despite sustained attacking intent. Goals from Ignacio Cobos (36'), one in each half, proved decisive as Spain combined clinical finishing with disciplined defending to secure the win, according to a Hockey India release. India began the match with sharp, quick passing, looking to control possession early, but Spain's counter-attacking approach proved effective. Ignacio Abajo (6') capitalised on one such move, neatly deflecting the ball into the net to hand Spain an early lead. Unfazed by the setback, India stayed committed to their structure, circulat-

ing the ball swiftly through midfield and probing Spain's defence with intent. The Indian team created multiple promising openings and nearly found the equaliser towards the end of the quarter when Abhishek fired a powerful strike, only to be denied by an excellent save from Spanish goalkeeper Luis Calzado. The second quarter produced end-to-end action, with both teams showing attacking intent and creating chances but failing to convert. Spain earned their second penalty corner of the match in the 24th minute; however, Indian goalkeeper Suraj Karkera stood tall to make a crucial save and prevent Spain from extending their lead. In the closing minutes of the first half, Spain applied sustained pressure on India's defence, but the Indian side absorbed it well before launching quick counter-at-

tacks of their own, including a promising circle entry that put Spain under pressure. Despite both teams pushing for a goal, neither could find the net, and Spain carried a slender 1-0 advantage into halftime. Soon after the restart, Suraj Karkera produced a brilliant save as Spain came out aggressively, determined to extend their advantage. Their pressure eventually paid off when Ignacio Cobos (36') struck from close range after finding himself unmarked inside the circle to double Spain's lead. Buoyed by the goal, Spain continued to press high and earned five penalty corners towards the latter stages of the third quarter, but India's defence held firm with disciplined and courageous defending to deny any further damage. The penultimate quarter concluded with Spain leading 2-0. Eager to stage a comeback, India began the fourth and final quarter on the front foot, spending sustained periods inside Spain's circle and eventually earning their first penalty corner of the match, though they were unable to convert the opportunity. At the other end, Indian goalkeeper Honnenahalli Shashikumar Mohith produced an impressive save in a one-on-one situation to prevent Spain from extending their lead. With four minutes remaining, India withdrew their goalkeeper to add an extra outfield player in search of a breakthrough, increasing the pressure on Spain's defence. However, despite their late push, India could not find the back of the net as the match concluded with Spain securing a 2-0 victory. India will next take on hosts Australia in their second game of the Hobart leg of the FIH Men's Pro League 2025-26 on Sunday.

# Super 8s showdown: England face Sri Lanka as fierce battle for spin bowling supremacy takes center stage

## Sri Lanka chase advantage, England seek momentum

**Pallekele:** A battle for spin-bowling supremacy is on the cards as England look to draw inspiration from their recent series whitewash of Sri Lanka when the two sides clash in a Super Eight match of the T20 World Cup here on Saturday. England had beaten Sri Lanka 3-0 in their T20I series here earlier this month and they would be happy to return to the island nation for the Super Eight match, having played all their group games in India. The two-time champions are, however, yet to convince at this T20 World Cup, with three nervy victories against associate nations and a loss at the hands of former champions West Indies. Co-hosts Sri Lanka began with wins over Ireland and Oman, and were at their best against Australia, whom they beat by eights wickets while chasing 182 here. The Lankans, however, lost their momentum, losing to giant-killers Zimbabwe in their last group match in Colombo on Thursday. It will be a fresh start for both the sides with Sri Lanka looking to cash in on the home advantage while England would be looking to pick up steam



in the tournament at a place where they had done well less than a month back. For Sri Lanka, Pathum Nissanka would be looking to continue his top form at the venue where he had hit 100 not out in the win against Australia. He is among the three centurions in this T20 World Cup and is at the second spot among highest run getters so far. Kusal Mendis has also been in good touch with three half centuries in four matches and he would be one of the key Sri Lankan batters the England bowlers would want to target. England batters, meanwhile, have been struggling so far with Jacob Bethell the best among them with 143 runs from four matches with one half century. The form of captain Harry

Brook and senior player Jos Buttler will be crucial for England's success. In the bowling department, off-spinner Maheesh Theekshana has been the best Sri Lankan bowler with six wickets from four matches. Sri Lanka were dealt a blow after pacer Matheesha Pathirana was ruled out of the rest of the tournament on the eve of Thursday's defeat to Zimbabwe. Dilshan Madushanka, who replaced Pathirana in the squad, conceded just 20 runs from his three overs against Zimbabwe. Seamer Dushmantha Chameera is set to return to the side after being rested for the final group game. England would be looking up to the spin duo of Adil Rashid and Liam Dawson, as well on pacer Jofra

Archer to get wickets. Veteran Rashid, one of the best leg-spinners in the world currently, has taken six wickets from four matches -- the same as Archer -- and he could be the England trump card once again on Sunday. Dawson has been reasonably economical till now while Rashid had one outstanding game against West Indies (2 for 16 in four overs) but was otherwise expensive, taking a combined 4 for 121 in 11 overs against Associate opposition. Conditions should also favour England's part-time options with the likes of Will Jacks and Bethell in the side. Both played vital roles with the ball in England's 3-0 series win earlier this month on a slow, used surface here. The match could also be disrupted as there is prediction of rain in the afternoon. Adil Rashid's triple strike set up the contest before Tom Banton's unbeaten half century guided England to a crucial five-wicket win over Scotland, keeping their Super Eights hopes alive in the T20 World Cup, here on Saturday. In their must-win Group C clash after their shock loss to West Indies, two-time cham England.

# Indian squad officially announced for 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup hosted in Australia

**New Delhi:** The Indian senior women's team's 26-member squad for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026 has been announced. Placed in Group C, India will begin their campaign against Vietnam on March 4 at the Perth Rectangular Stadium at 16:30 IST, followed by a meeting against Japan on March 7 at the same time and venue. The last group stage match will be against Chinese Taipei on March 10 at the Western Sydney Stadium at 14:30 IST, as per a press release from the All India Football Federation (AIFF).



Via the Play-off Tournament. After a four-week camp in Türkiye, the Blue Tigresses arrived in Perth on February 11. Among the 26 players in the squad, eight were part of the last Asian Cup that was hosted by India in 2022 -- Sweetie Devi Ngangbam, Shilky Devi Hemam, Sanju, Anju Tamang, Pyari Xaxa, Grace Dangmei, Manisha Kalyan and Sowmiya Narayanasamy. However, India had to withdraw from the tournament after just one game due to a COVID outbreak. In the squad that will battle it out in Australia, there Are six potential debutants

Who are yet to be capped for India -- defenders Sarita Yumnam and Sushmita Lepcha, midfielders Jasoda Munda, Sanfida Nongrum and Aveka Singh, and forward Kaviya Pakkirisamy. Grace Dangmei is the highest-capped player and top-scorer in India's squad with 23 goals in 91 appearances. Born in 1995, Anju Tamang is the seniormost player at 30 years old. As she was in the 2022 edition, Shilky Devi Hemam is the youngest in the Indian squad, now 20 years old. Sanfida Nongrum and Aveka Singh, Pakkirisamy.

# Smriti Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues power India to 176 runs in Adelaide T20I cricket clash



**Adelaide:** Smriti Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues helped India post 176/6 in the third and final match of the ongoing India vs Australia Women's T20I series at the Adelaide Oval on Saturday. India won the toss and opted to bat first. Mandhana and

Shafali opened the innings for the Women in Blue as the Aussie pacer Darcie Brown faced difficulty in finding her rhythm in the opening over, bowling four wides and was smashed for a boundary by Smriti Mandhana with a cover drive. India were off to a de-

cent start as they found themselves at 14/0 in two overs. However, they lost their first wicket in the form of Shafali with India 19/1 in 2.4 overs. Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues made good use of the powerplay and took the team total to 54/1 after the first six

overs. In the last over of the power play, Sophie Molineux went for 14 runs. The duo kept the run rate up after the power play ended with India in a commanding position after 10 overs at a score of 86/1. Mandhana brought up her fifty in 38 balls with a six to Brown in the 12th over. In the 15th over, Jemimah was dropped by Phoebe Litchfield at extra cover, though she made a diving effort. At the end of the 15th over, India were at 127-1. Mandhana's innings came to an end after she had hit a six on the first ball of the 16th over by Annabel Sutherland. Mandhana scored 82 runs in 55 balls.

The opener looked exceptional throughout the innings, finding boundaries in almost every over. Despite a slow start, she ended her innings with a strike rate of 149.09, which included eight fours and three sixes. Richa Ghosh continued the momentum after Mandhana's dismissal. Jemimah reached her half-century in 41 balls.

# East Bengal, Jamshedpur chase wins

**Kolkata:** Gameweek 2 of Indian Super League 2025-26 continues with a Saturday double-header as East Bengal FC face Sporting Club Delhi at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK) in Kolkata on Saturday. Later in the evening, Jamshedpur FC hosts Punjab FC at the JRD Tata Sports Complex, with the kick-off scheduled for 19:00 IST, as per an ISL press release. East Bengal FC come to this match after a commanding 3-0 victory over North-East United FC in their season opener at the same venue. Youssef Ezzejari struck twice, and Miguel Ferreira scored the other to seal the win for the Red and Gold Brigade. Speaking ahead of the match, East Bengal FC head coach Oscar Bruzon said, "SC Delhi are not an unknown side for us. They have a clear playing identity, a coach who believes in possession football and building from the back, and a group of young, will come here game.

# Neymar hints at possible retirement in 2026, while keeping hopes alive for FIFA World Cup comeback

**Santos:** Brazil star Neymar has admitted that he could retire from professional football at the end of 2026, as he battles persistent injury challenges while keeping his sights on representing his country at the FIFA World Cup later this year. The 34-year-old, who returned to his roots with Santos after spells at Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain, is enjoying football again following surgery on a long-standing knee issue in December 2025. He previously missed an entire season due to anterior cruciate ligament damage. Neymar's contract with the Brazilian club has been extended through the end of the calendar year. Neymar said, "I don't know what the future holds for me. It's possible that in December I'll want to retire. I'm living day by day. This year is crucial, not only for Santos, but also for the Brazilian national team and for me," as quoted by goal.com.



this. Of course, I wanted to come back to help my team, but in the end, I preferred to rest myself so I could come back at 100%, pain-free, fear-free, and in top form. "I managed to come back well in the last match. I'm happy and relieved to be back a little stronger than before. Obviously, I need to get Back into my rhythm, but with perseverance, I'll reach 100%. I'm taking it step by step. I don't know what the future holds; my instincts will decide. One day at a time." Neymar, Brazil's all-time leading scorer with 79 goals in 128 appearances, has not featured for the

Selecao since October 2023. Securing a recall for the World Cup remains a top priority for the mercurial Forward, with national coach Carlo Ancelotti reportedly monitoring his progress closely. Brazil, drawn in Group C at the 2026 World Cup, will kick off their campaign against Morocco at MetLife Stadium on June 13, before taking on Haiti and Scotland in Philadelphia and Miami, respectively. With the World Cup looming, Neymar's focus remains firmly on fitness and performance, while his long-term career plans remain undecided. After going 0-2

down in the game, FC Goa looked to bounce back, with the Spanish head coach making some tactical tweaks to their game plan. With a mid-field-heavy formation to cut down Al Nassr's quick transitions through the middle of the park, Borja Herrera and Co. gradually found their footing in the game, resulting in substitute Fernandes finding his name on the scoresheet. Fernandes received a through ball from Herrera and beat his marker with a quick run inside the box. . Despite being surrounded by FC Goa defenders inside the penalty box, the striker This was also the first goal Al-Nassr conceded in ACL. According to sources, the GCDA executive committee has now revised the rent to Rs 4.2 lakh per match, up from the Rs 2 lakh figure announced earlier. The new agreement reflecting the revised amount is yet to be formalized, triggering the latest standoff between the two sides. Only a week ago, GCDA and the club had jointly addressed the media at the same venue, where GCDA chairman K. Chandran Pillai announced that the rent had been reduced to Rs 2 lakh from the previous Rs 8.4 lakh, citing the club's financial constraints due to the delayed ISL season.

# Floyd Mayweather ending retirement returning to pro boxing this summer



**Los Angeles:** Mayweather, who turns 49 on Tuesday, hasn't fought in a real boxing match since 2017, when he beat Conor McGregor. Following that big-money bout against a mixed martial artist, Mayweather (50-0, 27 KOs) declared himself retired for the third time in his career. The former five-division world champion has still been in the ring regularly throughout his 40s with a series of lucrative exhibition bouts against The likes of online Influencer Loan Paul, YouTuber Mikuri Asakura and John Gotti III, the grandson of the infamous mafia boss. Mayweather al-

ready has announced yet another exhibition coming up this spring against 59-year-old Mike Tyson, although no location or television partner has been confirmed. But Mayweather says he is also returning to real ring competition this year under a promotional deal with CSI Sports/Fight Sports. "I still have what it takes to set more records in the sport of boxing," Mayweather said in a statement. "From my upcoming Mike Tyson event to my next professional fight afterwards, no one will generate a bigger gate, have a larger global broadcast audience and

generate more money with each event (than) my events." Mayweather spent more than a decade as arguably the biggest American star in boxing, and he beat Manny Pacquiao in 2015 in the richest fight in boxing history at the time. His superb defensive skills and quick hands were his ring strengths, but his stardom and wealth proliferated largely because of his "Money May" antihero persona. Mayweather has flaunted his extravagant lifestyle online practically since the invention of social media, but he filed a lawsuit earlier this year against Showtime Networks and Stephen Espinoza, fight of his comeback. Ruslan Provodnikov in Las Vegas on his comeback. Returning after a year away from international action and a draining battle with Hepatitis A, Preeti Pawar marked her comeback in style, securing a medal for India at the World Boxing Cup Finals here on Sunday. The 22-year-old defeated fellow Hangzhou Asian Games bronze medallist Nigina Uktamova of Uzbekistan by unanimous category.