

In Brief

Conrad Sangma Travels Calls for Peace Following Garo Hills Violence

Shillong: Conrad K. Sangma, the chief minister of Meghalaya, visited a number of locations in Tura on Thursday to evaluate the harm done to both public and private properties as a result of the recent turmoil in the Garo Hills. He also urged the populace to uphold harmony and peace. The chief minister examined the situation in various areas of the town where reports of destruction and vandalism following the violence were made while he was there. Sangma remarked that seeing the amount of the harm done to residences, businesses, and other properties was upsetting. The chief minister shared his thoughts on X, saying, “It is truly heartbreaking to see the scale of destruction and the losses suffered by individuals and businesses.” Earlier in the day, Sangma also held a meeting with party leaders and workers in Garo Hills to discuss ways to restore peace and rebuild trust among different communities in the region.

Manipur Police register 3 FIRs after poppy field incident

Imphal: Following a number of occurrences in the Ukhrul district, including the burning of houses at a poppy production site, gunfire between armed groups, and the imprisonment of civilians, Manipur Police said that three different FIRs had been filed. Two Kuki poppy cultivators were arrested after huts at a poppy growing location in the Thawai Kuki Hill Range, also known as the Mapithel Hill Range, were allegedly set on fire early on March 11. “Huts at a poppy cultivation site in the Thawai Kuki Hill Range (Mapithel Hill Range) were reportedly burned in the morning of 11.03.2026, and two Kuki poppy cultivators were detained,” the police continued.

Tripura Budget Session From March 13 to 25

Agartala: Tripura’s Legislative Assembly Budget Session is set from March 13 to March 25, as announced by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ratan Lal Nath. Governor Indra Sena Reddy Nallu will address the House on the opening day, along with an obituary for former Speaker Bishwa Bandhu Sen. Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy will unveil the budget for 2026-27 on March 16, including revised estimates for 2025-26. The session will introduce significant bills for higher education, proposing a Health Sciences University, a Technical University, and a Women’s University. Discussions on the Governor’s address will start on March 18, with the Opposition leader joining the budget debate on March 19.

Amit Shah will speak at the “Yuva Shakti Samaroh” event in Guwahati

Guwahati, Mar 15: As preparations for the approaching “Yuva Shakti Samaroh,” a large-scale youth rally that is set to take place at the Veterinary College Playground in Khanapara, Guwahati, intensify, Assam will host a huge youth mobilization program. Amit Shah, the Union Home Minister of India, will speak at the rally, which is anticipated to attract about 1.5 lakh young people from all over Assam, making it one of the biggest youth events in the state in recent memory.

Assam Minister Pijush Hazarika called the gathering a potentially historic occasion in the political landscape of the state in remarks made prior to the event. He claimed that Assam has seldom seen such a large-scale youth mobilization. Hazarika noted that in his nearly three decades of involvement with



youth organisations, he has never seen preparations of such magni-

tude. According to him, the scale of planning and participation reflects

the growing enthusiasm and political engagement among the youth

of the state. The event is being organised by the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, the youth wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party, under its Assam Pradesh unit. Apart from Shah, the rally will also be attended by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma along with several senior party leaders.

Political observers view the large-scale youth outreach programme as a significant show of strength by the ruling party in the state. The gathering is expected to highlight the party’s efforts to mobilise young voters and expand its organisational base among the youth ahead of future political contests in the region. With thousands of participants expected to arrive from various districts, security and logistical preparations are being intensified around the Khanapara venue to ensure the smooth conduct of the event.

Tripura BJP meets its core committee

Agartala, Mar 15: In order to discuss the upcoming by-election for the Dharmanagar Assembly constituency, the elections for the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), and other organizational issues, such as choosing the next Speaker, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in Tripura convened a core committee meeting on March 12 at the state party office in Agartala. After Speaker Biswabandhu Sen passed away in February of this year, the Dharmanagar Assembly seat became vacant. Chief Minister Manik Saha, state BJP president and MP Rajib Bhat-tacharya, former MPs Rebati Tripura and Pratima Bhoumik, ministers Ratan Lal Nath and Pranajit Singha Roy, party leader Rajdeep Roy, and BJP state general secretaries Bipin Debbarma and Bhagaban Das were among those present. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Chief Minister Manik Saha said the party discussed preparations for the upcoming elections and prepared a list of probable candidates. He said deliberations were held on several names and the final list would be sent to the party’s central leadership for a decision. “The by-election for the Dharmanagar Assembly constituency and the election to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council are approaching. In the meeting we discussed preparing a list of probable candidates and our political strategy. Many names have come up and we will send the list to the Centre, which will take the final decision,” Saha said.

Nagaland aims to operationalize 19 EMRS projects by the next year

Kohima, Mar 15: On March 12, the Nagaland government told the Assembly that it is working to operationalize at least 19 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) that are currently under construction around the state by the following year. Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio stated that the state’s EMRS projects fall under both the old and new phases of the centrally financed plan in response to a pointed question posed by JD(U) MLA Jwanga Seb. According to Rio, the Department of Tribal Affairs is carrying out the new phase of the plan, whereas the Planning Department carried out the previous phase.

The chief minister gave specifics, stating that the

EMRS at Phenshuny in Tseminyu district had made more than 96% financial development and over 75% physical progress under the previous plan. Meanwhile, the EMRS at Kade in Phek district has recorded about 60 per cent physical progress, with full financial progress already completed. Both projects are expected to be completed by next month, he added. Under the new phase of the scheme, EMRS projects are currently under construction at Chiechama in Kohima district, Tuli in Mokokchung district, Pelhang in Peren district, Vidima in Dimapur district, Riphym in Wokha district and Phelungre in Kiphire district. According to the chief minister, these projects



have recorded physical progress ranging from about 33 per cent to over 60 per cent and are expected to be completed by December 2027. Rio further informed the House that additional EMRS projects are being implemented by the Department of Tribal Affairs in several other locations, including Watiyim, Longwa, Tening,

Longsa, Noklak, Noksen, Akhakhu, Japu, Botsa, Tam-lu and Yimjenkimong. The Eklavya Model Residential Schools are aimed at providing quality residential education to students from Scheduled Tribe communities in remote areas, with a focus on improving access to modern education while preserving indigenous culture.

Arunachal Pradesh’s 2026–2027 budget is Rs 36,607 crore, including a Rs 701 crore deficit

Itanagar, Mar 15: Chowna Mein, the deputy chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh, presented the state assembly with a deficit budget of Rs 701.43 crore for the 2026–2027 fiscal year on Tuesday. The total estimates were set at Rs 36,607 crore, a decrease of roughly 8.1% from Rs 39,842 crore in 2025–2026. Mein, who also oversees the Finance, Planning, and Investment portfolios, blamed the decrease mostly on a lack of central allocation in response to the 16th Finance Commission’s recommendations about horizontal devolution. We have prepared a budget for the state’s development that is growth-oriented and people-centric, notwithstanding the shortfall,” he stated. The budget has been structured around six major priority areas, each with dedicated allocations. Strengthening foundations receives



the second-largest allocation at Rs 2,038 crore, covering roads and connectivity, hydropower, border power infrastructure, electricity transmission and distribution, solar energy, and the state’s surrender and rehabilitation policy. People-centric development draws the largest allocation at Rs 3,320 crore, covering health infrastructure, public health, school and early childhood education, higher education, skill development, and support for girls and youth. Sustaining economic growth gets Rs 630 crore, targeting oil palm cultivation, millet promotion, diversified high-value farming, tourism, and the wine economy. Entrepreneurship and employment receives Rs 307 crore, focused on the Arun MSME Mission, large and medium industry promotion, skill development for working women, and startup support.

The company disputes its role in the assault on the Arunachal highway project

Itanagar, Mar 15: Jhandu Infratech has denied any involvement in an alleged assault incident that was reported from a highway construction site in the Lower Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh. The business claims that the conflict was unrelated to the company and was a personal dispute between two private persons. According to reports, the event happened at a Hunli project site run by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corpo-

ration Limited. For the infrastructure project, Jhandu Infratech has been hired as a private contractor. The corporation apologized for the incident in a statement released following the scandal, but made it clear that the project site regrettably became the scene of a personal argument between two people. The business added that a mutually acceptable resolution has been reached by the parties. “As a law-abiding company that strictly adheres to all compliance and workplace

rules, we would like to state that the person accused in the incident has no association with Jhandu Infratech, as has been wrongly reported in certain sections of the media,” the company stated. However, several labourers working at the site—many of them from Assam—have alleged that the incident began after a worker approached the office of the company’s managing director seeking an advance payment of Rs 10,000. According to the workers, the labourer had requested



the advance due to an urgent medical situation involving his mother in his home village. Workers claimed that after the request was allegedly denied, a heated confrontation broke out and the labourer was reportedly assaulted by four to five men, sustaining injuries to his head and ears.

PM Modi to launch development projects worth nearly Rs 48,000 crore during two-day Assam visit

Guwahati, Mar 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate, lay foundation stones and launch several development projects worth nearly ₹48,000 crore during his two-day visit to Assam beginning today. The projects will be rolled out across Kokrajhar, Guwahati and Silchar and are expected to strengthen infrastructure, connectivity, energy supply and industrial growth in the state and the wider Northeast region. The Prime Minister will begin his visit in Kokrajhar on March 13, where he will perform bhoomi poojan, lay foundation stones and flag off projects valued at more than ₹4,570 crore. One of the key projects is a Wagon Repairing Factory at Bashbari in Kokrajhar district, to be developed at an estimated cost of ₹256 crore under the Bodo Peace Accord. The facility will come up on around 2,200 bigha of land and is expected to strengthen railway infrastructure and create employment opportunities in the Bodoland Territorial Region. Modi will also launch the Asom Mala 3.0 programme worth over ₹3,200 crore. Under the initiative, more than 900 km of roads will be built across Assam to improve connectivity between national highways, district roads and rural areas. Officials said the programme will also help improve inter-state transport links and ease travel across different parts of the state. In addition, the Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone for six road projects in the Bodoland Territorial Region. These include four flyovers and two bridges, with a total estimated cost of around ₹1,100 crore. The projects are expected to improve traffic movement and connectivity in several key areas of the region. During the Kokrajhar programme, Modi will also flag off three train services—the Kamakhya–Charlapalli Amrit Bharat Express, the Narangi–Agartala Express and the Guwahati–New Jalpaiguri Express—which are expected to improve rail connectivity between Assam and other parts of the country. Later in the day, the Prime Minister will travel to Guwahati where he will launch and in-



augurate projects worth about ₹19,680 crore. As part of the programme, he will distribute land pattas to tea garden workers, providing homestead land rights to members of the tea garden community. Officials said the move will help improve housing security and enable tea garden families to access institutional credit and government welfare schemes. From Guwahati, Modi will also release the 22nd instalment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi to more than 9.3 crore farmers across the country.

Under the scheme, eligible farmers receive ₹2,000 directly in their bank accounts as financial assistance. Among the major infrastructure projects, the Prime Minister will dedicate the Kopili Hydro-Electric Project built at a cost of over ₹2,300 crore in Dima Hasao and West Karbi Anglong districts. The project is expected to boost clean energy generation and improve power supply across the region. He will also inaugurate the capacity enhancement project of the Numaligarh–Siliguri product pipeline of Oil India Limited, which will support the expansion of Numaligarh Refinery Limited from 3 MMT-PA to 9 MMT-PA. Another major project to be launched is Phase-I of the North East Gas Grid connecting Guwahati with Numaligarh, Gohpur and Itanagar, along with a branch line extending to Dimapur. Officials said the project will strengthen the region’s gas infrastruc-

ture and support industrial and domestic gas supply. In the railway sector, the Prime Minister will inaugurate electrification projects on several important routes including Rangiya–Murkongselek, Chaparmukh–Dibrugarh, Badarpur–Silchar and Badarpur–Churaibari. He will also lay the foundation stone for the doubling of the Furkating–Tinsukia railway line, a 194-km project estimated to cost over ₹3,600 crore. The project is expected to increase rail capacity and improve freight and passenger movement. Other initiatives include the foundation stones for cruise terminals at Biswanath Ghat in Biswanath district and Neamati in Jorhat. A Regional Centre of Excellence for maritime training and research will also be set up at Bogibee in Dibrugarh. The Prime Minister will further lay the foundation stone for a ropeway project connecting Kamakhya Railway Station with the Kamakhya Temple. The ropeway system will be able to transport around 17,000 passengers daily and is expected to improve access to the temple. In addition, Modi will inaugurate the PM Ekta Mall in Guwahati, which is being developed as a commercial and tourism hub showcasing One District One Product items, GI-tagged products and traditional handicrafts and handloom goods from across the country. On March 14, the Prime Minister will visit Silchar where he will launch development projects worth about ₹23,550 crore.

NE/EAST

The Tripura BJP administration kept the majority of its 2018 election pledges

CM Manik Saha



Agartala, Mar 15: Dr. Manik Saha, the chief minister of Tripura, stated on Monday that the BJP government in the state is offering what he called a model of good governance and has delivered the majority of the promises made to the people during the 2018 Assembly elections. Speaking at a public event in Bardhaman, West Bengal, Saha stated that the BJP made a

number of promises when it came to power in Tripura in 2018 and has worked to carry out most of them. He claims that the government's belief in keeping its word has contributed to the development of public confidence.

According to the Chief Minister, the BJP-led government has prioritized development projects, transparent administration, and welfare

programs meant to enhance the state's citizens' quality of life. He further claimed that various policies and programmes introduced by the government have helped speed up development and strengthen governance. Highlighting governance initiatives, Saha said Tripura is the only state in the country to have implemented the e-filing e-governance project from the Panchayat level to the Legislative Assembly. He also said that the BJP follows the principle of "what we say, we do," adding that the party's governance in Tripura reflects this approach. Referring to the experience of the state under the BJP government, Saha urged people in West Bengal to consider this model while exercising their democratic rights. With Assembly elections approaching in West Bengal, the Tripura Chief Minister called on voters to support BJP candidates.

MLAs are urged by the Mizoram Assembly Speaker to preserve the Assembly's dignity



Aizawl, Mar 15: On March 9, Mizoram Assembly Speaker Lalbiakzama urged all members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to preserve decorum and respect the House's dignity. The plea follows recent tense confron-

tations between opposition parties and members of the ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) on divisive issues, such as a proposed land agreement between the Indian Air Force and the state government for the establishment of a

base close to Lengpui airport.

Addressing the House before the Question Hour during the ongoing budget session, Lalbiakzama reminded members of the Assembly's prestigious reputation, noting that Mizoram's legislative proceedings are often held up as a benchmark for peace and excellence among Indian states.

"While members enjoy specific rights and privileges within the House, those rights are inseparable from their responsibilities," he said, cautioning that reckless or disorderly behaviour undermines both the institution and the public it represents. The Speaker urged MLAs to respect their duties and conduct themselves responsibly, preserving the Assembly's long-standing legacy as one of the country's most "outstanding" legislative bodies. Lalbiakzama's remarks underline the importance of parliamentary decorum, especially during debates on sensitive issues, and serve as a reminder that the dignity of the House depends on the conduct of its members.

Assam CM Distributes Appointment Letters in Education and Power Sectors

Guwahati, Mar 15: At a program in Khanapara on Thursday, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma gave employment letters to 5,690 applicants in the Education and Power sectors, initiating yet another round of hiring by the Assamese government. The Chief Minister's Office of Assam claims that the state government's attempt to guarantee open and merit-based hiring in government posts includes the issuance of appointment letters. With the most recent appointments, 1,64,359 government jobs have been created during the current administration. "With this, the total number of government jobs provided during this tenure has risen to an impressive 1,64,359, reflecting a strong dedication towards empowering the youth and building a #ViksitAssam," the Assam CMO added. Speaking about the development, the chief minister said the current government has worked to end corruption in the recruitment process, which had earlier been a



matter of concern.

"The 2021-2026 job season concludes. Government recruitments in Assam were marred with corruption during the Congress era. Today, I humbly state that not only have we eliminated corruption in government recruitments but also given 1.64 lakh jobs against our promise of one lakh jobs," Sarma said in a post on social media. He also thanked

the people of the state, particularly the youth, for supporting the government's initiatives and believing in merit-based opportunities. The chief minister further said that the government will continue its focus on employment generation in the coming years. He expressed confidence that the next term, from 2026 to 2031, would bring around two lakh government job opportuni-

ties through what he described as corruption-free recruitment. "To them, I promise again today, the 2026-2031 season will bring in 2 lakh CORRUPTION FREE Govt job opportunities," he added. The recruitment drive is part of the state government's broader initiative aimed at strengthening public services while creating employment opportunities for young people in Assam.

Assam Police threatens to take legal action in response to LPG rumors



Guwahati, Mar 15: On March 12, Assam Police issued a warning that anyone who spreads false information about LPG and other petroleum product shortages in the state will face severe legal repercussions. Assam Police stated in a post on X that there will be severe legal repercussions for anyone trying to spread false information about shortages

of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), gasoline, diesel, and other petroleum supplies. Additionally, the police warned people not to believe or propagate such accusations, claiming that "inimical elements" would attempt to disseminate false information in order to instill fear among the populace. The warning was issued one day after Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota stated that the state's local refineries can now only supply roughly 30% of Assam's LPG demand, prompting concerns about a potential shortage in the days ahead. The state government has

established a special media monitoring committee to keep tabs on rumors, false claims, and misleading news that can confuse customers in order to prevent panic and misinformation. According to Kota, the state administration has already asked all four of Assam's refineries to boost output in order to guarantee a steady supply of LPG to customers. The chief secretary, along with Assam Director General of Police Harmeet Singh, officials from the Food and Civil Supplies Department and representatives of oil marketing companies, also participated in a video con-

ference with Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan. The meeting included chief secretaries and DGPs from various states and Union territories to review the availability and supply of LPG and diesel across the country. During the meeting, the State Level Coordinator of Indian Oil Corporation reviewed the LPG supply position in Assam and said that the overall situation remains comfortable and that adequate stock of LPG is currently available in the state. Assam has four refineries — three operated by Indian Oil Corporation at Digboi, Guwahati and Bon-

gaigaon, and another run by Numaligarh Refinery Limited at Numaligarh. According to official data, the Northeast requires around 1.91 lakh domestic LPG cylinders of 14.2 kg every day. Of this, Assam alone accounts for the consumption of about 1.34 lakh cylinders daily. In the commercial segment of 19 kg cylinders, the Northeast market requires around 5,777 units per day, including about 4,112 units in Assam. Authorities reiterated that there is no immediate cause for concern and urged people to rely only on official information regarding fuel supply.

Manipur Census Protest Turns Tense at Ima Market

Imphal, Mar 15: Under the banner of the Just and Fair Delimitation (JFD) organization, protesters from all over Manipur gathered at Ima Market in Imphal on Wednesday to voice their opposition to the state's ongoing census process. The rally became confrontational when police used tear gas shells to scatter the throng. According to reports, the incident injured five demonstrators.

The JFD is calling for a "Just and Fair Census" in addition to an open delimitation procedure, according to Naorem Wangamba, Assistant Secretary (Organization).

The group's main demand is that 1951 be used as the basis cut-off year for determining



citizenship and that the current census be postponed until illegal immigrants are correctly detected. Wangamba warned that if the census proceeds without first segregating illegal immigrants from bona fide Indian

citizens, there is a risk that undocumented residents could end up being inadvertently legalised — a move he said would violate both constitutional principles and factual ground realities. Wangamba noted that JFD had already submitted a memorandum to the Union Home Minister on December 15, 2025, urging the Centre to postpone the census in Manipur until illegal immigrants are detected and the state's ongoing conflict is resolved.

Nagaland targets 5,000 skilled youth to set up yarn bank for weavers

Kohima, Mar 15: Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio stated on March 10 that the Nagaland government is attempting to create a Yarn Bank that will provide local weavers with high-quality yarn at reasonable prices, lowering production costs and sustaining the manufacture of traditional Naga textile patterns in larger markets. Rio continued his discussion of MSME development at the eighth session of the 14th NLA by stating that the state was looking at provisions to guarantee that a portion of government procurement came from indigenous MSME enterprises and was encouraging cluster-based development and value addition in food processing, handicrafts, handloom, and agro-based industries. On the skilling front, the Nagaland Skill and Entrepreneurship Development Mission had

enrolled 3,091 candidates in training as of February 2026, with 2,365 having completed programmes and 495 currently undergoing training. The government aimed to skill 5,000 youth in total. Under the RAMP initiative, the state was working to enhance MSME competitiveness through capacity building, registration drives and buyer-seller meets. The PM Vishwakarma Scheme had received over 25,000 artisan applications, with training and financial assistance being facilitated. Nagaland ranked third among small states in the Export Preparedness Index 2024. Coffee from the state was being exported to the UAE, with demand growing from Bahrain, Europe, South Korea, Singapore and Japan. Pineapples and processed king chilli were also reaching international markets. Rio acknowledged



that access to credit, bank approvals and market linkages remained challenges, and said the government would continue working with banks and district industries centres to support entrepreneurs. He asked legislators to encourage youth in their constituencies to explore enterprise opportunities, and said the government would keep focusing on improving the ease of doing business, strengthening financial support systems and promoting innovation so that MSMEs could grow into sustainable and competitive enterprises.

Gaurav Gogoi suggests a meeting with the chief minister of Jharkhand



Guwahati, Mar 15: Assam Congress President Gaurav Gogoi indicated a potential courtesy meeting with Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, following Soren's interest in Assam's electoral politics. Gogoi expressed the importance of private discussions and noted that Soren had visited Assam recently to promote tribal unity. Gogoi is in Jharkhand to strengthen the Congress strategy for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, supported by

AICC's appointment of Bandhu Tirkey as a senior observer to address local issues.

Meanwhile, senior Congress leader Pawan Khara revealed ongoing seat-sharing negotiations with allies, asserting that the party's confidence is based on ground realities against alleged corruption by Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma. Assam's elections are approaching, with the BJP aiming for a third term and Congress seeking to regain power.

A bill to involve village authorities in urban development is approved by the Nagaland assembly

Kohima, Mar 15: The Nagaland Town and Country Planning (Fifth Amendment) Bill, 2025, which strengthened rules for urban and peri-urban development and included village administrations in the state's town planning framework, was enacted by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly on March 10. Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio tabled the bill on Monday with the intention of formalizing the function of traditional village institutions in the planning of areas covered by peri-urban or notified master plans. The amendment defines a "town planning scheme" as a layout plan created under a master plan or a peri-urban plan for a designated region within a planning zone.

The plan will specify how that zone's land will be developed and used. Additionally, the law broadens the term of "Local Authority" to include village administrations situated in peri-urban or notified master plan regions. According to officials, the action formally incorporates traditional institutions into the process of urban planning. Twenty

to thirty percent of land under a town planning scheme must be set aside for public uses including roads, schools, hospitals, parks, and other municipal infrastructure, according to another important clause.

The amendment also mandates that the state government designate a qualified officer to supervise the planning and execution of a town planning scheme within a month of authorizing its preparation. The Nagaland Shops and Establishments Bill, 2025, which aims to control working conditions in stores, businesses, and public entertainment venues throughout the state, was also approved by the House. The law will initially apply to areas under Town Committees constituted under the Naga Hills District (Constitution of Town Committee) Rules, 1954, and will be extended to other areas later. Except for registration requirements, most compliance provisions will apply to establishments employing 20 or more workers.

The bill sets limits on working hours, stating that employees cannot be re-



quired to work for more than 10 hours a day or 48 hours a week. Overtime will be permitted within prescribed limits, with wages paid at twice the normal rate. It also mandates weekly holidays and provides for 16 days of privilege

leave after 12 months of service, along with 12 days each of medical and casual leave. Speaker Sharingain Longkumer put both bills to a vote after no member sought clarifications, and the House adopted them.

Meghalaya CM appeals for peace



Shillong , Mar 15: Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma of Meghalaya has issued a passionate appeal for peace amid rising tensions and unrest in the state, specifically urging citizens to resolve differences through dialogue instead of violence. Despite receiving intelligence about threats to his safety, Sangma chose to remain at his residence, asserting his determination and faith in divine protection. He reflected on the legacy of his late father, P. A. Sangma, as a source of inspiration for his commitment to serving the community. Concerned about recent acts of vandalism and property destruction, he condemned these actions as contrary to societal values and called for restraint. He emphasized that the resolution of the current situation relies on constructive engagement and unity, encouraging all citizens to prioritize the community's collective interests and restore harmony in Meghalaya.

The first oil ship to reach India arrives at the port of Mumbai after crossing the Strait of Hormuz

Mumbai, Mar 15: Amid increased tensions in the Middle East, an Indian-captained crude oil tanker flying the Liberian flag has arrived at Mumbai port after passing through the strategically important Strait of Hormuz. According to the Mumbai Port Trust, the tanker Shenlong Suezmax, which was transporting crude that had been loaded at Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura port, arrived in Mumbai on Wednesday after Iran gave the ship permission to cross the restricted strait. According to sources who spoke, Iran permitted Indian oil tankers to pass through the Strait of Hormuz after discussions between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Iranian colleague Abbas Araghchi. The Liberia-flagged tanker had departed Ras Tanura on March 1 before navigating



the sensitive corridor, news agency ANI reported. A large portion of the world's supplies of natural gas and crude oil pass through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the most important maritime chokepoints in the world. Since the US-Israel military assault against Tehran started on February 28, Iran has tightened control over the strait, heightening concerns about the world's oil supply. The third-largest oil consumer in the world, India, has been obliged to consider other options due to the route's impending shutdown, including boosting purchases from Russia. On Wednesday, the Shipping Ministry said that there are currently 28 ships flying the Indian flag in the Persian Gulf. Of them, four vessels with 101 Indian seafarers are east of the Strait of Hormuz, and 24 vessels with 677 Indian seafarers are west of the strait. The Indian ministry is closely monitoring the safety of its vessels and seafarers, operating a 24-hour control room since February 28. Recent events include the attack on a Thai vessel bound for Kandla port, which has prompted criticism from India. Since late February, Iran has attacked at least 16 ships as military operations from Israel and the U.S. began, with Tehran warning that oil prices may rise to \$200 per barrel.

12,478 students in Tripura to receive smartphones

Agartala, Mar 15: On Wednesday, March 11, the Tripura government released Rs 6.24 crore under the Mukhyamantri Yuba Yogayog Yojana (MYYY) for the Academic Year 2024-25, reaffirming its commitment to digital education. Pranajit Singha Roy, Minister for IT and Finance, Government of Tripura, officially launched the fund today at an event at the Secretariat, Agartala. Under the direction of Tripura Chief Minister Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha, the program seeks to empower students with better access to digital learning possibilities, according to officials from the Directorate of Information Technology. Through this scheme, 12,478 eligible final-year students from government colleges across the state will receive a smartphone grant of Rs 5,000 each, facilitating better access to online educational resources. The scheme is being implemented by the Directorate of Information Technology, Government of Tripura. For the current academic year, applications were invited from 1 November to 20 December 2025 following the formal launch by Chief Minister Dr.



Manik Saha on 28 October 2025. Out of the applications received from 40 government colleges, institutes, and universities, all 12,478 were found eligible. The programme was attended by senior officials, including Kiran Gitte, IAS, Secretary, IT, and Jeya Ragul Geshan B, IFS, Director, IT, along with DIT officials, IT Nodal Officers from colleges, and student representatives. Through initiatives like MYYY, the Tripura Government continues to prioritize digital education, ensuring that students across the state have the tools and resources needed to excel academically.

Tripura's TTPRASA chief minister will be chosen by the TTAADC election results following the 2028 elections

Pradyot Kishore Manikyadebbarma

Agartala, Mar 15: The supremo of the TIPRA Motha Party (TMP), Pradyot Kishore Manikyadebbarma, stated on March 11 that whether Tripura will have a tribal chief minister following the 2028 Assembly elections will depend on the results of the impending elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC). The current term of the tribal council is scheduled to expire on April 20, although the TTAADC election schedule has not yet been disclosed. Speaking at a party gathering in Killa, Gomati district, Debbarma stated that the results of the council elections will determine whether a tribal leader is appointed as the state's chief minister during the next Assembly elections. He alleged that a "secret deal" exists between the Bharatiya Janata Party and Manik Saha, claiming that the chief



minister is too weak to protect the rights of indigenous communities. Debbarma also accused the BJP of trying to weaken tribal institutions and alleged that funds meant for village committees have not been released. He claimed that the election of village committees has not been

held for several years, which he said has hampered development in tribal areas. The TMP leader further alleged that the BJP would spend significant resources to win the tribal council elections but urged voters not to be influenced by money power.

Rajnath Singh presents Defence Forces Vision 2047, which aims to overhaul the armed forces

New Delhi, Mar 15: Rajnath Singh, the minister of defense, unveiled an ambitious Defence Forces Vision 2047 on Tuesday. It outlines the organizational improvements, capabilities enhancement, and strategic reforms needed to support the armed forces. The Center's long-overdue theaterization of tri-services to meet the demands of modern warfare coincided with the release of the vision paper, which is in line with the government's goal of becoming Vaisit Bharat when India turns 100. In 2019, the Narendra Modi government came out with the theaterisation plan to ensure greater synergy among the three service chiefs to deal with security challenges and future wars. The three service chiefs have yet to arrive at a consensus on the proposed



theatre commands. The document, prepared over the last two years by Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, outlines the strategic reforms, capability enhancements and organi-

sational changes required within the defence forces to effectively address the evolving geostrategic, technological and security environment, the defence ministry said.

Assamese migrant laborers return ahead of elections due to the LPG situation in Kerala

Guwahati, Mar 15: An ongoing LPG shortage in Kerala is severely impacting the hospitality sector, leading to temporary shutdowns of restaurants and hotels, and causing many migrant workers, particularly from Assam and West Bengal, to return home ahead of upcoming elections. G Jayapal, Secretary of the Kerala Hotel and Restaurant Association, expressed concerns about the disruption caused, as many restaurant operators fear that if workers leave now, they may not return until after the elections. Binoy Peter from the Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development highlighted that around 50% of

Kerala's migrant workforce comes from these eastern states. With hotels closing, the return of workers is accelerating due to both the LPG crisis and the approaching elections, which has led to heightened demand for train tickets to these states. Industry representatives warned of potential severe labor shortages if the situation persists, prompting hotel operators to recruit local women temporarily while hoping for the return of migrant workers post-elections. The combined effects of the LPG shortage and the exodus of migrant workers could exacerbate the challenges faced by Kerala's hospitality sector in the weeks to come.



The jab at Rahul Gandhi by Om Birla

New Delhi, Mar 15: Om Birla resumed his duties as Lok Sabha Speaker after the Opposition's no-confidence motion against him was defeated. He emphasized his impartiality, stating all Members of Parliament (MPs) should have an equal opportunity to speak in the House, criticizing the notion that the Leader of the Opposition possesses special privileges. Birla reinforced that even the Prime Minister must adhere to House rules for making statements. The no-confidence motion, supported by 118 MPs, was rejected following a lengthy debate. Birla denied allegations of partisan behavior, asserting that he conducts proceedings with balance and discipline. He also clarified misconceptions about controlling microphones, stating that only the current speaker's microphone is activated. He concluded by affirming his commitment to encouraging all members' participation within procedural guidelines.

The "six-tier" budget is praised by the chief minister of Arunachal

Itanagar, Mar 15: On March 11, Pema Khandu, the chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh, welcomed the "six-tier" budget that Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Chowna Mein had given. However, he also noted that the state had seen a decrease in anticipated revenues because of developments related to the approaching 16th Finance Commission of India. The chief minister told the Itanagar media that the current fiscal year's budget is about 8% less than the previous one. He continued by saying that the Center's share has decreased by 17%, primarily as a result of modifications to the tax devolution structure anticipated under the new Finance Commission, which will primarily impact smaller states. According to Khandu, he has already discussed the matter with Nirmala Sitharaman and expressed worries about how it would affect states like Arunachal Pradesh. The chief minister also noted that Arunachal Pradesh's internal revenue production is impacted by the state's minimal state-owned resources. According to him, the adminis-



tration would now concentrate on enhancing income collection and bolstering its own resources. Khandu went on to say that the budget was created following public input and aims to address several areas of development. "We have prepared this Budget keeping in mind the welfare

of people and the development of all sectors. I am hopeful that the people of Arunachal Pradesh will benefit from it in the coming years," he said. The Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly is expected to pass the Budget later today after detailed discussions.

DESAM demands NRC before to delimitation and locks down a training facility in Imphal over Census preparations

Imphal, Mar 15: On Wednesday, March 11, the State Institute of Training at Takyel in Imphal was closed down by the Democratic Students Alliance of Manipur (DESAM), who claimed that the institution was hosting training sessions for the next national census. The demonstration was organized as part of the Just Fair Delimitation (JFD) movement, which has been calling for the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state prior to the Census of India and any further delimitation process. Asserting that the government should not move forward with Census-related activities without first addressing concerns regarding the detection of illegal immigrants in the state, DESAM members assembled outside the institute's premises and established a lockdown. Speaking to reporters, DESAM convenor M. Somorjit Meitei accused authorities of attempting to conduct the Census without taking into account the aspirations and concerns of the



indigenous population of Manipur. "We, as part of the JFD movement, completely condemn the government's initiative to start Census training for government employees. Such things will not be tolerated," Somorjit said. He warned that carrying out delimitation without first identifying illegal immigrants could have serious demographic and political consequences for the state. According to him,

several Assembly constituencies could become "out of reach" for the indigenous population if the exercise is undertaken without implementing NRC. "This will have a huge impact on the people of Manipur," he said. Referring to the ongoing session of the Manipur Legislative Assembly, the DESAM leader urged the state government to formally address the issue in the House. "As the Assembly session is going on, we

request the honourable Chief Minister to take up a resolution in the Assembly that the delimitation exercise will not be conducted without implementing NRC," he added. The protest at the training institute was carried out peacefully. DESAM members reiterated that their agitation would continue until the government ensures that NRC is implemented before initiating any Census-related activities in the state.

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Assam’s spiritual heritage

In a major initiative aimed at preserving Assam’s spiritual heritage while strengthening community infrastructure, the Government of Assam has invested Rs 433 crore to upgrade infrastructure in 22,923 temples and Namghars across the state, underscoring the administration’s commitment to protecting the cultural and religious institutions that have historically served as the foundation of Assamese society. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma emphasized the deep significance of these sacred institutions, stating that for the people of Assam, Mandirs and Namghars are not merely places of worship but vital centers of community life, spirituality, and cultural continuity that have shaped social cohesion for generations. “For us in Assam, Mandirs and Namghars are places of worship; they are the heart of our communities and the soul of our traditions. By renewing and strengthening these sacred spaces, we are honouring the values passed down to us and ensuring that our faith, culture and way of life remain strong for generations to come,” the Chief Minister said while highlighting the importance of the state’s initiative. The extensive infrastructure upgrade programme forms a key component of the government’s broader cultural and spiritual development policy under the Asom Darshan initiative, which has been expanded to include Vistartit Asom Darshan, a comprehensive scheme designed to provide financial assistance, annuity grants, infrastructure improvements, and enhanced connectivity for religious and heritage sites throughout the state.

The programme also aims to strengthen the institutional network of Namghars, which are unique community prayer halls that originated during the 16th century as part of the Bhakti movement led by the revered Vaishnavite saint and social reformer Srimanta Sankardev, whose teachings of devotion, equality, and community participation transformed the religious and social landscape of Assam. Namghars remain central to Assamese socio-cultural life and function not only as prayer halls but also as platforms for cultural education, social dialogue, and artistic expression through devotional practices such as naam-kirtan and traditional dramatic performances like Bhaona, which reflect the philosophical ideals and spiritual narratives propagated through Sankardev’s neo-Vaishnavite movement. The state currently hosts more than 25,000 Namghars that serve as important institutions fostering unity and community engagement across rural and urban areas, and the government’s largescale infrastructure support is aimed at ensuring that these institutions remain structurally resilient, accessible, and capable of supporting a wide range of religious and cultural activities. Under the Rs 433 crore programme, renovation and development works include structural reinforcement of ageing buildings, installation of improved electrical systems, construction of sanitation facilities, development of approach roads and pathways for easier access by devotees, creation of boundary walls for protection of temple premises, establishment of community halls for gatherings and cultural programmes, and the provision of reliable water supply systems to ensure hygienic and comfortable facilities for worshippers. In addition to these essential upgrades, special emphasis has been placed on preserving traditional architectural elements and historical features associated with older temples and Namghars, many of which have endured decades of environmental challenges including seasonal flooding, soil erosion, and climatic stresses characteristic of the Brahmaputra river basin.

The renovation programme therefore integrates modern engineering solutions with heritagesensitive restoration techniques, ensuring that the aesthetic and cultural integrity of these sacred institutions is preserved while strengthening their structural durability. Implementation of the project is being coordinated through the state’s Transformation and Development Department, which oversees the allocation and monitoring of funds under the Asom Darshan framework to ensure equitable distribution of resources across all districts, including the Brahmaputra Valley, Barak Valley, and hill regions of the state. The programme covers a diverse range of religious institutions including village temples dedicated to various Hindu deities, historically significant Satras or Vaishnavite monasteries, and the vast network of Namghars that serve as the backbone of Assam’s devotional and cultural life. Local management committees consisting of temple priests, Namghar presidents, respected community elders, and representatives from local administrative bodies are actively involved in identifying development priorities, preparing project proposals, and supervising implementation, thereby ensuring transparency, accountability, and community participation in the execution of the scheme. These committees also play an important role in ensuring that the renovation works respect traditional practices and architectural heritage while incorporating modern infrastructure that improves safety and convenience for visitors and devotees. The initiative is widely regarded as one of the largest coordinated efforts undertaken by the state government to protect and modernize religious and community institutions, reflecting the administration’s broader approach of integrating cultural preservation with developmental progress. Officials noted that the infrastructure improvements will also contribute to the promotion of religious tourism across Assam by making pilgrimage sites more accessible and visitorfriendly, thereby supporting local economies and generating employment opportunities for artisans, construction workers, and small businesses involved in restoration projects and tourism services.

Experts warn that “invasive” AI-led mass surveillance in Africa violates people’s rights



Experts on human rights and new technologies claim that the swift spread of AI-powered mass surveillance systems throughout Africa is breaching residents’ right to privacy and having a chilling impact on society. According to a recent report by the Institute of Development Studies, 11 African governments have spent at least \$2 billion (£1.5 billion) on Chinese-made surveillance technology that tracks movements and recognizes faces. The report cautions that national security is being used as an excuse to install these systems with little oversight.

Chinese businesses frequently market the technology as a way to assist quickly urbanizing nations in modernizing their cities and lowering crime rates. These packages commonly include CCTV systems, facial recognition, biometric data collecting, and cameras that track vehicle movements. But researchers from the African Digital Rights Network, who co-authored the report, said there was no real evidence of these systems reducing crime and warned that they allow governments to monitor human rights activists and political opponents, arrest protesters and lead journalists to self-censor.Wairagala Wakabi, executive director of the Kampala-based policy body Cipesa and co-author of the report, said: “This large-scale and invasive AI-enabled surveillance of public spaces is not ‘legal, necessary or proportionate’ to the legitimate aim of providing security. History shows us that this is the latest tool used by governments to invade the privacy of citizens and stifle freedom of movement and expression.”

Nigeria has spent the most on infrastructure, investing \$470m on 10,000 smart cameras by last year. Egypt has installed 6,000, while Algeria and Uganda have about 5,000 each. An average of \$240m was spent by the 11 countries with the investment often funded by loans from Chinese banks. The report emphasises that a lack of regulation or legal framework on storing and using the data on individuals is a concern, given the rapid rollout of this technology but Bulelani Jili, an assistant professor at Georgetown University, said even the introduction of laws could be dangerous.Surveillance of online activity has often been used to crack down on dissent and has been legalised through laws that can criminalise ordinary people for their posts online. Jili said focusing on the introduction of laws could simply allow governments to claim the systems had been legitimised.“The real challenge, therefore, is not simply whether

surveillance is regulated, but how societies negotiate the balance between security, accountability and civil liberties once these technologies become deeply institutionalised,” he said. He said there had already been concerns about facial recognition being used to monitor activists in Uganda and that surveillance systems were used to crack down on gen Z-led protests in Kenya.

This could pose a danger to anyone deemed a threat to governments in the future, he warned.“Historically marginalised communities, political activists, journalists and minority groups can be disproportionately affected when these technologies become embedded in policing and intelligence practices,” said Jili. Yosr Jouini, who authored the report’s section on Algeria, said the systems were originally introduced in connection to “smart city” projects that promised to tackle crime and manage traffic but in reality often became mainly a tool of the security forces.

“The narrative is framed only through a security lens, which dismisses any other concern and does not provide enough mechanisms for citizens to ensure their rights are protected,” she said. She highlighted how street protests in 2019 and 2021 played a key role in political change but the expansion of surveillance systems could make people hesitant about protesting in the future.

“We know a lot of protesters have been arrested when participating in public space gatherings. We don’t know for sure if it was based on the cameras but there’s a chilling effect – because it could happen – on people’s willingness to participate in public gatherings.” In 1936, John Scott, son of the late Guardian owner and legendary editor CP Scott, did something unheard of for a media heir: he gave up his stake for the greater good.After inheriting the newspaper, Scott renounced all financial benefit – bar his salary – in the Guardian (worth £1m at the time and around £62m today) and passed ownership over to the newly formed Scott Trust. The Trust would evolve to have one key mission: to secure the financial and editorial independence of the Guardian in perpetuity. That means the Guardian can’t be bought. Not by private equity, not by a conglomerate, and definitely not by a billionaire looking for a political mouthpiece. So here are three good reasons to make the choice to support us today.

The potential consequences of America’s resumption of nuclear testing



The text discusses the irony of President Donald Trump, who aspires for the Nobel Peace Prize, wanting to revive nuclear testing amidst concerns about the United States’ waning influence. It questions whether Trump acknowledges that leaders like Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping now chart their own paths, undermining the historical role of the U.S. as a global leader and policeman.

The narrative raises concerns about the deterioration of nuclear arms control structures built over decades, suggesting that Trump’s announcement to restart nuclear testing may indicate anxiety over the U.S. losing its nuclear supremacy.Following a surprise announcement during a trip to Asia, where Trump directed the U.S. military to resume testing for the first time in 33 years, there is speculation about the motivations behind such a declaration. Trump’s insistence that other

nations, including China, Russia, and North Korea, are conducting secret tests reflects a perception that the U.S. is falling behind in nuclear capability. The context intensifies with Russia’s successful tests of advanced nuclear missiles, which may have provoked Trump’s reaction.Currently, nine countries are known to possess nuclear weapons, with Russia

holding the most, followed closely by the U.S. The text provides estimates of nuclear arsenals from various nations, highlighting the massive potential loss of life from a single nuclear detonation. It notes the technological advancements in missile systems and weapon designs and discusses the ongoing debate regarding the necessity of renewing nucle-

ar tests. Proponents argue that testing is essential to ensure the reliability and safety of aging arsenals, while critics contend that modern techniques, including simulations, can achieve the required updates without physical tests. The U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) maintains that renewed testing is unnecessary, as nuclear weapons primarily serve a political and deterrent function rather than as weaponry for active use.Lastly, the efforts being planned for nuclear testing aim to validate new designs and ensure the reliability of existing weapon components through non-explosive means. The text concludes by noting that much of this required testing could proceed in a laboratory setting without public announcement, yet Trump’s decision to vocalize his intentions indicates a strategic choice to assert U.S. strength in the face of evolving global nuclear dynamics.

Teachers in the UK have noticed a rise in problematic parents who have short fuses and threaten legal action



According to a headteachers’ organization, teachers are accustomed to instances of rudeness and disobedience from their students, but they now claim that parents are among the worst offenders and have an impact on staff members’ mental health. According to the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), 60% of headteachers and other senior leaders reported verbal abuse and threats in the previous 12 months, and over 90% reported experiencing “challenging behavior” from parents, including rude or disrespectful responses. Over 75% of respondents claimed that their mental health and wellbeing were being negatively impacted by their parents’ deteriorating behavior. Parents are now more likely to disagree with how a school handles problems and to contest consequences like detentions or suspensions for misbehavior or truancy, according to school administrators. ASCL president and Stafford deputy headteacher Jo Rowley urges the government to sponsor a nationwide campaign urging parents to support their children’s school or college.

“A minority of parents with

unreasonable expectations and short tempers are a drain on time, energy, and resources,” Rowley is set to say at the ASCL’s national conference in Liverpool. While most parents “work productively” with teachers, she will underline the importance of parents making complaints “in a polite and reasonable manner” to avoid conflict. “Some parents are clearly struggling to deal with the pressures in their own lives, and their behaviour is very challenging,” Rowley will tell the conferences.

“The huge amount of work and stress they generate detracts from other children, undermines behaviour policies, and contributes to the pressures which drive people out of teaching.” Experienced headteachers said flashpoints included confiscating pupils’ mobile phones, with one parent accusing the school of theft and threatening to call the police. Other bitter disputes can come from turning down requests for pupils to take time off for family holidays in termtime.

More recently, heads said parents had been using AI to generate lengthy, legalistic complaints that required increasing amounts of time to administer. Of the

1,700 school leaders surveyed by ASCL, 73% said subject access requests – statutory demands for personal data held by an institution – were being used by parents “in a challenging or excessive manner,” while more than half said they had experienced hostile or defamatory comments from parents on social media. Martyn Oliver, Ofsted’s chief inspector, will also defend his organisation’s new inspection regime to the conference, explaining that more schools in England are receiving “needs attention” grades because of Ofsted’s “more exacting” standards. “Needs attention” is the fourth-lowest out of five on Ofsted’s new scale, which ranges from “exceptional” to “urgent improvement”.Oliver

is to say Ofsted will continue to highlight schools where it finds disadvantaged children “who are not making the strides that they should”. “We will never acquiesce to the quiet curse of low expectations that would see Ofsted prioritise context over outcomes for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children.”Bridget Phillipson, the education secretary, is expected to tell delegates: “The changes you have seen in your classrooms over the past decade – the poverty, the additional need, the technology – this is a new era of childhood, and it calls for a new era of education. An end to policy in parts. Instead, a village around the child. Every child. With schools as the beating heart of that support.”

Islam, Women, and the Morality of Self-determination

The ongoing discourse concerning Islam and women frequently becomes polarized, with one faction of secular critics arguing that the religion inherently oppresses women, while radical interpretations suggest that women’s subordination is justifiable according to Islamic texts. To counter the latter perspective, it is essential to delve into the ethical underpinnings of the Quran which historically advocated for gender justice in a seventh-century Arabian society. Empowerment is depicted not as a Western ideation but as a revival of core Islamic principles advocating for equality in moral responsibility between genders, challenging radical beliefs that manipulate religious texts to justify exclusionary practices.At the crux of patriarchal interpretations lies a significant misinterpretation of human dignity. Many radical advocates assert male superiority by selectively referencing specific verses to justify a hierarchical societal structure. However, the Quran introduces a concept of ontological dignity rooted in the idea that humanity originates from a singular soul (nafswahida), emphasizing shared essence over gender distinctions. Radical narratives assert that women should remain relegated to domestic spheres under the pretext of ‘protection.’ This stance contradicts the innate dignity bestowed upon all individuals by the Creator. Rather than seeking permission to exist, the ethics of empowerment demand the elimination of societal barriers to personal fulfillment. Education emerges as a crucial countermeasure against radical patriarchy, exposing the significant discrepancies between Islamic teachings and extremist practices, especially since the pursuit of knowledge is deemed obligatory for Muslims irrespective of gender. In order to defend a hierarchical social structure, many radical proponents selectively cite particular scriptures to assert male superiority. But the Quran emphasizes shared essence over gender differences, introducing a notion of ontological dignity based on the notion that humanity is descended from a single soul (nafswahida). Under the guise of “protection,” radical narratives contend that women should continue to be restricted to the home. This position runs counter to the inherent dignity that the Creator bestowed upon every person. The radical closure of educational institutions for girls does not reflect adherence to Islamic tenets but represents a profound theological misinterpretation. Historical evidence underscores this, illustrated by figures such as Fatima al-Fihri, who established the University of al-Qarawiyin in 859 CE, the world’s oldest degree-granting university. To assert that Islam promotes female ignorance is to disregard the accomplishments of countless women scholars, or muhaddithat, who played pivotal roles in educating leading male jurists. Education transforms women from passive figures subject to external interpretations into active participants shaping their destinies.This shift from objectification to subjectivity extends into public engagement and economic autonomy. Contrary to radical prescriptions confining women to private spheres, prominent figures like Khadija, the Prophet Muhammad’s first wife, and Aisha bint Abi Bakr, a noted jurist and political leader, illustrate the dynamic roles women have historically played in Islamic society.

Renault’s futuREady plan centers on India, with four models by 2030

Chennai: Renault, a French automaker, unveiled its new strategy plan, futuREady, on Tuesday. Under this plan, the business has set an ambitious goal to sell 2 million vehicles under the Renault brand by 2030, with half of those sales coming from outside of Europe. More significantly, India is positioned as a global production hub and one of the three major growth hubs outside of Europe. Based on this approach, Renault intends to produce 36 new models over the next five years, 14 of which will be produced outside of Europe, as opposed to just eight in the preceding five. Four new models, including fully electric and fully hybrid vehicles, will be created and built in India between now and 2030. According to the new standards set by the Renault



Group, the Bridger Concept is the prototype for the first car to be developed in India in less than two years. Depending on the market, it will be offered in combustion, hybrid, or electric versions. It is built on the Renault Group modular platform, or RGMP Small. By the end of 2027, it will be first introduced in India and then gradually expand-

ed to other foreign markets. Renault, which has been in India for 15 years, stated that it is utilizing its extensive market experience and a completely integrated local ecosystem. According to a release, “India will become a global production and supply hub for the brand, serving its domestic market as well as many other countries.”

“The plan is based on four pillars: growth ready, tech ready, excellence ready and trust ready. We plan to launch 36 new models between now and 2030 and substantially transform the customer experience during the lifetime of our vehicles. We will accelerate our technological road maps for all key technologies. We will also set high-

ly ambitious goals for operational performance, with the widespread use of AI,” said François Provost, chief executive officer of Renault Group. The group said it is stepping up the pace with a targeted approach in its growth hubs -- India, South America and South Korea -- all of which will contribute to its expansion. The company added that it is planning to sell over 2 million Renault-branded vehicles every year, with half from outside Europe. It is also planning to have 100 per cent electrified sales in Europe and 50 per cent outside Europe. Renault said it will rely primarily on its hubs in Latin America, South Korea and India, where the brand already has strong industrial and commercial presence. Together, these markets represent a potential equivalent to that of Europe.

The Telangana HC has reserved an order regarding the arrest of Fino Bank MD

New Delhi: Rishi Gupta, the chief executive officer and managing director of Fino Payments Bank Ltd., filed a writ petition challenging his arrest in connection with an alleged goods and services tax (GST) evasion scheme involving merchant entities using the bank’s payment aggregation platform. On Wednesday, the Telangana High Court reserved its decision. On March 17, the court will render its decision. The lawsuit revolves around allegations of widespread tax fraud, wherein merchants allegedly executed transactions totaling about ₹10,000 crore in violation of the GST Act by failing to issue invoices. Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing the petitioner, argued that Gupta had no direct involvement in the alleged evasion.

He emphasised that Fino operates solely as a payment aggregator and banking platform, providing infrastructure for transactions without liability for the tax compliance of sellers or buyers. Singhvi argued that the petitioner was not personally accused of GST delinquency and that the accusations were restricted to specific platform suppliers. He emphasized that the bank removed non-compliant firms and followed Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines for onboarding and de-boarding merchants. Singhvi argued, “The petitioner cannot be held criminally liable for alleged defaults of third-party sellers because he had no personal involvement in onboarding merchants.”



Singhvi stated that ₹28 crore in GST had previously been paid as proof of good faith. He also pointed out inconsistencies in enforcement, questioning why similar payment aggregators such as HDFC Bank Ltd and Razorpay Software had not faced scrutiny despite comparable models. He relied on the Bombay High Court’s decision in Mahesh Gada to distinguish intermediaries from principal tax defaulters. Opposing the plea, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) N Venkataraman, appearing for the revenue authorities, defended the arrest, citing preliminary investigations uncovering multiple GST violations, primarily the non-issuance of invoices. He described the matter as a “serious economic offence” involving a vast tax evasion network. Venkataraman said due process was followed, including the issuance of summons and authorisation for arrest by the additional director general/commissioner. The ASG presented transaction data analysis showing the extent of evasion and requested the court to continue custodial interrogation while rejecting the bail petition.

Apollo Global Management issues Adani Energy a \$500 million bilateral debt

Mumbai: According to persons familiar with the situation, a division of Adani Group raised roughly \$500 million through a bond privately placed with funds controlled by Apollo Global Management Inc., underscoring the Indian conglomerate’s continuous attempt to access money outside of the public dollar bond market. The 15-year private bonds were sold by a company under the control of Gautam Adani-led Adani Energy Solutions Ltd. at an all-inclusive rupee-equivalent cost of roughly 8.5%, and the company intends to use the proceeds to refinance current dollar debt, according to the people who asked not to be named because the information is confidential. The financing highlights the change in financing for Adani, one of the biggest Indian issuers in the past, as it borrows to finance ambitious plans for capital expenditures while dealing with high borrowing costs in the public dollar bond market and the burden of growing legal concerns from the US. The group has previously stated that it is increasingly using Japanese lenders and intends to rely more on the domestic market. Due to the rising cost of issuing dollar bonds due to the declining rupee,



Indian issuers have generally halted their sales. According to the persons, the organization intends to stay away from public dollars bonds until prices rise and outstanding US issues are settled. Apollo confirmed the deal in response to a Bloomberg query. “India represents a compelling infrastructure market globally with strong economic growth and long-term demand for reliable power generation,” said Apollo Partner Jamshid Ehsani in a statement. It is working with Adani Energy “to

provide flexible, long-term capital that supports the resilience and growth of its platform,” he said. A spokesperson for Adani Group did not immediately reply to an emailed request for comment. The conglomerate tapped Apollo in June when the group’s airport unit, Mumbai International Airport Ltd., raised around \$750 million from a group of global investors. Prior to that, a group of investors including BlackRock Inc. bought bonds to fund Adani’s purchase of ITD Cementation India Ltd.

Madhya Pradesh receives approval from the Center to expand the Bhavantar program to mustard

Mumbai: A Madhya Pradesh government plan to expand the price deficiency support program, commonly known as the Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana (BBY), to mustard procurement after it was used for soybean in 2025 has been approved by the Central government. The program is designed to shield farmers against fluctuations in prices. At a meeting in Delhi today, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav decided to expand the program to include mustard. The Bhavantar scheme compensates farmers when market prices fall below the government’s benchmark levels, allowing them to sell produce in the open market while receiving the difference directly from the government. Extending the scheme to mustard is expected to provide relief to oilseed growers and ensure timely fulfillment of the state government’s commitments to farmers. Madhya Pradesh was among the first states to experiment with the Price Deficiency Payment Scheme, called BBY, back in 2017 for soybeans during Shivraj Singh Chouhan’s tenure as Chief Minister. Later, in 2025, the present Mohan Yadav government relaunched the scheme with changed norms. Thus, Madhya Pradesh is one of the few major agricultural states experimenting with the Price Deficiency Payment Scheme in two frontline crops. Madhya Pradesh is one of the major mustard-producing states in India after Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The new



mustard crop for the 2026 season has already started arriving in some markets. The mandi price of the new mustard crop in major mandis across the state is quoting at levels that are lower than the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of ₹5,950 per quintal. According to an official statement, during the meeting, Chouhan instructed officials to ensure faster disbursement of payments so that farmers receive compensation without delays. He also approved a proposal to ensure 100 per cent procurement of tur (pigeon pea) from farmers in the state. Officials said the decision would provide income stability to tur growers by eliminating the risk of distress sales during periods of excess supply. The review meeting also covered a range of agriculture and rural development

issues affecting the state. Discussions were held on pending payments related to mustard and soybean procurement, additional targets for moong and urad under the pulses mission, and implementation of key central schemes. Among the programmes reviewed were Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, the soil health and fertility programme, wage and material payments under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, rural housing under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin, and rural road construction under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. Chouhan directed officials to dispose of all pending cases related to Madhya Pradesh on priority to ensure that farmers, labourers and rural households receive benefits without delay.

Infosys is forced to restrict catering services due to the LPG shortage

New Delhi: Following updated government limits on the fuel’s use across industries, Infosys, a major provider of IT services, issued an advise to staff members on its campuses in Pune, Bengaluru, and Chennai regarding the reduction of LPG supply for food court vendors. Corporate campuses in India are starting to feel the effects of the ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia and the ensuing restrictions on the supply of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), which are compelling businesses to implement backup plans for food services. The company’s employee message, which Business Standard was able to view, states that food court operations will be reconfigured starting on March 12. The withdrawal of live counter options is one of the limited offerings. To manage the disruption, the company has

introduced several temporary measures. “Food courts across campuses will operate with limited menus. Some of the cooked food will be sourced from vendors’ central kitchens externally, and alternative cooking arrangements such as electrical appliances and biofuel will be used more extensively,” the advisory for employees at the Pune campus said. “Food court vendors are currently receiving reduced LPG supplies from their respective providers. Despite their sincere efforts to continue operations, the limited availability of LPG is restricting their ability to operate at full capacity,” the company added. Infosys has also urged employees to cooperate during the period of constrained supply. Staff have been advised to avoid organising on-campus events that require catering and to bring food from home wherever



feasible to reduce pressure on campus food services. Infosys is among a handful of companies that operate biogas plants at their campuses. According to the firm’s FY25 ESG report, it has created capacity to treat 100 per cent of organic waste generated on campuses, including food and garden waste, through biogas plants and organic waste converters. However, it could not be ascertained what proportion of the company’s fuel requirements is currently met through biogas.

Meta Platforms plans sweeping layoffs as AI costs mount

New Delhi: Meta Platforms Inc. is planning sweeping layoffs that could affect 20% or more of the company, three people familiar with the matter said, as the world’s largest social media company looks to cut AI cost and prepares for greater efficiency brought on by AI-assisted workers. No date has been set for the Meta playoffs and the magnitude has not been finalised yet, the people said. Top executives have signalled the plans to other senior leaders and told them

to begin planning on how to pare back, two of the people said. The sources spoke on the condition of anonymity as they are not authorised to disclose the job cuts. If Meta settles on the 20% figure, the layoffs will be the company’s most significant since a restructuring in late 2022 and early 2023 that it dubbed the “year of efficiency”. The company laid off 11,000 staffers in November 2022, or around 13% of its workforce at the time.

RBI updates counterparty credit risk regulations

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has updated its counterparty credit risk (CCR) framework to align more closely with Basel Committee norms, enhancing the measurement of exposures from derivatives.



Key revisions involve reduced capital add-ons for interest rate and foreign exchange contracts, balanced by increased add-ons for long-dated equity and commodity swaps, potentially affecting trading activity in these areas. The updated framework clarifies capital treatment for banks as clearing members on exchanges recognized by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) within the equity and commodity derivatives sectors. According to the new rules, regulated entities must consider CCR exposures of all entities

consolidated under the Basel III framework when calculating capital on a consolidated basis. The amendments also modify the add-on factors for potential future exposure under the current exposure method, aligning these factors with international standards. Experts describe this adjustment as a prudential refinement, improving the accuracy of banks’ potential exposure assessments in derivatives, especially in exchange-traded markets. Pururaj Bhar of Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas notes that the clarification regarding clearing member exposures may promote central clearing and stronger risk management practices, although the overall effect on system-wide capital is anticipated to be limited.

Airlines hike fares as West Asia war sets oil prices on fire

Mumbai: Leading Indian airlines have begun hiking the fuel surcharges on domestic and international flights as the ongoing conflict between Iran and the US-Israel bloc sends aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices spiraling. IndiGo made the latest such move on Friday. The global prices of ATF, which typically accounts for 40% of an airline’s operating expenses, has seen a “sharp surge” since early March 2026 due to regional supply interruptions. IndiGo: India’s largest carrier said it will begin levying a sector-based fuel charge on all domestic and international tickets starting March 14, 2026. The airline noted that while fully offsetting the ATF surge would require a “substantial adjustment” to base fares, it has opted for a smaller charge to benefit flyers. Budget carrier SpiceJet warned that airlines have little choice but to impose surcharges if oil remains high. Founder Ajay Singh has urged the government to reduce excise duties and VAT on jet fuel, noting that prices even at \$90 per barrel are becoming unsustainable.

Parthanil Ghosh is named MD and CEO of HDFC ERGO General Insurance

Mumbai: On Wednesday, the board of HDFC ERGO General Insurance accepted Parthanil Ghosh’s nomination as managing director and chief executive officer (MD & CEO), with effect from April 16, pending regulatory clearance. He will take over for Anuj Tyagi, the general insurer’s MD and CEO, who left on January 16, 2026, to explore business ventures. After the company merged with L&T General Insurance in 2016, he joined, and from May 1, 2025, he has been



General Insurance. The board has faith that he will build on that achievement and advance the business.

INTERNATIONAL

The upper level of Glasgow Central station will be closed for the remainder of the week due to a fire next door



Glasgow: Due to a fire that destroyed a nearby building on Sunday, Glasgow Central station's high level will be closed for the remainder of the week. Due to the fragility of the mid-Victorian block on the intersection of Union Street and Gordon Street, much of

which collapsed during the fierce fire, Network Rail stated that it would not be viable to restore the station's upper concourse, where trains depart to locations throughout the United Kingdom. On Wednesday, Glasgow Central's lower level, which is utilized by more local services, will reopen.

There were no casualties during the fire but only the facade of the Gordon Street part of the building remains after the inferno gutted the inside, which housed ground-level shops as well as offices and retail space above. More than £160,000 has been raised on GoFundMe to help affected business owners, many of whom lost their entire stock and tools in the blaze. Network Rail said the instability of the facade, along with the need for ongoing assessments, meant high-level trains would not be able to run this week. Ross Moran, route director for the network, said: "Our priority is to make sure that we can reopen Glasgow Central as soon as it is safe to do so and we will continue to work with emergency services, the local council and our train operators to restore services. "We want to reassure passengers that we are doing everything we can to open the high-level station, but we must enable the emergency services and Glasgow city council to complete their critical work to se-

cure the Union Corner site and make it safe."

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service confirmed that as of 4.30pm on Tuesday, four fire appliances and one high-reach vehicle remained at the scene. The vape shop on Union Street, where the fire is believed to have started on Sunday afternoon, had not paid business rates, according to an investigation by the Ferret news site, and does not appear to be registered to sell tobacco or vaping products. Colin Borland, Scotland director of the Federation of Small Businesses, said the Scottish government should take lessons from its response to the Glasgow art school fire of 2018, which affected many nearby businesses for months afterwards. "Four fire appliances and one high-reach vehicle were still on the scene as of 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, according to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The Scottish government set up a £5m fire recovery fund and that supported about 250 businesses in the immediate area, giving them a bit of breathing space and no business rates for three months," he said. Borland said that the economic impact on the city centre of the closure of Scotland's busiest station for days was likely to be even more significant and urged the Scottish government to "urgently" replicate a similar support package.

Seoul is shaken by the US missiles' hurried redeployment from South Korea to the Middle East

Seoul: Nearly ten years have passed since the peaceful South Korean village of Seongju was suddenly elevated to a crucial position in the nation's defense against a North Korean attack. The US-made terminal high-altitude area defense (THAAD) missile-defense system arrived in Seongju early on a spring morning in camouflaged trucks, despite protests from the local population that the deployment would make them a target for Pyongyang's ballistic rockets. Washington-backed Seoul's conservative government maintained that Thaad was the best method to find and eliminate North Korean missiles before they endangered the South and the 28,500 US soldiers stationed there. China and Russia were also incensed by the deployment, claiming that Thaad's potent radar may jeopardize their security.

However, after nine years, it is said that the US has begun removing components of the system and other military equipment from South Korea in order to use them in its conflict with Iran. According to two individuals cited by US media, the Pentagon is transporting components of a Thaad system to the Middle East. The action, which was revealed this week, has raised concerns about Donald Trump's security commitment to South Korea, the United States' most significant east Asian ally after Japan, as well as cautions that the nuclear-armed North



would try to increase pressure on its neighbor. Critics wonder why South Korea spent so much political money on a defense system that might eventually be dismantled. South Korea's liberal president, Lee Jae Myung, sought to reassure the public that the country was able to deter threats from the North, even if the US redeployed weapons and other military assets to the Middle East. Noting that Seoul had opposed the redeployment of US artillery batteries and air-defence units, Lee told a cabinet meeting: "If asked whether that would seriously hinder our deterrence strategy against North Korea, I can say with certainty that it would not." He added that South Korea's defence budget is among the highest in the world and is estimated to be 1.4 times greater than North Korea's gross domestic product.

The South's foreign minister, Cho Hyun said on Friday that US and South

Korean militaries were also discussing the possible redeployment of some US Patriot missile defence systems to the Middle East. South Korean media carried unconfirmed reports that some missile batteries were likely to be redeployed to US bases in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. "For operational security reasons we do not comment on the movement of specific military capabilities or assets," an official from United States Forces Korea told the Yonhap news agency. Even if Lee is right to play down the security risk to South Korea, the weakening of US defences there have raised concerns that the war with Iran signals a downgrading in Trump's commitment to North-east Asia, where North Korea's nuclear weapons programme and the Taiwan Strait are potential flashpoints. "There is a risk that North Korea could miscalculate the relocation of some of these weapons as a

pretext for low-level provocations to test the allies' defence posture," said Choi Gi-il, a military studies professor at Sangji University. Japan, too, is having to adapt to the US's hasty redeployment of military hardware to the Middle East – a move that lends weight to criticism that Trump went into the Iran war without a clear plan, leaving American forces in danger of being sucked into a prolonged conflict.

Japan hosts about 50,000 US troops, more than half of them on the southern island of Okinawa. Two US guided-missile destroyers based in Yokosuka, south of Tokyo, are currently deployed in the Arabian Sea, according to a report by the US Naval Institute. The head of Japan's main opposition party has raised concerns about reports that the US was poised to send vessels based in Japan to the Middle East. "Japan has not permitted the stationing of US forces so they can sortie from those bases to fire missiles towards the Middle East," Junya Oga-ta told MPs this week. The JoongAng Daily, a conservative South Korean newspaper, said any reduction in the country's ability to defend itself "inevitably raises concerns". "The [South Korean] government should work to ensure that any redeployed assets return promptly once their missions end, minimising potential gaps in deterrence against North Korea. Efforts to strengthen Korea's own defence capabilities should also accelerate."

Iran is growing more resistant to the US-Israeli assault

Tehran: Iran's authorities believe they are winning the war and the US president is at least under political pressure, so they have rejected two signals from Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump's special envoy, requesting a truce. Abbas Araghchi, the foreign minister, added that the battle would not end if Trump unilaterally declared that the United States had won. The inference is that Iran might be prepared to carry on the conflict in some capacity or maintain its chokehold on ships attempting to pass through the Strait of Hormuz even if the US declared its intention to stop its attacks. Iran feels that the confrontation cannot end until it is certain that Trump has demonstrated the economic, political, and Iran feels that the fight won't stop until Trump has been proven that the military, political, and economic costs are so great that they shouldn't be repeated.

Instead, it is demanding a long-term agreement in which the United States pledges never to attack Iran again. "A promise that aggressive activities against Iran will not be repeated is necessary if a ceasefire is to be reached or the war is to be terminated. Otherwise, such a ceasefire would be useless if another attack happened after a few months, according to deputy foreign minister Kazem Garibabadi. For a regime that was only concerned with its own survival at the beginning of the conflict eleven days ago, the defiance is astounding. However, in discussions with the numerous nations that have offered to mediate, the foreign ministry is investigating whether it is possible for the conflict to just end, as it did in June of last year, or whether it needs to conclude with some sort of agreement that would involve a conditional removal of US economic sanctions. However,



the general consensus among Iranian regime leaders is that it will endure and shouldn't look for a deal just yet. On Wednesday, more than 80 countries will support a resolution presented by Bahrain that denounces Iran for its attacks on the Gulf States but does not criticize the United States or Israel, putting them under tremendous diplomatic pressure in the UN Security Council. Russia might support a different motion that calls Russia may sponsor a separate motion calling for a ceasefire. "We are absolutely NOT seeking a ceasefire," the speaker of the parliament, Mohammed Ghalibaf, posted to social media. "Let the enemy know that whatever they do, there will certainly be a proportionate and immediate retaliation [...]" We are fighting eye for eye, tooth for tooth, without compromise or exception." The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has stressed that it will control the strait of Hormuz, which carries nearly 20% of the world's crude oil and about 20% of liquefied natural gas.

Shabana Mahmood grants the police's request to prohibit the Al Quds march in London

London: The Metropolitan police have requested that a pro-Palestinian march scheduled for Sunday be prohibited "to prevent serious public disorder," and Shabana Mahmood, the home secretary, has granted their request. After its organizers declared support for the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, the annual Al Quds Day march in London came under fire for seemingly endorsing the Iranian dictatorship. There were also a number of counter-protests scheduled for that day. The home secretary stated that she was "satisfied doing so is necessary to prevent serious public disorder, due to the scale of the protest and multiple counter-protests, in the context of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East" when she announced her decision to forbid the march. "The police will be able to impose stringent conditions if a stationary protest continues." "Instead of exercising their right to peaceful protest, I expect to see the full force of the law applied to anyone spreading hatred and division." The protest is always "good natured and peaceful," according to the Islamic

Human Rights Commission (IHR), which is in charge of organizing it.

The IHRC "strongly condemns" the ruling and is seeking legal counsel, according to a statement posted on the organization's website. "The police have brazenly abandoned their sworn principle of policing without fear or favor," the statement stated, confirming that a "static protest" will take place on Sunday.

Since there is no evidence, they are unable to provide it. "This is essentially a politically charged decision, not one made for London residents' safety." Since 2012, no protest march has been prohibited. Previous Al Quds Day marches led to arrests for antisemitic hate crimes and aiding terrorist organizations, according to the Metropolitan Police. "The decision to ban it this year is purely based on a risk assessment of this specific protest and counter-protests – we do not police taste or decency or prefer one political view over another, but we will do everything we can to reduce violence and disorder," the force said in a statement. The Met said the



"uniquely complex" international situation and "severe" risks meant merely placing conditions on the protest "will not be sufficient to prevent it from resulting in serious public disorder". It added that it would place "strict conditions" on any static protest, which the law does not allow the police or government to ban, but "given the tensions, we have to accept that confrontations could still take place".

The decision follows calls

from Labour and Conservative MPs to ban the march. Earlier on Tuesday, the courts minister, Sarah Sackman, said people expressing support for "the malign regime in Iran" should not be "on the streets of London calling for hate and hostility against this country". A spokesperson for the IHRC, Faisal Bodi, told the BBC's The World Tonight that it was "a sad day for freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and the right of people to legiti-

mately protest about issues they feel strongly about". He added: "This demonstration has taken place for the last 40 years peacefully." The IHRC has previously expressed support for Iran's former supreme leader. After his death in a US-Israeli airstrike last month, the group said the late Ayatollah "chose to stand on the right side of history" and described him as "a rare role model" who would be "mourned by freedom loving people all over the world".

In the House of Lords, hereditary lords will lose their seats

New York : After an agreement was reached to give those Conservatives and cross-benchers who lost their seats life peerages, hereditary peerages will be eliminated prior to the next king's speech. The House of Lords (hereditary peers) bill's final text was approved by the upper chamber on Tuesday night, completing its journey through parliament and paving the path for its inclusion in the statute book. Angela Smith, the leader of the Lords, stated that some individuals who would otherwise lose their seats would receive life peerages from the government.

Consequently, the Conservatives stopped opposing the law. Up to 92 hereditary peers have been permitted to sit in the upper chamber and cast ballots in the lobby since 1999, but the law essentially eliminates this quota. When the current parliamentary session concludes, which is anticipated later this spring,



hereditary peers who have not been made life peers will no longer be able to sit in the Lords. "This has never been about the contribution of individuals, but rather the underlying principle that was agreed upon by parliament over 25 years ago that no one should sit in our parliament by way of an inherited title," stated Lady Smith. Hereditary peers still exist more than 25 years later, and significant reform has stalled. It is our responsibility to find a solution. The lord speaker, Michael Forsyth, offered his thanks to hereditary peers for their service in the upper chamber. Lord Forsyth of Drumlean said:

"I would like to thank hereditary peers from all parties and none for their work in the House of Lords over many years. "Whatever views people may have of this constitutional change, it is sad to say goodbye to friends, who in many cases have contributed significantly to debate and scrutiny and to our institutional memory." Recognising their contribution is not about party politics but acknowledging the value of service and commitment, and I am proud to do so and to thank them." The king's speech is expected to take place in the second week of May, days after elections across Britain on 7 May.

‘Children see magic in the smallest adventures’: exploring Scotland with my four-year-old

“There! There – I can see it!” The cries of my four-year-old echoed around the ruins of 13th-century Urquhart Castle, causing a group of US tourists to come running over to the corbelled bartizans (overhanging turrets) where we stood. “It’s Nessie, I saw her,” he insisted, pointing at the ripples spinning out from the back of a sightseeing vessel on Loch Ness. This was day four of a budget, week-long Scotland adventure for the two of us, and we were spending the day in Drumnadrochit, on the shores of the country’s most famous body of water, looking for the fabled monster. It wasn’t the first time that reality and wishful thinking had seemingly combined on this holiday. When I told people I was going to take my son on a week-long trip across Scotland and my budget was £500, they were sceptical – especially as we were travelling in the school holidays. But as a woman who likes a challenge, I was up for proving them all wrong. The car journey was punctuated by stops at lochs so enchanting they could have been lifted from the pages of a children’s book. We’d begun our adventure in Glasgow, having travelled by train (£30), then picked up a cheap hire car for the five-hour drive to the Isle of Skye. Accommodation on Skye is pricey, but I had a secret weapon – my tent. The car journey was punctuated by stops at lochs so enchanting they could have been lifted from the pages of a children’s book. We finally reached the island and checked in at Camp- ing Skye, a community-owned campsite by the sea in Broadford. For the £16 cost of a pitch, we spent the evening playing beneath the flanks of Beinn na Caillich, eating chips and mushy peas from the local shop, and roasting marshmallows on a firepit. The next morning, primed for a mini-ex- pedition and stocked up with supplies, we drove to the southern enclave of Elgol. The crowds who flock to the island for the Fairy Pools and spectacular Quiraing rock forms melted away as we went deeper into the countryside. We pulled over at a nondescript parking area and I explained the plan to my son. We were going to walk about 2.5 miles (4km) to our accommodation – and no, mummy couldn’t carry him as I would be carrying all our supplies. Excited by the carrot on a stick in the form of a bag of Percy Pigs, we set off, me with a full backpack, him clad in waterproofs, clutching a walking pole. “I can do this. It’s going to be hard, but it’s going to be worth it,” I heard him muttering to himself as the ascent kicked in. Along the way I pointed out the purple petals of the devil’s-bit scabious flower – mythol- ogy claims the devil was so enraged by the plant’s healing properties that he chewed its roots, leaving them short and jagged. My son loved how stories such as this and the landscape combined, and it distracted him from the climb. When we reached the highest point, we could see down to Camasunary Bay, and the thought of playing on the beach made our descent fly by. Our accommodation was a free (unbookable) bothy and, being first to arrive, we picked the top bunk of the sleeping platform, and I laid out our things. As more people came, my boy confidently greeted the guests as though welcoming them into his own home, proudly telling them this was his first bothy. That evening was spent running around on the near-black sand beach just outside the door,



making trenches, cooking pesto pasta on my camping stove and laughing at the “loo with a view” that sits above the bothy on the hillside. Having stayed in many bothies over the past 15 years, I had wondered how taking a child would pan out. But his presence brought everyone together in an amazing way, and by 9pm all 12 residents were fast asleep, likely lulled by the white noise I was playing for him on my phone. Next morning, my son’s determination to reach the car was only eclipsed by his de-

sire to have ice-cream for breakfast, which I had promised as an incentive to climb up the hill. He was

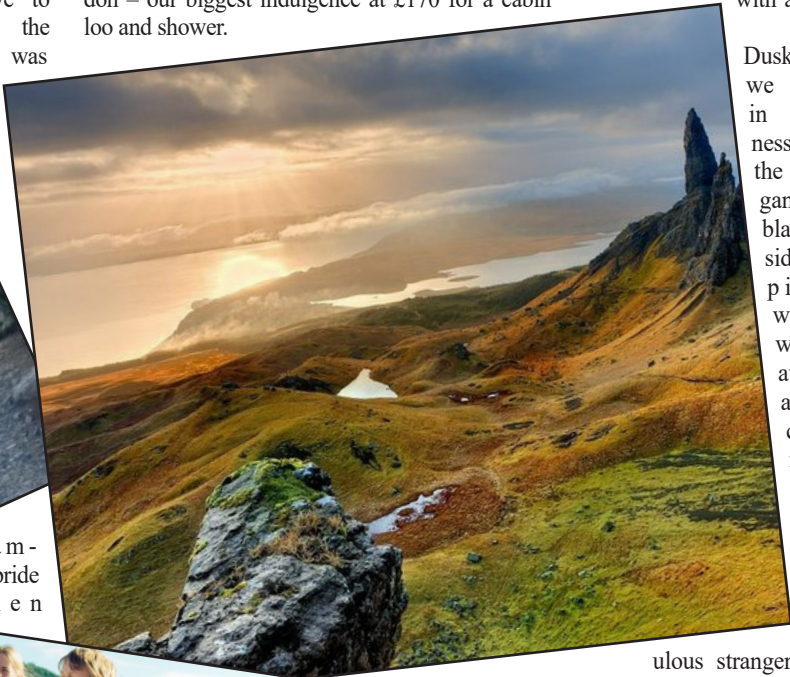


he told the owner of The Creel pop-up cafe by Elgol harbour that he’d walked more than 5 miles “all by myself” and made friends in a bothy. The truth is that kids love holidays – but they love spending time with their parents most of all. From there, it was back to the mainland and a two-hour drive on to Drum- nadrochit for a stay in a private room at Loch Ness Back- packers Lodge (£60), with an afternoon spent in the nearby Loch Ness Centre, learning all about Nessie. After the nov- elty of sharing a bunk bed (me on top, him below), the next day was reserved for paddling in the shallows of the loch, running around the aforementioned Urquhart Castle and getting visitors’ hopes up with proclaimed sightings of the legendary plesiosaur.

That afternoon we journeyed to our final stop – the Cairngorms national park. At the reindeer centre in Glenmore Forest, we met the UK’s only free-rang- ing herd (which had been brought here to be checked over by a vet) and joined a scav- enger hunt designed to teach children about these creatures. We ended the day at Loch

Morlich, building sandcastles with children my son befriended in that easy way kids seem to do. I pointed up to the summit of Caim Gorm – the sixth highest mountain in Britain. “That,” I told him, “is where we go tomorrow.”

After a night in a camping pod at the Speyside Trust’s Badaguish outdoor centre (£75), we braved the mountain during rain squalls on a guided hike (£35) which involved taking the mountain railway to Ptarmigan top station at 1,097m, then an hour’s walk to the summit. As we stood on the misty peak, our guide told us we were at 1,245m. I’ve never seen such a proud look on my son’s face. The UK’s highest restaurant, the Ptarmigan, sits at the railway’s top station, and we indulged in hot chocolate before exploring the learning zone’s exhibition, with its panoramic film showcasing the land- scapes around us in much better weather than we experienced. There are also interac- tive sandboxes where children can create their own natural environments. We rounded off the day by taking the train back down and going tubing (£15pp), laughing gleefully as we slid down the purpose-built dry slope in giant rubber rings. Determined to make the journey home part of the adventure, I had booked the sleeper train back to Lon- don – our biggest indulgence at £170 for a cabin with a private loo and shower.



Dusk hit as we boarded in Inver- ness, and the sky be- gan to turn black out- side the pic- ture win- dows while we ate mac- a- r- o- n- i cheese in the dining car and my son told in- cred-

ulous strangers about our adventures. The truth is that kids love holidays – but they love spending time with their parents most of all. And by taking my son on my kind of adventure, I had bonded with him in a way I never thought pos- sible. Children see magic in even the smallest of ad- ventures – and their enthu- siasm is utterly infectious. Our total spend after six days away was just under £500 which, when I think of the memories we have made, and the stories my son continues to best buy ever – even more fan- Scotland’s largest loch.



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Artificial sweeteners and brain aging: What we know so far

Can artificial sweeteners actually be harmful to health? And can consum- ing them on the regular affect our mem- ory and thinking skills? A l- though a new link found between sug- ar alternatives and brain ag- ing requires more study, it may warrant some concern. MNT speaks to a physician and researcher to dive deeper into the matter and discuss In Con- versation. Artificial sweeteners come in many different names and forms — as liquids or powders, as sucralose, erythritol, aspartame, and more. They are consumed by millions of people around the world, and especially by people with diabetes.

The main reason behind the recommendation for people with diabetes to swap sugar for sugar alternatives is that the lat- er are believed to cause fewer blood sugar spikes.

The Food and Drug Admin- istration (FDA) has also ap- proved several artificial sweet- eners. Trusted Source, including saccharin, sucralose, and aspar- tame, as well as sugar alcohols like xylitol and erythritol, and plant-based sugar substitutes like stevia and monk fruit, as safe for consumption. However, in recent years, more and more research has emerged about the possible long-term health ef-



stirred controversy and concern among the public, but does this mean people should stop con- suming artificial sweeteners altogether? And what oth- er possible effects could they have on health? To discuss this and more, Claudia Suemoto, MD, PhD, senior author of the Neu- rology study, joined Medical News Today editors Yasemin Nicola Sakay and Maria Cohut on this episode of In Con- versation, looking at artificial sweeteners’ effects on health, particularly the brain. Suemoto is a physician and assist- ant profes- sor o f



fects o f c o n -

suming sugar alternatives. The most recent one was a study published in Neurology, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neu- rology, which found that the sweeteners — aspartame, sac- charin, acesulfame-K, erythri- tol, xylitol, and sorbitol. Trusted Source — were linked to declines in memory and over- all thinking skills that were equivalent to about 1.6 years of brain aging. Such research has

geri- atrics at the Univer- sity of São Paulo Medical School, where she is also an epidemiologist focused on dementia research and brain aging. She is also cur- rently one of the coordinators of the Brain Bank of the Brazil- ian Aging Brain Study Group — the largest brain bank in Lat- in America. In 2016, she was awarded the L’Oreal UNESCO For Women in Science in Brazil. You can listen to our current podcast episode in full below or on your preferred streaming platform.

Search for the perfect brown bar in Amsterdam

Is there anything better than a good old British pub? Well, a Dutch person may prefer a bruine kroeg (brown bar). Often nondescript from the outside and thus easy to miss, these cosy, home- ly, rustic cafe-style bars typically have plain dark-wood furniture, candles on the tables, aged knick-knacks and faded pictures. There will be dim lighting, usually from antique-style lamps, and they make ideal hubs — they are often referred to as a “surrogate living room”.

The name comes from the venues’ tobac- co-stained walls and ceilings, which since the smoking ban started in 2008 have been topped up by dark brown paint. Beers and jenever (Dutch gins) are the most popular drinks, and snacks such as bitterballen (meat ragout croquettes), boiled eggs and borrelnootjes (nuts with a crispy coating) are often available too.

The choice of background music is a vital com- ponent; soft vintage jazz is ideal, so when I vis- ited Café ’t Hooischip the Michael Jackson and Culture Club soundtrack jarred somewhat with the cosy, historic setting.

These drinking rooms used to be all-male hang- outs, but today everyone, young and old, flocks to them. Few places encapsulate Dutch culture and tradition like the bruine kroegen. But in re- cent years they have come under threat from ev- er-rising rates, property prices and modern bars that are able to generate greater income. They are still found throughout the Netherlands but it is estimated that more than a quarter have closed since 2010. That said, those I visited in the centre of Amsterdam (the city has the highest density, and boasts hundreds) appeared to be thriving..

Café ’t Smalle

This one, in the Jordaan district, has the usual enticing brown bar attributes and features a cute curved wooden staircase leading to a cubby-hole room above with further seating. The crowd is mainly Dutch, but I deduct a point because it feels a little too polished for a brown bar. Even worse, the English couple next to me are discuss- ing their Ocado order for their return to London, which completely ruins the ambience.

Café Pieper

It is delightful to approach a building so wonky that the leaded windows are positioned at a strik- ing slant. So it is disappointing to then learn that



the previous owner of Café Pieper installed them on purpose to accentuate the historic feel of this venue, which has been trading since 1665. That’s the main quandary when embarking on a brown bar crawl — how much of the old-time feel is genuine, how much is manufactured? Howev- er, once inside the small, low-ceilinged venue, which seats about 25 with room for a few more at the bar, there is a lovely feeling of gezelligheid (conviviality) and cosiness.

Locals tend to visit in the evening, tourists in the day. It’s heartening to see that here, as in most of the brown bars I visited, there’s a strong contingent of young people. “It’s like a second home for our regulars; we know exactly what they like to drink,” says manager Chag Wal- visch, who was a regular himself for 10 years before being asked to work here two years ago. “They appreciate the considerably higher ser- vice level you get in a brown bar. We are always welcoming and relaxed about guests starting a tab rather than having to pay each time they buy a round — that sort of thing. You can come here alone and easily get into a conversation; you just don’t get all that in a normal bar. We had some Americans come in for four days in a row last week because they loved it so much.”

Café Eijlders

From the outside, Café Eijlders looks like any touristy cafe, but step inside and you are trans- ported back to the 1940s, when it opened as a meeting place for Dutch artists, writers, and

bohemians in occupied Amsterdam. Centred around the semicircular bar, where stools, chairs and banquettes fan outwards, are two raised ta- bles. The colour scheme is in various shades of dark brown and dark red, from the burgundy upholstery on the chairs to the garish and dated floor tiles. A soundtrack of Nina Simone and Nat King Cole plays softly in the background. There’s not a tourist in sight despite this bar be- ing metres from the hellish tourist trap that is Leidseplein. 7/10

Café De Dokter

Considered to be the smallest bar in Amster- dam, Café De Dokter has no more than 20 seats in total. The chandelier above my head, covered in dust and cobwebs, has a Miss Havisham vibe, while there’s no way of telling the time from the clock on the wall as it is so deeply layered in grime. There are several paintings, but again I have no clue what they depict due to the heavy layers of dust.

The ceiling and walls look as if they haven’t been cleaned since the place opened in 1798. And that is exactly why I love it — Café De Dokter oozes character. I love it even though the woman at the bar is terse, whereas all the staff I’ve encountered at other brown bars have been very friendly. Despite the dust, the glasses are spotless, and the floor and furniture spark- ling clean. And there’s some sleepy vintage jazz playing, which is entirely appropriate for the setting.

ENTERTAINMENT

YRF states that Aneet Padda is not portraying Madhubala in her biography



Mumbai: A representative for YRF Talent denied rumors that Aneet Padda, star of Saiyaara, has been cast as movie queen Madhubala in a future film. Aneet, who made her breakthrough with YRF's 2025 romance blockbuster, is reportedly set to act in the biographi-

cal film directed by Jasmeet K Reen, who is best known for Darlings, starring Alia Bhatt and Vijay Varma. The actor's management company, YRF Talent, clarified that the reports are "untrue" in a statement. In March 2024, Sony Pictures International Productions launched the

Madhubala project. Sony Pictures International Productions, Brewing Thoughts Pvt Ltd, and Madhubala Ventures—led by Arvind Kumar Malviya and Madhur Brij Bhushan, Madhubala's younger sister—are co-producing it. During her career, Madhubala, one of the

top actors from the heyday of Hindi cinema, starred in great films like Mr. & Mrs. 55 (1955), Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi (1958), Kala Pani (1958), and Howrah Bridge (1958). She rose to become one of the industry's most well-known figures.

The 1960 historical epic drama Mughal-e-Azam, in which she costarred with Dilip Kumar's Salim and Prithviraj Kapoor's Akbar, was her career-defining performance as Anarkali. At the age of 36, Madhubala passed away in 1969.

Aneet is set to headline Shakti Shalini, the next instalment of producer Dinesh Vijan's ambitious Maddock Horror Comedy Universe (MHCU). Her entry was announced with the release of Ayushmann Khurrana's 2025 film Thamma, which is also a part of the MHCU. Shakti Shalini will release in cinema halls on December 24.

Sai Pallavi briefly falls in love with Junaid Khan in the Ek Din teaser

Mumbai: Actor Sai Pallavi has recently made headlines for her Bollywood debut after making the South cinema industry fall deeply in love with her. As everyone is aware, Sai will portray Sita in Nitesh Tiwari's Ramayana, alongside Ranbir Kapoor.

However, Sai's first Hindi film, Ek Din, would feature her alongside Junaid Khan, the son of Aamir Khan. Junaid will play a lead in his third Bollywood movie with this project. The highly awaited trailer for the next romantic drama movie was released today, providing us with a preview of Sai and Junaid's new on-screen chemistry. Ek Din's two-minute and twelve-second trailer opens with Junaid Khan staring at a Fortune Bell, which is said to grant wishes to sad lovers. Junaid silently hopes, "Kaash Meera meri ho jaaye, chaah ek din ke liye hi sahi," as Sai Pallavi and Kunal Kapoor pass by.



When Junaid is called away, the wind sways the bell, fulfilling his request even though he doesn't ring it.

The scene changes to Sai, who is actually Meera, holding a cupcake while singing Happy Birthday to Junaid. Junaid says, "Meri wish toh poori ho gayi," as she asks him to blow out the candle after wishing her a happy birthday. They go on to enjoy the perfect day together. But what happens when the sun sets and the

day ends? Ek Din, which is purportedly a remake of the 2016 Thai movie One Day, is helmed by Sunil Pandey and supported by Aamir Khan. Internet users are really enthralled with this new love tale. A admirer gushed, "Finally! Too good," beneath the trailer. Music, images, and especially pure drama. No more murder and bloodshed. Someone commented, "Woow finally no alcohol no drug no cigarettes trail-

er refreshing one," while another posted, "Waiting for May 1st ." "Finally something fresh from Bollywood," a commenter wrote. Another netizen commented, "Simple sweet Fantasy romance genre after ages @aamirkhanproductions Hindi film audience, welcome to the world of @saipallavi.senthamarai ," while another commented, "A much needed relief from violent spy action films."

A toxic conflict is avoided by Varun Dhawan's Hai Jawani



Mumbai: The revised release date for Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai was revealed by the film's producers on Tuesday. The release date of the Varun Dhawan film was originally set for June 5. The decision to reschedule the movie was made a few days after the producers of Yash's Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-ups made a separate statement that the movie would now be released on June 5 instead of March 19. The producers of Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai also emphasized in an official statement released by Tips Films, the production

company supporting the film, that they don't think it's necessary to compete "unnecessarily" at the box office. The romantic comedy, also starring Mrunal Thakur and Pooja Hegde, will now hit the screens on June 12.

"We would like to clarify that our film Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai was originally scheduled for release on 5th June, a date we had announced several months ago.

However, after recent developments and considering the prevailing situation, we felt it would be more appropriate to shift our release. We strongly

believe that it is always healthier for the industry when filmmakers support one another rather than compete unnecessarily on the same date.

In that spirit of solidarity, we have decided to move the release of Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai to 12th June and bring our film to the audiences a week later (sic)." Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai is directed by David Dhawan. The film marks Varun's new collaboration with his father. The two worked on films like Judwaa 2 (2017), Main Tera Hero (2014) and Coolie No. 1 (2020).

Badshah is criticized by Sona Mohapatra for the contentious song

New Delhi: Rapper-singer Badshah has become embroiled in controversy following the release of his most recent song, Tateeree, which has received condemnation from a number of sources due to its purportedly obscene lyrics and images that many viewers find offensive. Singer Sona Mohapatra did not hold back and took a jab at the rapper, saying that he needs to improve and be more responsible with the content he releases, as the anger on social media continues to rise. Sona posted a harsh critique of Badshah's contentious song Tateeree on Instagram on Wednesday. She called him out, saying that calling oneself a "son of Haryana" does not excuse or make up for the transgression. Sona criticized the objectification of women in pop culture, specifically targeting Badshah for perpetuating harmful stereotypes of masculinity. She argued that such portrayals reduce women to mere props and distort their value to admiration of men. Sona criticized the objectification of women in pop culture, specifically targeting Badshah for perpetuating harmful stereotypes of masculinity. She argued that such portrayals reduce women to mere props and distort their value to admiration of men. Sona emphasized the cultural responsibility of artists to challenge misogyny rather than profit from it, especially in a region like Haryana.

Anupam Kher co-stars with Prabhas in the 1940s Azad Hind Force drama Fauzi

Mumbai: The production team announced on March 8 that veteran actor Anupam Kher has joined the cast of Prabhas' film Fauzi. The 1940s are the setting for Hanu Raghavapudi's film, which is produced under the Mythri Movie Makers banner. It centers on an Azad Hind Force fighter. The announcement, which marked a major addition to the ensemble cast, was made on Kher's 71st birthday. Fauzi is positioned as a historical play that seeks to convey the intricacies of the 1940s Indian independence movement. Expectations for the movie have increased after Anupam Kher joined the cast and Prabhas took the lead. "Wishing the phenomenal. @AnupamPKher Ji a very Happy Birthday," the production banner posted on social media. Being a member of the #Fauzi battalion is a true honor. "Happy and healthy new year," the caption said. Fauzi is being produced as a two-part film franchise under the direction of Hanu Raghavapudi. The



story takes place during a time of major upheaval in India and focuses on the experiences of a soldier in the Azad Hind Force. Although the producers have not yet revealed Kher's precise position in the movie, it is expected that his participation will give the ensemble cast more weight. Kher's recent work includes his directorial return with Tanvi The Great, which released in July 2025. The film

also featured Shubhangi Dutt alongside Kher and marked his re-entry into a filmmaking role after several years. In addition to Fauzi, Anupam Kher is expected to appear in Khosla Ka Ghosla 2, reuniting with actors Boman Irani and Ranvir Shorey. The sequel to the 2006 film will mark Kher's 550th film, adding another milestone to his extensive filmography.

Sara Arjun recreates her iconic 'boyfriend girlfriend' McDonald's ad



Mumbai: Many people remember actor Sara Arjun from the famous "boyfriend girlfriend" McDonald's commercial. Arjun has been acting in advertisements and movies since she was very young. The actor is currently starring in a new McDonald's commercial that features the same "boyfriend girlfriend" scenario, but with a cute twist! In the latest advertisement, Sara was shown informing the boy she wasn't interested in the "boyfriend-girlfriend" scenario and making jokes about how high expectations are common in current relationships. All he wants, though, is the McAlloo Tikki burger! Then Sara asks, "What would she do, stare at him while he eats?" The new Buddy Meal deal, which guarantees that the

combo can be enjoyed together, is then introduced in the advertisement. She says, "I'm loving it!" at the end. In a nostalgic reference to a 2011 advertisement, Sara Arjun, who played a child actor, humorously revisits her dialogue about wanting a Tikki burger, eliciting fond memories from fans. Social media reactions included comments praising her charm and beauty. Sara is set to appear in the sequel "Dhurandhar: The Revenge," with a trailer showcasing her impactful portrayal of Yalina. Additionally, the document briefly touches on Malaika Arora's past marriage to Arbaaz Khan and her subsequent relationships, highlighting her break-up with Arjun Kapoor and speculation regarding Bedi's past links.

In the US, Dhurandhar 2 advance reservations surpass \$2 million

New Delhi: Perhaps the most eagerly awaited Hindi movie in years is Dhurandhar: The Revenge. Ranveer Singh returns as Hamza, also known as Jaskirat, an Indian spy in Pakistan in this Aditya Dhar-directed follow-up to the 2025 blockbuster Dhurandhar. With little than a week until its debut, the film's astounding advance booking figures, which are approaching the million-dollar level, are a good indicator of its enormous buzz. On Saturday, Jio Studios and B62 Studios unveiled the Dhurandhar 2 trailer, a four-minute look inside the universe of Jaskirat Singh Rangi. It was immediately followed by the opening of advance reservations for paid previews globally. In North America, theatres opened advance bookings for the rest of the opening weekend as well, while Indian cinemas are waiting until later this week. As a result, the advance bookings for Dhurandhar 2 have surged ahead in the US and Canada. According to trade estimates, by Tuesday's end, the spy thriller had raked in over \$750K for premiere shows alone. The advance booking for opening day has comfortably crossed \$1 million, and the opening weekend mark has now reached a staggering \$2 million. Given that the film releases on March 19, these are astounding figures.

Sorab Bedi of Splitsvilla X6 responds to relationship rumors involving Malaika Arora

New Delhi: The internet was ablaze with rumors that actor Malaika Arora and Splitsvilla X6 contestant Sorab Bedi were dating after a few party videos went public. Bedi has now responded to the rumors, vehemently disputing any romantic connection and advising people to exercise caution when leaving comments on the internet. Rumors that the two might be more than just buddies rapidly surfaced after recent images and videos of them dancing and hanging out at a Juhu restaurant. However, Bedi stated that their relationship is only platonic in an interview with Times Now. He claims that the two had been pals in the modeling industry for a number of years.

Actors Delnaz Daruwala and Vahbiz Mehta were instrumental in promoting them, according to Bedi. During my modeling days, Delnaz Daruwala and Vahbiz Mehta offered me the opportunity to walk the ramp. I started going to parties and got acquainted with them. My mentors introduced me to Malaika at one such event. She also has a tight relationship with Vahbiz and Delnaz. We became buddies as a result. He remarked, "There is nothing between us." Bedi also



expressed disappointment over the online reaction to their recent photos, urging people to be respectful while discussing a woman's personal life. "People are talking several things about us.

They should think twice before speaking about a girl. It could affect her mental state. Aisa karna nahin chahiye (They shouldn't do it)," he said. He added that he has attended social gatherings with Malaika and their mutual friends for years, but the attention is new because of his recent visibility. "I have been par-

tying with Vahbiz, Delnaz and Malaika for many years. Earlier, I used to share pictures with Malaika too, but I wasn't a known face then. Now people are noticing it. Two people can be friends – we trust each other, but people interpreted it differently," he explained. The rumours began after Bedi attended a celebration at Malaika's restaurant in Juhu and posted photos from the evening on Instagram. In the now-deleted post, he congratulated her on the venue and shared pictures with the actor and their group of friends.

Priyanka Chopra talks on raising her daughter Malti away from the spotlight

Mumbai: Global celebrity Priyanka Chopra feels that her daughter's privacy must come first, even when fame brings attention of its own. During a recent podcast appearance, Chopra talked about why she keeps her daughter Malti Marie Chopra Jonas out of the spotlight. She revealed that the family had experienced a terrifying incident where a stranger had followed the youngest home from school.

The star stated that she and her husband Nick Jonas are dedicated to preserving their daughter's identity as she grows up in an interview with Amanda Hirsch on Not Skinny But Not Fat. Chopra explained that while public curiosity about Malti is inevitable, she wants her daughter to have the freedom to decide how much of her life she shares with the world. "As she's growing older, we've started to deflect a little bit," Chopra said. "She moves around a lot, so we let her have as much anonymity as she can. It is her normal, and people will

be curious about her.

I never want her to be fearful of that or sceptical of the humans she meets. It's okay for her to be aware of it, but having a sense of choice will be important," she continued. Priyanka Chopra shared that her family decided to hire security after a concerning incident where a stranger followed her daughter Malti from school while recording her. This event highlighted the importance of establishing boundaries for Malti's privacy and safety. Chopra emphasized that while she has chosen a public life, her daughter deserves the same choice regarding privacy. She acknowledged the evolving understanding of raising children in a public environment and stressed that protecting Malti's well-being is her top priority. On the professional front, Chopra's film "The Bluff" is streaming on Prime Video, and she is set to star in the Telugu drama "Varanasi," scheduled for a 2027 release.

Nathan Martin of the USA wins the LA Marathon by 0.01 seconds

New Delhi: The outcome of the 2026 Los Angeles Marathon felt less like a marathon and more like a Hollywood movie. At 2:11:17 on Sunday, American runner Nathan Martin defeated Kenyan Michael Kimani Kamau by an astounding 0.01 seconds to win the race. The blink-and-you-miss-it ending swiftly became an internet sensation. The race has become one of the most talked-about marathon finishes of the year due to the widespread sharing of videos of the tumultuous final stretch, the dash to the line, and Kamau's expensive late accident. After the race, Martin remarked, "I made an actual move five miles out when I saw no one else was picking up the pace." "I made the decision that I had to push." "I saw the leader at a mile and a half to go, and with 800 meters remaining, I was thinking, 'I'm catching him.'" The victory also has historical significance. Martin won the Los Angeles Marathon, becoming the first Afri-



can-American to do so. The 36-year-old makes the occasion even more memorable by juggling his career as a high school cross-country coach and substitute teacher with his elite racing. In American distance running, Martin is already well-known. He became the fastest Black marathoner in American history when he set a personal best time of 2:10:45 in the Grandma's Marathon in 2023.

According to the National Black Marathoners Association, he is also the first U.S.-born Black runner to win a major city marathon since Ted Corbitt achieved the feat in the 1950s and 1960s. For most of the race, Kamau looked firmly in command and seemed on course for victory. But the final moments delivered an unexpected twist that ultimately shaped the outcome.

With roughly 300 metres left, Kamau briefly ran off course after following the lead motorcade at a fork in the road. A now-viral video shows the escort vehicles taking a turn toward an exit lane, with Kamau mistakenly following them for a few seconds. A spectator carrying a Kenyan flag could be seen running nearby as Kamau moved toward the wrong lane before a cyclist alerted him to the mistake. The Kenyan runner had to stop, turn around and rejoin the course—losing precious seconds in the process. In a marathon decided by 0.01 seconds, those few moments proved crucial. Martin, sensing his chance, launched a final surge in the closing stretch and powered across the line just ahead of Kamau in a thrilling sprint finish that had spectators roaring. The victory also came with a sizeable reward. Martin walked away with 25,000 USD for first place, while Kamau earned 10,000 USD for finishing second.

LPG cylinder shortage hits Mumbai, Bengaluru eateries

Mumbai, Mar 15: Restaurant groups in Maharashtra and Karnataka have warned that restaurants may close within days if supplies are not restored due to an unexpected shortage of commercial LPG cylinders, which has alarmed the hospitality industry. According to industry sources, the interruption has already started to have an impact on operations in Bengaluru and Mumbai, as hotels and restaurants find it difficult to obtain cooking gas due to global supply difficulties connected to the ongoing conflict in West Asia following the strikes on Iran by the United States and Israel. A committee consisting of three senior officials from state-run oil marketing businesses has been established to examine LPG provision to other sectors, according to the government, which also stated that LPG supply to domestic families and vital sectors like hospitals has been prioritized. The shortfall is growing quickly and could soon paralyze the industry, according to Vijay Shetty, head of the India Hotels and Restaurant Association. According to Shetty, the group has written to Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and is in contact with Maharashtra Civil Supplies Minister Chhagan Bhujbal. "If this shortage continues, all restaurants in Mumbai will be shut in the next two days."



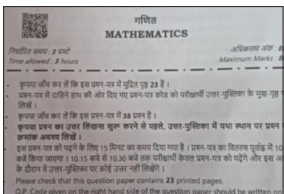
"As of today, 10–20 percent of our members are facing problems. By tomorrow it will be 60 percent. By the day after tomorrow, it will be 100 percent impact on restaurants, forcing them to shut," he said. Restaurant owners say commercial LPG supplies have largely stopped since Sunday, while domestic cylinders are facing delivery delays ranging from two to eight days after booking. Annu Shetty, who runs Hotel Sagar in Mulund, said commercial cylinders have become difficult to find. "We are not finding commercial LPG cylinders. At a few places it is available but a Rs 1,750 cylinder is being sold for Rs 1,950," she said. The supply crunch has also caused panic among households. Consumers with dual domestic connections have rushed to book refills, leading to long queues and delays at dealer outlets.

Dealers say the shortage could push some commercial users towards the illegal purchase of subsidised domestic cylinders on the black market, a practice they warn is dangerous. Domestic 14.2 kg cylinders remain available but delivery timelines have stretched significantly. The situation has also hit Karnataka, where the Bangalore Hotels Association warned that hotel operations could be affected from March 10 due to the sudden halt in commercial LPG supplies. "Since the gas supply has stopped, the hotels will be closed from tomorrow," the association said in a statement. The group said the disruption would affect common people, students and medical professionals who depend on hotels for daily meals. P C Rao, honorary president of the association, said hotel owners have no choice but to suspend operations if the shortage continues. "Without gas, food and refreshments will not be available at the hotels starting tomorrow. Hotels will not open," Rao said. "We have spoken and sent communications to central ministers and also informed MPs from Bengaluru. Without gas, it will not be possible to prepare food, so the government should respond immediately." Government sources said oil marketing companies, Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum, have been directed to prioritise domestic household cooking gas supply amid the supply crunch. Officials said the waiting period for LPG deliveries has been extended from 15 days to 25 days in order to curb hoarding by consumers. Sources added that India is exploring new international suppliers to stabilise LPG supplies, including potential imports from Algeria, Australia, Canada and Norway. At the same time, oil marketing companies have been asked to scale up LPG production and adjust their product mix to manage demand.

The popular "Rickroll" QR code in the Class 12 maths paper is explained by CBSE

New Delhi, Mar 15: Following internet concerns regarding a QR code put on certain question papers, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has reaffirmed that the Class 12 Mathematics board exam question papers are authentic and their security is unaffected. The explanation was made in response to social media posts that suggested scanning a QR code on the exam paper would launch a YouTube video of Rick Astley's song "Never Gonna Give You Up," a practical joke known as "rickrolling." On March 9, the Class 12 Mathematics exam was held. Screenshots of the question paper started making the rounds online shortly after it concluded. Students said that by scanning the QR code printed on it, they were taken to the song video. The rumor quickly gained traction on so-

cial media sites like Reddit, where students posted screenshots and made jokes about the unexpected link showing up during a crucial board exam. The situation was still unclear, nevertheless, since a number of students reported that the QR code in their exam centers did not link to any external content, only opening basic letter markers like "A" and "Q." This caused uncertainty on whether the widely shared screenshots depicted a specific instance, a technical glitch, or a deceptive image that was making the rounds on the internet. In a notification issued after the exam, CBSE said that multiple security features are built into board exam question papers, including QR codes used to verify the authenticity of the document in case of any suspected breach. The board acknowledged that in a few



question paper sets, scanning one of the QR codes appeared to link to a YouTube video. However, CBSE confirmed that the issue does not affect the authenticity of the question papers. "The question papers are genuine. The security of the question papers remains uncompromised," the board stated. CBSE said the concerns raised by students and parents regarding the QR code have been taken seriously. While confirming that the authenticity of the papers remains intact, the board said necessary steps are being taken to ensure such issues are not repeated in future examinations.

Amid the LPG issue, Arvind Kejriwal criticizes PM Modi

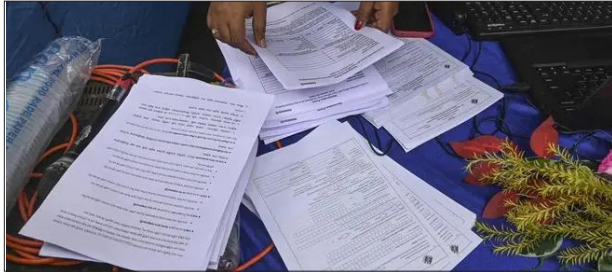
New Delhi, Mar 15: Arvind Kejriwal criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a significant LPG shortage affecting India, attributing the issue to the country's heavy reliance on imports from the Strait of Hormuz. He warned of potential unemployment for nearly 1 crore people and reported that many restaurants and hotels are nearing shutdown due to this crisis. Kejriwal argued that the current gov-

ernment has abandoned India's traditional neutral foreign policy, accusing it of siding with the US and Israel, especially following Modi's visit to Israel amid escalating tensions. He claimed this shift has strained relations with Iran, which controls vital energy routes, and expressed concern over India's weakened global standing and ridicule from US officials due to these foreign policy decisions.

Voter deletions in the SIR roll modification have caused a stir in the Rajya Sabha

New Delhi, Mar 15: Congress and Trinamool Congress lawmakers protested the purported removal of legitimate voters through the special intense revision (SIR) of electoral registers on Tuesday, causing a commotion in the Rajya Sabha. Derek O'Brien, the head of Trinamool, brought up the matter during Zero Hour and insisted on a conversation on the SIR. The demand was rejected by Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan on the grounds that the SIR and other electoral reforms had previously been debated in the previous session of Parliament. During the demonstration, the Trinamool members brandished signs.

Mallikarjun Kharge, the head of the opposition in the upper house, called the SIR procedure a "fraud" and organized a walkout. Leader of the House J.P. Nadda accused the Opposition parties of obstructing the Rajya Sabha proceedings. "No topic will be discussed by the opposition parties. They raised a new problem today. They had



talked about the SIR during a discussion about electoral reforms. However, the government staged a walkout that time in response to the argument. "They wish to impede democracy and instigate chaos," Nadda stated. Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, a member of Trinamool, was permitted to pose an additional query regarding active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) during Question Hour. Roy stated that coercive measures were being carried out in Bengal under the SIR's name before inquiring about the API. He urged that the government send a delegation to Bengal, citing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's objection against the purported removal of legitimate votes from the final records. He re-

The Unnao rape survivor's CBI plea can be heard by the Supreme Court

New Delhi, Mar 15: In the appeal filed by the CBI contesting the Delhi High Court's decision to free former BJP lawmaker Kuldeep Singh Sengar, who was serving a life sentence for the crime, the Supreme Court on Monday let the rape victim to be heard. Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi's bench ruled that the victim had a right to be heard in the CBI's appeal, but it rejected the girl's cousin's request for Sengar to protect him. The relative has argued that he perceived a threat to his life and requested instructions from the CBI and local authorities to safeguard him. However, the bench declared that he had the right to move the relevant authority for However, the bench stated that as his plea cannot be taken into account in the CBI's appeal, he was allowed to seek the proper



body for relief. In the rape case, where Sengar was given a life sentence, the Supreme Court postponed his release on December 29, 2025. Sengar's sentence was suspended by the Delhi High Court on the grounds that he was not a "public servant."

Prize money for the African Champions League has increased by 50%

New Delhi: The CAF president said on Monday that prize money for Africa's premier club championships will increase by up to 100% this season, with payouts for the Confederation Cup and Champions League increasing by a combined USD 4 million to support the continent's teams worldwide. The Confederation Cup winner will get USD 4 million, double the present award, while the winners of the CAF Champions League in 2025–2026 will receive USD 6 million, a 50% increase. The most recent modifications, according to CAF, continue a sharp rise in prize money since its president, Patrice Motsepe, assumed office in 2021. Confederation Cup rewards have increased 220% from USD 1.25 million to USD 4 million over the past five years, while the Champions League prize



fund has increased 140% from USD 2.5 million to USD 6 million.

According to CAF, the total yearly prize money and solidarity payments for African teams have increased by 123.4% to over USD 42 million from USD 18.8 million in 2021. Payments for clubs eliminated in the preliminary rounds were proposed by Motsepe; each team would receive

USD 50,000 in 2024 and USD 100,000 in 2025. CAF said the expanded financial support helped push participation to a record 130 clubs in the 2025-26 Champions League and Confederation Cup competitions. The two-legged CAF Champions League final will be played on May 15 and 24 this year, while the Confederation Cup final dates are May 9 and 16, CAF added.

The NCERT judiciary chapter's authors are unfit to write for the next generation Supreme Court

New Delhi, Mar 15: Three people who were involved in writing a contentious chapter on "corruption in the judiciary" in a Class 8 NCERT textbook were subject to a strict ruling from the Supreme Court, which declared them ineligible to be involved in the creation of curricula or textbooks for future generations.

The Court ordered the union government, state governments, universities, and all institutions receiving public funds to distance themselves from the three authors and not collaborate with them on any publicly funded academic projects after taking a close look at the chapter's content and preparation methodology. The matter arose from a suo motu case initiated by the Supreme Court regarding a section on corruption in the judiciary in a Class 8 NCERT political science textbook. The Court examined whether the content misrepresented the functioning of the Indian judiciary and whether proper



procedures were followed during its drafting and approval. During the hearing, the Court also reviewed the steps taken by NCERT to revise the chapter. The Supreme Court expressed dissatisfaction with the affidavit submitted by the NCERT director.

According to the affidavit, Chapter 8 of the textbook has already been rewritten and will be implemented in the upcoming academic session. The Court termed the response "disturbing", noting that such an important academic revision lacked transparency. However, the Court clarified that the individuals may approach the Supreme Court seeking modification of the order after submitting their response.

Kejriwal is asked to respond to the Delhi High Court's CBI appeal in the Delhi liquor policy matter

New Delhi, Mar 15: In response to the CBI's plea to overturn the trial court's February 27 ruling clearing the accused in the liquor policy case, the Delhi High Court on Monday asked former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and others to respond.

Telangana Jagruthi president K. Kavitha and former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia are among those who have been invited to respond to the CBI's request. In a notice to Kejriwal and 22 others, Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma stated that the trial court's "scathing remarks" against the investigating officer were to be taken into account and halted its recommendation that the officer face administrative action. The high court also said it would issue an order direct-



ing the trial court to defer proceedings to a later date in the connected money-laundering case being investigated by the Enforcement Directorate. The trial judge brought up

the CBI while dismissing the charges against Kejriwal and others, stating that "the material placed on record does not disclose even a prima facie case, much less any grave

suspicion, against any of the accused persons."

Tushar Mehta, the CBI's solicitor general, defended the agency's position in the high court on Monday, stating that

there was sufficient evidence to bring charges against the accused. The CBI claimed to have gathered sufficient proof of bribery and conspiracy behind the creation of the now-canceled liquor policy. "The material, taken cumulatively and at face value as required by law, undeniably establishes grave suspicion of a systematic criminal conspiracy involving public servants and private individuals to manipulate the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22 for illegal gratification, followed by money laundering and utilisation of proceeds for election expenditure of the AAP," Mehta submitted. Mehta said the trial court order was perverse and "turned the criminal law on its head". The matter has been listed for further hearing on March 16.

Novak Djokovic not planning on retiring anytime soon

LA 2028 Olympics

New Delhi: Despite being 41 years old when the Games begin, Novak Djokovic claims that one of his long-term objectives is to defend his Olympic championship at the 2028 Los Angeles Games. Djokovic defeated Carlos Alcaraz to earn the gold medal in tennis at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, which he called the greatest sporting achievement of his illustrious career. The 24-time Grand Slam champion now has his sights set on Los Angeles despite being 38. “Going to the Olympics is one of the long-term objectives. After defeating Kamil Majchrzak in the second round in Indian Wells on Saturday, Djokovic told reporters, “That would be nice.” “There is still a long way to go. Every year feels longer to me at my age and at my point in my profession than it does to younger people. However, I’ll make an effort to attend; it’s undoubtedly one of the reasons.” Djokovic would be the second man in history to successfully defend an Olympic singles gold title if he were to travel to Los Angeles. The only man to accomplish it is Andy Murray, who won back-to-back titles in Rio 2016 and London 2012. Before winning the gold he had long desired in Paris, Djokovic



ic won bronze at the Beijing Games in 2008. The world number three was back on court at Indian Wells for the first time since an impressive run at the Australian Open, which included a thrilling five-set semi-final victory over Jannik Sinner. After five weeks away from competitive tennis, Djokovic showed some early rustiness before finding his rhythm to beat Majchrzak 4-6, 6-1, 6-2. “It’s good to be back on tour,” he said. “Five weeks

with no official match, I knew that the first match in such a long time will be a little bit tricky with conditions that are quite challenging,” he added, referring to the windy conditions in the California desert. Djokovic will next face American Aleksandar Kovacevic in the third round. But with his mind already partly on Los Angeles 2028, it is clear that the greatest tennis player of all time is far from done.

FIFA World Cup 2026 is still scheduled to take place in the USA despite the growing crisis in West Asia

New Delhi: FIFA’s Chief Operating Officer, Heimo Schirgi, has confirmed that the 2026 World Cup will proceed as scheduled in the United States, despite uncertainty regarding Iran’s participation due to ongoing geopolitical conflicts. Speaking at the International Broadcast Centre in Dallas, Schirgi emphasized the event’s importance, stating, “The World Cup is too big, and we hope that everyone can participate that has qualified.” Iran, which qualified through the Asian Football Confederation, is set to compete in Group G alongside Belgium, New Zealand, and Egypt, with matches planned in Los Angeles and Seattle. Schirgi noted

that FIFA is in contact with Iran’s soccer federation and is closely monitoring the situation in the region in collaboration with federal and international partners. Beyond these tensions, the atmosphere in Dallas was optimistic as FIFA officials announced plans for the fan festival and discussed the ongoing construction of the International Broadcast Centre, which will accommodate 3,000 to 3,500 media members during the tournament. The 2026 World Cup is poised to be the largest in history, featuring 48 teams across three host nations: the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Schirgi reiterated that the tournament will go on, reinforcing that



such a globally significant event cannot be halted.

Erling Haaland’s injury is being used by Manchester City’s forwards to achieve their own success



United Kingdom: Although Omar Marmoush’s second season at Manchester City has proven to be a challenging follow-up for the Egyptian forward, his outstanding performance in this weekend’s FA Cup triumph against Newcastle United provided a glimpse of what he still has to offer Pep Guardiola’s team. The defending champions have had to rely on their other attacking alternatives to fill up for Norway’s goal machine, Erling Haaland, who has been sidelined due to injury in recent weeks. Antoine Semenyo of Ghana has scored the game-winning goal against Leeds United in late February and the first goal in the disappointing 2-2 draw with Nottingham Forest earlier this month. Marmoush was given a starting brief for Saturday’s Fifth Round match against Newcastle after the Black Star was benched. He was tasked with leading the line and taking Haaland’s place as the goal threat. He did not let me down. Two minutes after halftime, Marmoush gave City the lead after Savinho’s equalizer had neutralized Harvey Barnes’ first goal. Matheus Nunes’s deadly cross from the right was handled by Nico

O’Reilly, and the Egypt international was an eager receiver of the loose ball, sending a powerful shot from close range into Aaron Ramsdale’s net. Newcastle rang the changes to find a way back into the match, but in the 65th minute, Marmoush killed the contest, again following excellent work from Nunes. The power Marmoush can generate with such little backlift, coupled with his lithe agility, is reminiscent of Jermain Defoe or City great Sergio Aguero, with the combination giving the Egyptian an unpredictability and deadline on the edge of the box that few in the Prem can match. Neither goals were indicative of a player struggling for form this season, yet Marmoush delivered a performance that belied his struggles at City during this testing campaign, with the 27-year-old a constant threat and lethal presence in the final third. Newcastle will be sick of the sight of him; seven of Marmoush’s 14 City goals have come against the Magpies, with the forward appearing to enjoy the Midas touch when up against Eddie Howe’s side. This was his second double of the season -- the first came

against Newcastle in another 3-1 victory for City last month -- and sends Guardiola’s side through to the FA Cup quarter-finals, where they’ve been rewarded by a home tie against Liverpool on April 4. By this point, Haaland will likely be back leading the line, but Marmoush’s mini renaissance in recent weeks suggests he has a big role to play during the final months of the season. The attacker has five goals in his 11 appearances since the Africa Cup of Nations, compared with one in his 15 outings for the Sky Blues before the tournament. He showed flashes of his instinctive finishing, dangerous pace and intelligent movement during the biennial showpiece in Morocco, even if it proved to be a frustrating competition for Egypt. However, it may have had the unexpected bi-product of shaking Marmoush into life during a season in which he’s largely looked a shadow of his Eintracht Frankfurt self. A late bloomer, the 27-year-old scored 15 goals in 17 Bundesliga outings during the first half of the 24-25 season -- following on from 12 league goals the year before

Matthew Hayden is named batting coach by the Gujarat Titans

New Delhi: Gujarat Titans appointed Australian cricket legend Matthew Hayden as their batting coach for the IPL 2026 season, as announced on Tuesday. Hayden, a two-time ODI World Cup winner, boasts an impressive international career with 273 matches played for Australia, accumulating over 15,000 runs and contributing to several ICC tournament victories. Vikram Solanki, the Director of Cricket for Gujarat Titans, emphasized the importance of this appointment during a critical phase for the franchise, which is dedicated to excellence and long-term success. He noted that Hayden’s extensive experience and mentoring skills will be vital in developing the team’s batting identity moving forward.

Derrick Jones and Yaw Yeboah are banned for life by MLS for wagering on their own games

New Delhi: Derrick Jones and Yaw Yeboah were banned for life by Major League Soccer on Monday for “extensive” gambling, including on games involving their own teams. The two once won a wager that Jones would be given a yellow card. According to MLS, it hired a law firm to look into “suspicious betting alerts.” In late October 2025, the players were put on administrative leave while the review was conducted.

Both participants wagered heavily on soccer throughout the 2024 and 2025 seasons, including on their own teams, according to the research. According to the league, “in one instance, both players bet on Jones to draw a yellow card during a match on October 19, 2024, which he received.” In 2024, Yeboah and Jones shared a season with the Columbus Crew. While Yeboah joined for Los Angeles FC, where he made 17 appearances in 2025, Jones remained with the Crew for the 2025 campaign. He presently plays in China after both parties decided to terminate his contract with LAFC in January. Jones, 28, immigrated to the US

India’s World Cup-winning team will receive a cash incentive of INR 131 crore, according to the BCCI

New Delhi: The BCCI has offered a cash reward of INR 131 crore for the team after India successfully defended their T20 World Cup championship. The BCCI released a statement saying, “The Board once again congratulates the players, support staff, and selectors on this historic achievement and wishes them continued success in the future.”

In Ahmedabad on Sunday, India defeated New Zealand by 96 runs after scoring 255 for 5 thanks to half-centuries from their top three players, Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson, and Abhishek Sharma.

Then, with figures of 4 for 15 in his four overs,



Jasprit Bumrah damaged New Zealand’s chase. For an unprecedented third time, India won the T20 World Cup. England (2010 and 2022) and the West Indies (2012 and 2016) have each won the tournament twice. Additionally, no prior defending champion had even advanced to the final, becoming India the first

side to win consecutive men’s T20 World Cups. Additionally, India is the first team to win the competition at home. The Indian men now own the Champions Trophy and the T20 World Cup, and they will have the opportunity to add the ODI World Cup trophy to their collection the following year.



as a youngster despite being born in Ghana. He played for Nashville SC, Houston Dynamo, Charlotte FC, and most recently Columbus after rising through the Philadelphia Union’s junior ranks. Over his career, Jones has appeared in 131 league games. Yeboah, also 28, is a graduate of the Right to Dream academy and originally hails from Accra, Ghana. He joined Manchester City in 2014 and went on loan to a number of sides, even-

tually landing at Wisla Kraków before being transferred to the Crew before the 2022 season. With the Crew, Yeboah matured into one of the best left wing-backs in the league, winning MLS Cup with Columbus in 2023. In 2021, MLS suspended Sporting Kansas City midfielder Felipe Hernández for betting on games. It terminated his contract in 2024 after he violated league gambling policies a second time.

Neymar is racing against time to be called up to Brazil



New Delhi: Neymar’s ambitions of fighting his way back into Brazil’s squad ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026 have been dealt a another setback as he will miss Santos’ Brazilian Championship match against Mirassol on Tuesday due to persistent physical tiredness. Neymar’s absence, according to Santos, was precautionary, but the timing is unfortunate because Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti arranged a journey from Rio de Janeiro to Sao Paulo to watch the 34-year-old play. According to sources connected to the Brazilian FA (CBF) and the technical committee of the national team, Neymar’s absence from Tuesday’s game surprised and frustrated both the CBF and Ancelotti, who had anticipated to get a close-up look at the No. 10. Ancelotti has made it clear he will only select players who are fully fit and can meet Brazil’s physical demands. Missing Tuesday’s match could cost Neymar a place in the national team squad being announced on March 16 for friendlies against France and Croatia on March 26 and 31. Neymar, Brazil’s all-time leading scorer with 79 goals in 128 appearances,

has not played for his country since October 2023, when he suffered serious knee ligament injuries that have hampered his comeback. Since returning to boyhood club Santos from Saudi Arabia in January 2025, he has shown flashes of his old form but has struggled to string together a consistent run of matches. Brazil’s attacking options include several in-form players such as Vinicius Jr., Estevao, Raphinha, Joao Pedro, Gabriel Martinelli, Endrick, Igor Jesus and Matheus Cunha. Ancelotti will continue with his visit to avoid the impression that he was just going to see Neymar, although that was the principal reason for travelling. Neymar is expected to be available for Sunday’s match against Corinthians at Vila Belmiro. However, Ancelotti will attend Botafogo vs Flamengo in Rio de Janeiro that day, with his assistant coaches assigned to monitor the Corinthians game. Time seems to be running out for Neymar with Brazil set to make its final World Cup call-up in May, with the finals being held in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. from June 11 to July 19.