

## AIUDF Chief Badruddin Ajmal Declares Assets Worth ₹222 Crore

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** In the run-up to the Assembly elections in Assam, Badruddin Ajmal, chief of the All India United Democratic Front and noted businessman, has declared assets worth over ₹222 crore in his latest election affidavit.

This marks a significant increase from the ₹151.71 crore he had declared during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, reflecting a rise of more than ₹70 crore within two years.

Ajmal, a prominent perfume baron associated with the global brand Ajmal Perfumes, is contesting from the newly created Binnakandi constituency in Hojai district. His candidature signals a return to state-level politics after his defeat in Dhubri in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections—a seat he had held continuously since 2009.



According to the affidavit, his immovable assets have risen to ₹169.90 crore, up from ₹123.36 crore in 2024. Movable assets have also increased sharply to ₹52.43 crore from ₹28.34 crore earlier.

Ajmal's asset portfolio includes nine vehicles, four residential properties in Mumbai and Delhi valued at ₹57.72 crore, and investments across sectors such as real estate, nature care, and aromatics. The affidavit also mentions a licensed firearm among his possessions.

His spouse, Rizwaana Badruddin Ajmal, has declared movable assets worth ₹31.08 lakh and immovable assets of ₹6.82 lakh.

Ajmal's properties include agricultural and non-agricultural land, as well as residential holdings spread across Assam, Karnataka, and other states.

The affidavit further lists liabilities amounting to ₹4.45 crore, primarily loans from financial institutions.

Ajmal's substantial increase in declared wealth has become a major talking point among voters, especially as financial disclosures of candidates draw heightened public scrutiny ahead of the polls.

## India's Oldest Working Journalist Lalbiakthanga Pachuau Celebrates 99th Birthday In Mizoram

**Aizawl, Mar 25:** Lalbiakthanga Pachuau, widely recognised as India's oldest working journalist, marked his 99th birthday while continuing his role as Editor of the long-running daily Zoram Tlangau, underscoring a lifetime dedicated to public service, media, and community development. Regional news subscription Born in Saichal village, Pachuau displayed leadership from an early age, serving as a Boy Scout Troop Leader and later as a trainer for the Mizo Signal Corps. At 18, he joined the Assam Regiment on August 28, 1945, during the Second World War, serving under the British Army. His military career included deployment to Jammu and Kashmir in 1948 during the conflict with Pakistan, followed by postings in Bihar and a return to Kashmir before retiring voluntarily in 1962 with an "Exemplary" character certificate.

During his service, he was awarded multiple honours, including the War Medal (1939–45), Burma Star, Independent Medal (1947), Jammu & Kashmir General Service Medal, and Sainya Seva Medal. His contributions extended into social reform and cooperative movements. As Chairman of the Free Zone Committee during the 1990s, he worked to combat rising drug and alcohol abuse in Aizawl. He also held lead-



ership roles in the Mizoram Social Defence Union and was instrumental in strengthening cooperative institutions, including serving as the first President of the Mizoram State Cooperative Union for ten consecutive years. His recommendations at the national level led to the es-

tablishment of the Mizoram Cooperative Apex Bank. India tourism packages Pachuau's journalism career began in 1953 while still in the army. After retirement, he pursued the field more actively, founding Zoram Tlangau in January 1980. The publication continues to run

daily, reflecting his enduring commitment to the profession.

In 2016, following verification by the Mizoram Journalists' Association, he was formally recognised as the oldest working journalist in India at the age of 94. The recognition was later endorsed by

the Mizoram government's Press Accreditation Committee, and the distinction remains uncontested. India tourism packages Even at 99, Pachuau remains actively engaged in journalism. He has served three terms as President of the Mizoram Journalists' Association, during which key institutions such as the Aizawl Press Club and the MJA Building were established. He has also been honoured as a Prominent Press Representative for Life by the state's Information and Public Relations Department. Earlier, Mrs Florence Zotluangpuii, Secretary of the Sericulture Department, delivered the welcome address and expressed gratitude to all participants and partners. The highlight of the evening was a stunning display of exquisite silk garments and creations by fashion designers Tluangpuii Hmar and Violeta by Sangzuali. Insightful addresses were also delivered by Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena and Dr. Naresh Babu N, Joint Secretary (Technical) & CEO of the Silk Mark Organisation of India (SMOI), Central Silk Board. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Lalrinawma, Director of the Sericulture Department, integrating silk with tourism, leveraging digital platforms and e-commerce, collaborating.

## High Voter Turnout, Low Political Security: Women Leaders Remain Marginal in Assam Politics

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** Assam continues to witness a striking contrast between strong participation of women voters and the limited political security of women leaders. With over 1.24 crore women voters—nearly half of the State's 2.49 crore electorate—women have consistently outperformed men in turnout, recording 82.42% in 2021 and 84.72% in 2016 Assembly elections. Despite this, women politicians across party lines remain vulnerable to exclusion and shifting political fortunes. A recent example is Nandita Gorlosa, a sitting Cabinet Minister and MLA from Haflong, who was dropped from the ticket list by the Bharatiya Janata Party and subsequently joined the Indian National Congress to remain in the electoral race. In Kokrajhar, the Bodoland People's Front replaced veteran leader Pramila Rani Brahma with Sewli Mohilary, despite Brahma expressing her wish to contest what she termed her "last election." This move highlights a recurring trend of sidelining experienced women leaders. The precarious nature of women's political careers is further reflected in cases like Angoorlata Deka, once a prominent youth face of the BJP after her 2016 victory, who did not return to electoral politics after losing in 2021. Similarly, Ankita Dutta continues to face uncertainty despite her political lin-



age as the daughter of former APCC president Anjan Dutta. There are notable exceptions. Senior BJP leader and Finance Minister Ajanta Neog is seeking her sixth consecutive term, making her one of the longest-serving women legislators in the State. Leaders like Bijoya Chakravarty and Sushmita Dev have also sustained long and influential careers.

However, such examples remain limited. According to Madhurima Goswami of the Chandraprabha Saikiani Centre for Women Studies at Tezpur University, political structures often reduce women's participation to tokenism, with limited autonomy and decision-making power. Other leaders like Renupoma Rajkhowa, Bismita Gogoi, and former Union Minister Raneer Narah have also faced instability in sustaining their political careers.

The numbers for the 2026 Assem-

bly elections further underline this imbalance. The Congress has fielded 14 women candidates, while the BJP has nominated only seven. The All India United Democratic Front has fielded two women candidates, while regional parties like the Asom Gana Parishad and BPF have limited representation to just one woman candidate each. In the 2021 Assembly elections, only six out of 76 women candidates were elected to the 126-member House, while in 2016, just eight out of 91 women candidates secured victory.

Observers note that while women are often projected as symbols of inclusivity during campaigns, they are rarely supported with long-term organisational backing or electoral security. The 2026 elections once again reinforce a persistent reality—women in Assam politics are visible and celebrated, but not always secure.

## Kuki SoO Groups Dissolve Armed Wings After Historic Peace Agreement in Assam

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** In a major step toward lasting peace in Assam, Kuki Suspension of Operations (SoO) groups have announced the dissolution of their armed organisations following the signing of a Memorandum of Settlement with the Central and state governments on March 15.

The groups—including the Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), United Kuki Defence Army (UKDA), and Kuki Liberation Army (KLA/KLO)—confirmed that all affiliated units have been disbanded with effect from March 23.

In a joint statement, the organisations termed the agreement a "historic milestone," marking a transition from armed conflict to cooperation and opening a new phase of reconciliation and political engagement in the region.

The groups have directed their cadres to vacate designated camps, return to their homes, and reintegrate into civilian life in accordance with the Constitution of India. They also urged members and supporters to cooperate with authorities in maintaining peace and stability.

Addressing concerns raised by certain sections, the groups stated that they had moderated their demands to avoid potential conflicts with other communities. Proposals such as a Kuki Tribes Autonomous Regional Council in Karbi Anglong and the creation of a separate Borail district in Dima Hasao have been set aside in the interest of broader harmony.

They further clarified that any future demands—such as the creation of new MAC seats—would only be pursued after consultations with all stakeholders.

While acknowledging concerns and protests in some quarters, the groups said the government had taken a balanced and inclusive approach. At the same time, they urged both the Centre and the state government to ensure timely and faithful implementation of the settlement, stressing that the credibility of the peace process depends on it.

In a strong warning, the organisations stated that any individual or entity claiming to act in their name after the dissolution would be considered unauthorised.

Reaffirming their commitment to peace and development, the groups said the agreement offers a crucial opportunity to build a stable and harmonious future for all communities in the region.

## No Central Data on Hate Crimes Against Northeast People, Government Tells Lok Sabha

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** The Central government informed the Lok Sabha that no centralised data is maintained on incidents of hate speech, racial slurs, harassment, and discrimination against people from the Northeast.

Responding to a query by Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai stated that "police" and "public order" fall under the jurisdiction of state governments as per the Constitution of India.

He emphasised that state governments are responsible for the prevention, detection, registration, and investigation of crimes, as well as the prosecution of offenders through their respective law enforcement agencies.

Rai noted that the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) compiles and publishes crime statistics submitted by states and Union Territories in its annual Crime in India reports, with data currently available up to 2023. However, he clarified that incidents specifically involving discrimination against people from the Northeastern states are not tracked separately at the national level.

Despite the absence of centralised data, the minister highlighted that existing legal provisions allow action against hate speech, racial remarks, and discriminatory behaviour, including those targeting individuals from the Northeast. He also outlined measures taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs to address safety concerns. These include issuing advisories to states and Union Territories, appointing nodal officers to handle complaints, and sensitising police personnel.

Among specific initiatives, Rai mentioned the Special Police Unit for North East Region (SPUNER) under Delhi Police, along with dedicated helplines and email support systems to assist victims.

Additionally, a three-member monitoring committee—set up following a Supreme Court of India directive—regularly reviews cases of racial discrimination and oversees grievance redressal mechanisms for people from the Northeast residing in different parts of the country.

## Senapati announces free cataract screening and surgery drive

**Imphal, Mar 25:** The District Administration of Senapati, in collaboration with the Directorate of Social Welfare and the District Health Society, has announced a specialized medical initiative under the Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY). This drive aims to combat vision impairment among the elderly by providing free cataract screenings and surgical interventions. Recognizing the importance of eye health in maintaining the independence of senior citizens, the "Special Drive for Cataract Screening & Surgical Camps" will target individuals aged 50 years and above. The camp is designed to be a comprehensive "one-stop" health event for eligible residents, offering Professional Eye Screening, Provision of necessary medicines and medical equipment, Free cataract surgeries for patients identified during the screening phase and Transportation arrangements for patients where necessary. The screening drive will be held across various locations in the district from 10 am onwards at Willong Sub-Health Centre on March 30, Sub-District Hospital, Mao on March 31, Paomata Primary Health Centre on April 6, Phaibung Primary Health Centre on April 7 and Oinam Hill Primary Health Centre on April 8. The Deputy Commissioner of Senapati encouraged all eligible senior citizens and their families to take full advantage of this government initiative. This drive represents a significant effort to bring high-quality healthcare directly to the doorsteps of the community, ensuring that no elderly citizen suffers from treatable blindness due to a lack of resources.

## Governor graces Mizoram Silk Runway event in Aizawl

**Aizawl, Mar 25:** Mizoram Governor General Vijay Kumar Singh, (Retd), graced the grand fashion show titled "Tlangro: The Mizoram Silk Runway" on Tuesday evening at Aijal Club Park in Aizawl.

The event, jointly organised by the Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, the Sericulture Department, Government of Mizoram and the National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC), aimed to showcase Mizoram's rich silk heritage while celebrating the artistry, craftsmanship, and immense untapped potential of the state's silk industry.

The First Lady, Bharti Singh, also attended the programme. Other dignitaries present included Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena and Dr. Naresh Babu N, Joint Secretary (Technical) & CEO of the Silk Mark Organisation of India (SMOI), Central Silk Board, who attended as Guests of Honour.

In his address, Governor Singh described sericulture as a sector with huge economic potential that remains largely untapped. He highlighted that Mizoram is capable of producing all four major varieties of silk - mulberry, eri, muga, and oak tasar - and has the natural advantages to emerge as the "Capital



of All Kinds of Silk" in the country. He noted that the state's climate and environment are highly suitable for silkworm rearing. With growing global demand for eco-friendly and sustainable textiles, Mizoram's natural fibre, particularly eri silk, holds strong potential to capture significant international markets. The Governor emphasised that sericulture aligns perfectly with rural development and women's empowerment, serving as an ideal supplementary income source that complements traditional agricultural activities. "Sericulture can become a powerful pathway for economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and sustainable development," he said, while stressing the need for strong collaboration among

farmers, government agencies, researchers, and local communities to transform the sector into a genuine engine of growth for the state.

The Governor outlined several key measures required to advance sericulture, including improving awareness and training programmes, ensuring the availability of quality inputs, adopting modern technology, strengthening infrastructure and market linkages, promoting research and development, encouraging greater youth participation, and ensuring effective government support and policy implementation. He also called for sustainability to remain at the core through environmentally friendly practices. Referring to muga silk -- a golden-hued variety

traditionally associated with Northeast India -- the Governor expressed confidence that Mizoram could take a leading role in its expansion. He suggested strategies such as increasing host plant cultivation, developing a distinct regional brand identity, enhancing skill development in rearing techniques, promoting value-added products, integrating silk with tourism, leveraging digital platforms and e-commerce, collaborating with fashion designers and the broader industry, and securing robust government and institutional backing.

Earlier, Florence Zotluangpuii, Secretary of the Sericulture Department, delivered the welcome address and expressed gratitude to all participants and partners. The highlight of the evening was a stunning display of exquisite silk garments and creations by fashion designers Tluangpuii Hmar and Violeta by Sangzuali. Insightful addresses were also delivered by Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena and Dr. Naresh Babu N, Joint Secretary (Technical) & CEO of the Silk Mark Organisation of India (SMOI), Central Silk Board. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Lalrinawma, Director of the Sericulture Department.

NE/EAST

## Two Civilians Injured

# Sharkaphung Shooting TNFO Requests Security Strengthening

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** Kezieke Youth Organisation (KYO) organised an informative Oyster Mushroom Farming Programme at the Kezieke Community Building on Tuesday, drawing the participation of 38 community members, with women showing notable enthusiasm for sustainable agricultural practices.

The programme was chaired by KYO general secretary, Neikhrietuo Albert, who conducted the proceedings. The event began with an invocation by Teisovilie Rio, vice chairman of the

Kezieke Welfare Board (KWB), setting a reflective tone for the gathering.

Delivering greetings, KYO president Lhoulaneituo Pienyü underscored the importance of skill-based initiatives in empowering youth. KWB vice chairman, Tseilievnuo Sale, encouraged the community to embrace innovative and income-generating activities such as mushroom farming.

The training session was led by KYO vice president, Medokhriezo Marcus Kengurüse,

who shared practical techniques and insights into oyster mushroom cultivation, highlighting its potential for small-scale entrepreneurship. The interactive session enabled participants to exchange ideas and engage actively with the resource person.

The initiative reflects KYO’s continued commitment to promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities and empowering youth through practical knowledge and community participation.

## Metro Orange Line may reach Sector V ‘by year-end’, Chingrighata clearance key hurdle

**Kolkata, Mar 25:** The Metro Orange Line will reach Sector V by the end of this year if the clearance for lifting concrete decks at Chingrighata is granted by the police this month, railway officials said. “Once the gap at Chingrighata is plugged, the executing agency is expected to take another seven to eight months to make the line ready for commercial services between Belegkata and Salt Lake Sector V,” said a Metro official.

The agency needs police permission to lift concrete slabs to bridge the gap at Chingrighata. Traffic blocks must be enforced for over two consecutive weekends for the work. The police nod has been pending for months, despite multiple prods from Calcutta High Court. Construction at Chingrighata has remained stalled for over a year. The Supreme Court on Monday rebuked the Bengal government for the long-stalled Metro construction at Chingrighata as a “dereliction of constitutional duties” and an attempt to politicise a project that would benefit people. The bench rejected the state’s plea that clearing the project now would violate the model code of conduct, apart from triggering traffic roadblocks at one of the city’s busiest intersections. The stalemate at Chingrighata remains the key hurdle, but it is not the only missing link in the upcoming New Garia-Airport Metro corridor (Orange Line). The Orange Line viaduct has at least four more gaps between Chingrighata and the airport. Concrete segments need lifting at most of these locations. “There are gaps that need to be bridged. But there is a complete stalemate only at Chingrighata. At other locations, there is some movement. We are finding ways to do the job without depending on traffic blocks,” said an official in the RVNL.



Beyond Chingrighata, the first gap in the viaduct is just before the Technopolis (Nabadiganta) station. A portion of the station itself is also incomplete because permission for a traffic block is pending. Technopolis, the station after the IT Centre, will serve passengers headed to Sector V, where the Orange Line meets the East-West Metro or the Green Line. The third gap lies between Nabadiganta and Nazrul Tirtha stations. There are two discontinuities in this stretch: One just after Nabadiganta station and the other just before Nazrul Tirtha. The fourth gap in the viaduct is between the Chinara Park crossing and VIP Road. Construction of the Chinara Park station is also incomplete.

# Party strengthening at the local level is a top priority for NPF

**Kohima, Mar 25:** Naga People’s Front (NPF) carried out a series of consultative and constituency tour programmes across Wokha, Kohima, and Zunheboto divisions on March 24, focusing on strengthening the party at the grassroots and fostering unity among members.

workers to remain committed. Vice president of the Central Women Wing, Grace Murry, emphasized working for the welfare of the people rather than personal gain. Janbemo Humtsoe of the Social Media Cell (COB) called for unity and honesty, while Zuthungbeni Humtsoe highlighted the role of youth in using digital platforms for growth. In Kohima, NPF 9th Kohima Town AC held its consultative meeting at

the Division Office. Former MLA Dr. Nicky Kire said the meeting was convened to foster unity and oneness among members. Vice president COB Kohima Division, Menuovilie Kesiezie, recalled the party’s formation in 1963 under the Cock symbol and encouraged members to work hard and identify the best candidate for the upcoming election.

AC president Metekhrielie Mejura, in his presidential address, called on members to treat politics as an important institution and to act as role models in society. Vice presidents COB, Guonice Sirie and Theyiekelie Tachü, spoke on good governance and discipline, stressing the importance of Kohima Town AC as the capital constituency. The programme was

chaired by Neiba Bio, working president of Kohima Town AC, with invocation by Acü Dzüvichü, Women President, and vote of thanks by Neibau Kire, president of the Farmers’ Wing. Farmers’ Wing president, Kiheto Phuleshe, lauded the leadership of minister for PWD (R&B), G. Kaito Aye, describing him as the senior-most legislator among the 60 elected members. He urged people to refrain from unnecessary election contests and to appreciate their leader’s contributions. NPF COB secretary, Hutovi Awomi, stressed the need for proper party structures, while general secretary Kakishe Muru encouraged diligence and sincerity. Kuhoi Zhimomi urged respect among party officials regardless of positions.

## Security forces dismantle Kuki and Naga bunkers in Kamjong and Ukhrul

**Imphal, Mar 25:** Security forces in Manipur destroyed bunkers set up by Kuki and Naga volunteers amid ongoing violence in the interdistricts of Kamjong and Ukhrul on Tuesday, according to official reports on Wednesday.

This follows appeals from the Sinakeithe Village Authority and the Central Working Committee of the Tangkhul Naga Foothills Organisation, urging the government to immediately dismantle the illegal bunkers installed by the Kuki Liberation Army (KLA) at the Lungter foothill in Sinakeithe, Kamjong district. Security forces conducted simultaneous operations at multiple locations within the jurisdiction of Litan police station in Ukhrul district. Bunkers were destroyed and dismantled at Lengiangching and Mongkat Chepu villages, affecting both communities. Many fired cartridges



were also recovered during the operations. Following the operation, in which the bulk of the bunkers on both sides were rendered ineffective, firing has been reduced considerably. Area domination has been established by security agencies through patrolling and strategic deployment of troops. In the neighbouring Kangpokpi district, security forces recovered several items from the general area of Tingkhai Khullen and Nepali Khutti under New Keithelmanbi PS. These included one 9mm carbine with magazine, two country-made 9mm pistols, four country-made 9mm pistol magazines, three country-made single-barrel bolt-action rifles, two country-made single-barrel pull-mechanism rifles, two country-made improvised mortars, seven 12-bore cartridges, 55 rounds of ammunition of different calibres, and two kilograms of pellets.

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## Rs. 3.5 cr Repjenyuba & Sakusangba Memorial Complex inaugurated

**Imphal, Mar 25:** The Longsa Senso Moria Mission (LSMM) Repjenyuba & Sakusangba Memorial Complex, constructed at an estimated cost of Rs. 3.5 crore in memory of Repjenyuba and Sakusangba—the first to introduce Christianity to Longsa village in 1916—was inaugurated on Tuesday at Landmark Colony, Dimapur.

The complex was inaugurated by minister for Rural Development and SIRD, Metsubo Jamir, in the presence of advisor for Sericulture and Minor-

ty Affairs, Imkongmar, and Lok Sabha MP S Supongmeren Jamir. A dedicatory prayer was offered by Rev Süpongchiten, pastor of Longsa Baptist Arogo. In his address, Metsubo Jamir emphasized the importance of gratitude, urging the gathering to remain thankful for blessings received. He highlighted Longsa village’s distinction of being home to two MLAs and a Member of Parliament, describing it as a rare achievement. He encouraged the youth to understand the origins and signifi-

cance of the Moria Mission, noting that the newly inaugurated complex should be regarded as a blessing.

Advisor Imkongmar lauded the committee’s perseverance, stating that carrying out a project for 15 years was a remarkable achievement. He recalled the pivotal role of Repjenyuba and Sakusangba in guiding the community towards Christianity, and added that the complex would serve not only Longsa villagers but also the wider Ao community in Dimapur.

## EC plans events to increase Assamese voting turnout

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** Special initiatives ranging from roping in a popular vlogger and a para-cyclist as campaign icons to organising street plays and rangoli competitions have been launched across Assam to encourage maximum voter participation in the assembly polls.

The initiatives are being carried out under the Systematic Voters’ Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme as per the directions of the Election Commission, an official statement said.

“With the objective of enhancing voter turnout and spreading awareness about citizens’ fundamental democratic rights and responsibilities, a wide range of activities are being organised across the state under the supervision of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO),” it said. As part of the campaign, authorities are organising street plays, drawing and rangoli competitions, slogan-writing contests, digital poster-making events, wall-writing drives, news presentation competitions and workshops, among other creative awareness programmes. Several districts have also introduced unique mascots and enlisted popular local personalities as SVEEP icons to connect with voters more effectively. Among the mascots introduced are ‘Bakhar’ in Lakhimpur, ‘Ganabandhu’ in Sonitpur, ‘Jolou’ in Jorhat, ‘Chameli’ in Golaghat, and ‘Dwimlu’ and ‘Sikhiri’ in Kokrajhar. To reach out to younger voters,

Jorhat district has enlisted popular Northeast vlogger Abhinav Borah, known by his social media handle ‘LazyGuy’, as a campaign face. In Lakhimpur, actor Rajiv Duwari has been designated as an SVEEP icon.

Rakesh Banik, regarded as the first international para-cyclist from the Northeast, will also promote voter awareness through various outreach programmes across districts, the statement said. Expressing optimism about a higher turnout, CEO Anurag Goel appealed to all voters in the state to exercise their democratic right. Polling for the 126-member assembly will be held on April 9, while the votes will be counted on May 4. Assam govt declares public holiday on April 9 for assembly polls. The Assam government declared a public holiday on April 9 as assembly polls are



scheduled on that day, according to notifications. The public holiday has been declared under Section 25 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881, according to a notification issued by the General Administration Department’s Commissioner and Secretary, MS Manivann. All government and non-government offices, urban local bodies, educational institutions, business and commercial establishments, including banks, will remain closed on that day, according to the notification. Another notification issued by the Labour Welfare Department said April 9 will be a paid holiday in all factories, tea plantations, shops and public entertainment or amusement establishments. Polling for the 126-member assembly will be held on that day, with the counting of votes scheduled on May 4.

## Naro clan in Dzülhami village, restores ancestral Vero name



**Guwahati, Mar 25:** In a significant development, members of the Naro clan in Dzülhami village, Phek district, have formally resolved to restore their original identity as the Vero clan. Historically known as the Vero clan, the group had over time come to be identified as the Naro clan due to certain circumstances. After collective deliberation, 51 households comprising 235 members unanimously declared that they shall henceforth be known and addressed as Vero clan. The decision reflects a renewed commitment to preserving their ancestral identity, heritage, and lineage. Community leaders described the move as a positive step and reaffirmation of their historical roots. The declaration was witnessed by representatives from across Phek district and Western Chakhesang areas. Later, Posetso also declared that the Nyekha clan, comprising 21 households and 89 members from Suthozu Nawu, would henceforth

— The Naro clan in Dzülhami village, Phek district, Nagaland, has officially restored its ancestral name to the Vero clan.

be recognised as Vero clan. Vezokho Vero, pastor of Naga Shisha Hoho Prayer Centre, Kohima, administered the Act of Blessing for the formal declaration. Speaking on the occasion, Sachopra Vero, (Retd) secretary to Govt of Nagaland, urged the gathering to maintain unity and always put God first in everything. “We need to be honest and truthful in all our dealings with others,” he said. Zhopra Vero, Kedahge, FGN, Müdosüh, Duvelhü, Vethi Vero, Vekho Vero, Zuvahu Vero, Kuduvo Vero and others also spoke at the programme. The programme was chaired by Müdokhrüpa while Sevotso Vero, pastor Chakhesang Baptist Church Mokokchung invoked God’s blessing. Vote of thanks was proposed by Zapove.

## Kishore Pradyot Debbarma abstains

**Agartala, Mar 25:** Notably, party supremo Pradyot Kishore Debbarma is not among the candidates this time. In the previous TTAADC elections, he contested from the Takarjala-Jampuijala constituency. For the upcoming polls, the party has nominated Suraj Debbarma, who is also the president of the Youth Tipra Federation (YTF), from the same seat.

The candidate list indicates a mix of continuity and organisational restructuring, with several new faces being introduced alongside experienced leaders. Senior functionaries such as Chief Executive Member Purna Chandra Jamatia and Chairman Jagadish Debbarma have been retained in their respective constituencies. Former MLA Rajeshwar Debbarma has been nominated from the Kulai-Champahour seat. Among other notable nominations, retired civil servant Chandra Kumar Jamatia has been fielded from the Maharani-Chelagang constituency. The party has also nominated leaders such as Bhabha Ranjan Reang from Damcherra-Jampui, Swapan Kumar Chakma from Machmara, and Umashankar Reang from Dasda-Kan-

chanpur.

In Karamchharra, Ratish Tripura has been selected as the party’s candidate, while Hangsa Kumar Tripura will contest from Chhawmanu. Hollywood Chakma has been nominated from Manu-Chailengta, and Dharendra Debbarma from Demchhara-Kachuchhrra. Khotrojoy Reang will contest from Ganganagar-Gandachhara, while Prasmit Debbarma has been fielded from Halahali-Asharambari. Further, Utpal Debbarma will contest from Maharani-Pur-Teliamura and James Debbarma from Ramchandra Ghat. Rabindra Debbarma has been nominated from Simna-Tamakari, and Runei Debbarma from Bodhjungnagar-Wakinagar. Jiten Debbarma will contest from Mandainagar-Pulinpur, while Gita Debbarma has been fielded from Pekuarjala-Jamjeijaynagar. From Amtali-Golaghati, Buddha Kumar Debbarma has been nominated, while C.K. Jamatia will contest from Maharani-Chelagang. David Muring will represent the party in Kathalia-Mirja-Rajapur, Kamal Kalai from Ampinagar, and Dhananjoy Tripura from Raima Valley.

# Gaurav Gogoi’s assets jump to Rs 7.57 cr from Rs 4.66 cr in 2 years

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Gaurav Gogoi and his wife Elizabeth Clare Gogoi have seen their declared assets soar to Rs 7.57 crore in 2026 from Rs 4.66 crore in 2024, with Elizabeth claiming the lion’s share.

According to his nomination affidavit, Gogoi’s movable assets jumped to Rs 72.59 lakh from Rs 38.30 lakh, while immovable assets increased to Rs 2.49 crore from Rs 2.25 crore since the last Parliamentary elections. His wife, meanwhile, owns no immovable property but saw her movable assets skyrocket to Rs 4.36 crore from Rs 2.03 crore.

# Coroner’s inquiry in Singapore concludes Zubeen ‘s death was an accidental drowning

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** Delivering the final findings, a coroner’s inquiry in Singapore into the death of Zubeen Garg has ruled that the singer’s death was due to accidental drowning. Zubeen was drowned during a swim off Lazarus Island in Singapore on September 19, 2025. Delivering his findings, State Coroner Adam Nakhoda said there was no reason to disagree with the Police Coast Guard’s investigation conclusion after analysing the evidence before him. A death certificate issued by the Singapore General Hospital listed the cause of death as drowning. Zubeen had consumed alcohol and refused a life vest before jumping off a yacht, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) David Lim testified on the first day of the inquiry on January 14. While his friends tried to convince him to return to the yacht, Zubeen became motionless. He was pulled back onto the yacht, where efforts were made to resuscitate him, but to no avail. The artist was in Singapore for the North East India Festival, a cultural festival organised by the Assamese community in Singapore. He was scheduled to perform on Sept 20. The captain of the vessel, who also testified on January 14, said that Zubeen and about 15 others had boarded the yacht at Marina at Keppel Bay at around 2 pm. He said the singer was so unsteady, his friends had to hold onto his arms as he boarded the vessel. The captain’s assistant told the court in January that no one had forced Zubeen to consume alcohol or enter the water. He added that the singer and his entourage were informed aboard the yacht about the necessity of wearing life jackets before going for a swim. At about 2.30 pm, the group arrived near Lazarus Island. Zubeen initially put on a life jacket and jumped off the yacht. He later removed it while in the water, as he found it was too big for him. When he returned to the yacht, he had to be helped onboard as he was breathing heavily. “It was apparent he was already exhausted by the short swim. I find the exhaustion was apparent by the fact he was unable to get onto the yacht himself and required assistance,” the coroner pointed out. Later, Zubeen decided to join another man for a second swim towards Lazarus Island and subsequently got drowned.

Before he resumed swimming, he was handed a smaller life jacket but refused to wear it. “Seeing as his drowning occurred shortly after he turned back and swam back towards the yacht, I found it was possible he decided to do so as he was very fatigued or he felt something was not right with himself physically,” said the coroner. The coroner said there was also no evidence of any delay of administration of first aid, nor delay in getting Zubeen back to the mainland to send him to a hospital.

# Two siblings among three children drown in Churachandpur

**Imphal, Mar 25:** In a tragic incident, three children, including two siblings, lost their lives after they were drowned in a water-filled pit at a construction site near a security forces camp in Churachandpur district on Tuesday. The heart-wrenching incident took place near a security forces training centre at Gangpimual village, where the children, aged between three and five years, were playing. They accidentally fell into a nearly four-foot-deep pit that had recently been dug and was filled with rainwater, a district official said. The children, residents of Bezar Veng locality in Gangpimual village, were immediately rushed to Churachandpur District Hospital. However, doctors declared them brought dead.

# HVDC Key to Assam’s Growth Amid Rising Power Demand

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** As Assam’s infrastructure and industrial base expand, the state’s electricity demand is set to rise sharply over the next decade, underscoring the need to strengthen transmission alongside generation capacity. To ensure reliable and continuous power supply to industry, experts are advocating the adoption of High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) transmission systems. Unlike conventional alternating current networks, HVDC technology can transmit large volumes of electricity over long distances with significantly lower losses. For a geographically distant and grid-constrained region like Assam, this efficiency is critical. The state’s peak power requirement is projected to nearly triple from 2,800 MW in financial year 2024–25 to 6,153 MW by financial year 2032–33, highlighting the urgency of robust transmission planning. Assam’s Gross State Domestic Product has been growing at an annual rate of 8 to 9 percent, driven by infrastructure initiatives such as Asom Mala, the Act East Policy,

and sustained investments across petroleum, tea, tourism, and logistics. This growth trajectory is expected to accelerate further, with rising demand from commercial, high-tension industrial, and bulk supply segments. Industry stakeholders believe that strengthening transmission infrastructure, particularly through HVDC corridors, could unlock significant economic potential. “Investors prioritise reliability and scalability in power supply,” said a representative from an energy consultancy firm, adding, “If Assam can offer seamless grid connectivity through HVDC, it can attract industries that require high-quality power, from advanced manufacturing to digital infrastructure.” Large upcoming projects are expected to significantly increase electricity consumption. These include the Tata Semiconductor facility, along with capacity expansions by Oil India Limited and Numaligarh Refinery Limited. Under the Advantage Assam 2.0 initiative, manufacturing units with an aggregate demand of nearly 400

MW are being established. Overall, new industrial and infrastructure projects are likely to add around 1,000 MW to the state’s demand beyond baseline growth. In parallel, Assam is planning two pumped storage projects of 900 MW each. These projects will require substantial charging power during off-peak hours, potentially increasing off-peak demand by an additional 1,800 MW. This evolving demand profile will require a more flexible and responsive transmission network. Grid stability is another critical concern. The Northeast’s power system remains vulnerable to disruptions due to challenging terrain and extreme weather conditions. HVDC systems offer precise control over power flows, enabling operators to maintain stability even during sudden fluctuations, which becomes increasingly important as renewable energy integration rises. “We are looking at a future where the Northeast can emerge as the ‘battery of India,’” said Saddam Alam, an energy consultant. “But a modern economy cannot run on an ageing and constrained grid.



HVDC allows us to bypass congestion in the narrow Siliguri Corridor by transmitting more power through a smaller footprint. It is essential to unlocking the region’s full energy potential.” A senior expert echoed this view, saying, “Investment in HVDC sends a strong signal to industry. By reducing transmission losses and ensuring a steady flow of high-quality power, Assam can position itself as a competitive destination for energy-intensive sectors such as data centres and food processing. It is about ending the region’s energy isolation.” However,

challenges remain. HVDC systems require high upfront investment, particularly for converter stations, and demand specialised technical expertise. Despite this, industry experts argue that the long-term benefits far outweigh the initial costs. “The cost of not building this infrastructure is far greater,” said Vikram Sarma, an infrastructure analyst. “Without adequate transmission, we risk creating stranded generation assets. HVDC is the critical bridge that can convert Assam’s natural and industrial potential into sustained economic growth.”

# Mizoram TB Deaths Hit Six-Year High With 145 Fatalities In 2025

**Aizawl, Mar 25:** Mizoram recorded 145 deaths due to Tuberculosis (TB) and 2,275 new diagnoses over the past year, according to data released by the State Health Department on Tuesday. While the state saw a marginal decrease in total cases compared to the 2,291 recorded the previous year, the fatality rate has reached a six-year high. Of the 2,275 people diagnosed last year, 1,364 were males and 911 were females, the data said. A total of 146 people were diagnosed with multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), and 267 others were found to be suffering from both TB and HIV, it added. Among the newly diagnosed patients, 2,134 were above 14 years of age, and 141 were below 14 years, the data said. Aizawl district recorded the highest number of cases at 1,569, followed by Lunglei district (155), while Kolasib district, bordering Assam, reported



138 cases during the same year. Altogether, 145 people succumbed to TB during the period, marking the highest fatality in six years since 2020. Eighty-four per cent of the patients have been successfully cured, the data said. Of the 2,275 new cases detected in 2025, 1,900 were identified in government facilities, while the remaining 375 cases were found in private facilities, according to officials. They also said that while Mizoram experienced fluctuations in new TB cases over the past six

years, fatalities have continuously increased since 2020. While 31 people died of TB in 2020, the number of fatalities rose to 46 in 2021, 87 in 2022, 119 in 2023, and 136 in 2024, they added. Officials noted that a healthy competition is currently underway to establish villages free from Tuberculosis, under the “TB-Free Village” initiative. During 2025, as many as 150 villages across Mizoram were eligible to be declared TB-free. Among these, 74 villages achieved TB-free status for one year, 58 villages maintained the

milestone for two consecutive years, and 18 villages have remained TB-free for three consecutive years, they said. Within Aizawl district, 19 villages are eligible to be declared TB-free, four of which have maintained this status for two years in a row, officials added. Addressing the gathering, Sarma said the latest round of appointments has pushed the total number of government jobs provided so far to 1,45,449. He reiterated that his administration remains focused on transparent, merit-driven recruitment and will continue expanding employment opportunities across departments. Stating that the government has already exceeded its initial promise of one lakh jobs, Sarma said the total recruitment figure would soon cross 1.5 lakh and eventually move towards the two lakh mark. He linked future employment growth to major industrial initiatives, including,

# BPF Candidate Shyuli Mohilary Emerges Among Wealthiest in Assam Polls



**Guwahati, Mar 25:** In the ongoing Assembly elections in Assam, Shyuli Mohilary, wife of BTC chief Hagrama Mohilary, has emerged as one of the wealthiest candidates, drawing significant public attention. Contesting for the first time from the Kokrajhar constituency as a candidate of the Bodoland People’s Front (BPF), her affidavit submitted with the nomination reveals total assets worth ₹54 crore. According to the affidavit, Shyuli Mohilary earned ₹9.33 crore during the financial year 2024–25 and holds ₹31.69 lakh in cash. Her movable as-

sets alone are valued at ₹30.51 crore, including deposits spread across 37 savings and fixed deposit bank accounts. She also owns gold jewellery worth ₹32.50 lakh and a fleet of 32 vehicles, which includes private cars as well as commercial vehicles such as excavators, dumpers, tractors, and school buses. Her immovable assets are estimated at ₹23.53 crore at current market value. These include commercial properties in Kokrajhar and a vehicle showroom named “RNB Motors” located in Gossaigaon.

Interestingly, her total assets significantly exceed those of her husband Hagrama Mohilary. As per the affidavit, he holds ₹5.55 lakh in cash, movable assets worth ₹3.66 crore, and immovable properties valued at ₹5.49 crore. The disclosure of such substantial wealth has become a major talking point among voters, especially at a time when asset declarations of several candidates are under scrutiny. Observers note that Shyuli Mohilary’s financial profile positions her among the richest women candidates in the state’s electoral fray.

# Mizoram Governor Inaugurates Tlangro Silk Runway To Showcase State’s Rich Textile Heritage And Artistry

**Aizawl, Mar 25:** Mizoram Governor General (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh, PVSM, AVSM, YSM (Retd), graced the grand fashion show titled “Tlangro: The Mizoram Silk Runway” on Tuesday evening at Aijal Club Park in Aizawl. The event, jointly organised by the Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, the Sericulture Department, Government of Mizoram and the National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC), aimed to showcase Mizoram’s rich silk heritage while celebrating the artistry, craftsmanship, and immense untapped potential of the state’s silk industry. Breaking Headlines Updates The First Lady, Bharti Singh, also attended the programme. Other dignitaries present included Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena and Dr. Naresh Babu N, Joint Secre-



tary (Technical) & CEO of the Silk Mark Organisation of India (SMOI), Central Silk Board, who attended as Guests of Honour. In his address, Governor General (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh described sericulture as a sector with huge

economic potential that remains largely untapped. He highlighted that Mizoram is capable of producing all four major varieties of silk mulberry, eri, muga, and oak tasar and has the natural advantages to emerge as the “Capital of All

Kinds of Silk” in the country. He noted that the state’s climate and environment are highly suitable for silkworm rearing. With growing global demand for eco-friendly and sustainable textiles, Mizoram’s natural fibre, particularly eri silk, holds strong potential to capture significant international markets. The Governor emphasised that sericulture aligns perfectly with rural development and women’s empowerment, serving as an ideal supplementary income source that complements traditional agricultural activities. “Sericulture can become a powerful pathway for economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and sustainable development,” he said, while stressing the need for strong collaboration among farmers, government agencies, researchers, and local communities to transform the sector into a genuine engine state.

# A fun-filled adventure by Culture Club - preschool, powered by House of Play, brings kids and parents together on March 29

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** Guwahati is all set to witness its first-ever junior obstacle race, ‘Junior Circuit’, an experiential event designed for children and parents, on March 29 at the Arya College Playground. Organised by the Culture Club - preschool and powered by House of Play, the event is aimed at promoting physical activity, confidence-building, and family bonding among children aged 3 to 15 years. Unlike conventional races, the event will be non-competitive in nature, with no rankings or timers, focusing instead on participation and completion.

The obstacle course, spread across approximately 900 to 1000 metres, will feature 15 purpose-built challenges, including crawling tunnels, balance beams, and cargo nets. Parents will participate alongside their children, making it a shared physical experience rather than a spectator-driven activity. Nikhil Mozika, Founder of Culture Club - preschool, said that the initiative seeks to create meaningful learning experiences beyond the classroom. “We believe children learn best through real-life experiences. Junior Circuit is designed to help them build confidence, develop resilience, and enjoy the pro-

cess of overcoming challenges with their parents,” he said. Culture Club - preschool, founded by a couple Silky and Nikhil Mozika, works towards promoting holistic development of children by encouraging experiential learning opportunities. The organisers stated that the event also aims to address concerns around sedentary lifestyles by bringing children back to outdoor play in a structured yet enjoyable format. The organisers added that every child completing the course will be recognised, reinforcing the idea that participation and effort are more important than winning a competition.

# 776 Candidates Cleared in Assam Poll Scrutiny; Decision Pending for Two Seats

**Guwahati, Mar 25:** The scrutiny of nomination papers for the upcoming Assembly elections in Assam found 776 candidates valid as of March 24, while the process for two constituencies—Barpeta (SC) and Dhekiajuli—has been adjourned till March 25, according to an official statement. Scrutiny has been completed for 124 constituencies, with only the two remaining seats pending final clearance. A total of 815 candidates had filed 1,389 nomination papers for the elections scheduled on April 9. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 26 (till 3 pm), as per the Election Commission of India. Among those awaiting clearance is Cabinet Minister Ashok Singhal of the Bharatiya Janata Party, contesting from Dhekiajuli. His nomination, along with that of Congress candidate Batash Orang, is currently listed as “applied.” For the Barpeta (SC) constituency, four candidates filed nominations. While three have been accepted, the nomination of Congress candidate Mahananda Sarkar Das remains under scrutiny. In Dhekiajuli, 10 candidates submitted nominations, of which eight have already been accepted. According to current Assembly composition, the BJP holds 64 seats. Its allies—the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) has nine MLAs, United People’s Party Liberal (UPPL) seven, and Bodoland People’s Front (BPF) three. The counting of votes is scheduled for May 4.

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Editorial

The Role of Creativity in Problem-Solving

Creativity is often associated with art and expression, but it also plays a crucial role in solving practical problems. In a rapidly changing world, creative thinking has become essential for addressing complex challenges. Problem-solving requires more than technical knowledge. It involves the ability to think beyond conventional methods and explore new possibilities. Creative individuals are more likely to develop innovative solutions that improve efficiency and effectiveness. In education, encouraging creativity helps students approach challenges with curiosity and confidence. Instead of relying solely on standard answers, they learn to explore different perspectives and generate original ideas. In professional environments, creativity drives innovation. Businesses that encourage creative thinking are better equipped to adapt to market changes and develop new products or services. This not only enhances competitiveness but also contributes to economic growth. Creativity also plays a role in everyday decision-making. Finding solutions to personal challenges often requires flexibility and imaginative thinking. However, creativity must be supported by a willingness to experiment and accept failure as part of the process. Fear of mistakes can limit innovation and discourage new ideas. Societies that value creativity become more dynamic and adaptable. By encouraging individuals to think differently, communities can develop effective solutions to both local and global challenges.

## The Bangladesh Delta Plan: Reality vs assurance

My colleagues called me the Banana Man. Not because I was particularly yellow, or easy to peel, but because of the way I ate bananas. I would strip the skin away completely, touching the fruit with my hands. My Bangladeshi colleagues found this endlessly amusing. “The banana has its own packaging,” they said. “Why strip it all away?” Friendly laughter. Gentle teasing. But looking back now, I think the joke carried a truth I wasn’t ready to hear. Perhaps I was always stripping away what was already there, the natural wrapping, the local knowledge, the lived experience, in order to get to what I thought was the essential thing underneath. Perhaps that was my mistake. And perhaps it took me twenty-five years of travelling to Bangladesh to understand it. The journey itself is not subtle. Eleven hours in the air, then Dhaka. Chaotic, loud, overwhelming, beautiful in its own relentless way. And then, almost immediately, the bubble closes around you: the hotel, the office, the project meetings, the PowerPoints.

The familiar rhythm of international development work, which has a way of making every city feel like every other city, as long as you stay inside it. For years, that was my Bangladesh. I was a solid engineer. I knew the science, I trusted my models, I had the data and the computing power to back up everything I said. I told myself I understood the delta. I did not understand the delta. In September 2018, I was part of the Dutch team working on the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, a document that dared to think eighty years ahead in a country where cyclones do not wait and policies change quickly. Long sessions. Heated debates. Whiteboards covered in arrows. I survived those sessions on bananas. We had a remarkable team: Bangladeshi experts, Dutch colleagues, modellers, planners, economists. Those were good days. And yet, even then, something sat at the edge of my awareness. We could talk, we could model, we could laugh together. But this was more their delta than ours. They carried an intimate knowledge, a lived experience that I could never fully access from



behind my models. When the Government of Bangladesh approved the Delta Plan, I felt proud. The Dutch water sector had contributed substantially. At that moment, confidence felt like exactly what Bangladesh deserved. As a Dutch water professional, I should have been more careful with my enthusiasm. The moment I truly understood my limits was not dramatic. It was quieter than that, and in some ways more unsettling. I was sitting with a group of community members in rural Bangladesh. We had our models, our outputs, our maps. I was proud of what we had built. I watched their faces as we presented. They were polite—Bangladeshi hospitality is genuine and disarming—but something was wrong. They could not recognise what we were showing them. Not because they lacked intelligence, but because we were describing a system that bore little relationship to the system they actually lived in. We were talking about flood risk and hydraulic gradients. They were talking about where their children go to school when the water rises, whether their land would still be theirs next season, how a family decides when to move, when to stay, and what gets left behind either way. I was speaking the language of the expert. They were speaking the language of experience. Those are not the same language. The models were not wrong, exactly. The

## From silos to synergy: Rethinking Bangladesh’s regulatory framework

Bangladesh’s regulatory system has long been organised along sectoral lines. Separate authorities oversee telecommunications, banking and financial services, energy, capital markets, competition, ICT and taxation. This structure worked when sectors operated largely in isolation. Today, technological change and digitalisation have reshaped how these sectors function. Economic activity no longer sits neatly within regulatory boundaries. Decisions taken by one regulator increasingly affect outcomes in others. This growing interdependence makes closer collaboration not just desirable, but essential. Several key regulators now operate in overlapping domains. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) regulates telecommunications, data transmission and digital platforms. The Bangladesh Bank oversees banks, digital payments, fintech activities and aspects of cybersecurity in the financial system. The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) regulates energy pricing and is becoming more involved in smart grids and digital metering. The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) governs capital markets, including digital trading platforms

and technology-driven investment services. Alongside them, the Competition Commission ensures fair market practices, the ICT Division and the Digital Security Agency handle digital governance and cybersecurity, and the National Board of Revenue (NBR) administers taxation of digital services. Individually, these mandates are clear. Collectively, they intersect in ways traditional models did not anticipate. Mobile financial services offer a clear example. They rely on telecom networks regulated by BTRC, financial rules overseen by Bangladesh Bank, digital security frameworks shaped by ICT authorities, and taxation policies administered by NBR. A regulatory change in one domain, whether on data usage, transaction limits or pricing, can ripple across the rest. Image A particularly urgent area of convergence is broadcasting and telecommunications, where technological change has blurred old boundaries. Broadcasting was once a content-focused, one-to-many service under the information ministry, while telecommunications centred on infrastructure under BTRC. That distinction no longer holds. Audiovisual content is now delivered over IP-based networks through OTT platforms, streaming services,

IPTV and social media. Spectrum, infrastructure, data networks and content distribution are tightly integrated. As a result, the roles of BTRC and the information ministry increasingly overlap. Decisions on spectrum allocation, network capacity, platform licensing, service quality and consumer protection now carry implications for both sectors. OTT platforms depend on telecom networks, yet raise questions about content standards, advertising, cultural policy and taxation. IPTV and hybrid services sit squarely at this intersection. A similar pattern is emerging in energy. Smart meters and digital billing systems lie at the crossroads of energy regulation, ICT infrastructure, data governance and consumer protection. While BERC focuses on pricing and policy, telecom connectivity, data privacy and cybersecurity fall under other authorities. Without coordination, gaps and inconsistencies are almost inevitable. Fintech and digital lending underline the same trend. These services combine banking functions, digital platforms and connectivity, alongside software, data and security concerns. Competition policy and taxation cut across all of them. When regulators operate in isolation, such overlaps can create uncertainty, duplica-

tive compliance and delays for new services. Gaps between mandates may leave risks insufficiently regulated or encourage regulatory arbitrage. Fragmentation also weakens the ability to manage systemic risks, especially when shocks, such as cyber incidents or payment disruptions, spread quickly across sectors. Crisis management is a particular concern. Cyber threats, digital fraud and infrastructure failures rarely respect sectoral lines, yet responses are often confined within single institutions. This increases the risk of delay or misalignment. Stronger collaboration is therefore critical for economic efficiency, financial stability and consumer protection. It can reduce uncertainty, support innovation and ensure consistent standards while aligning with Bangladesh’s wider digital ambitions. Importantly, this does not require sacrificing regulatory independence or creating a “super regulator”. It is about coherent oversight through aligned processes, shared risk assessment and regular collaboration. These arrangements focus on alignment and information sharing, not on centralising authority. Several Commonwealth countries have adopted converged or functionally coordinated regulatory models without dismantling their broader

administrative structures. The United Kingdom, for example, moved early towards a converged regulator model by integrating telecoms, broadcasting and spectrum oversight within a single authority, while maintaining strong coordination with competition and data protection bodies. Australia followed a similar path by aligning telecommunications, broadcasting and online content regulation within a unified framework, complemented by clear coordination mechanisms with competition, financial and cybersecurity regulators. Singapore, though institutionally distinct, shows how strong statutory coordination and clear lead regulator principles can achieve convergence outcomes even when regulators remain formally separate. In all these cases, convergence was achieved with minimal bureaucratic disruption. Rather than wholesale restructuring, reforms focused on harmonising mandates, adopting technology-neutral laws, clarifying inter-agency responsibilities and institutionalising coordination mechanisms. In Bangladesh, coordination currently takes place mainly through informal consultations or ministry-led committees, often on an ad hoc basis. While useful, these mechanisms lack permanence and insti-

tutional memory. There is no standing platform where regulators can regularly discuss emerging cross-sector risks, align regulatory priorities, or jointly plan responses to technological change. A practical way forward would be to institutionalise an inter-regulatory coordination framework. Such a framework could bring together regulators like BTRC, Bangladesh Bank, BERC, BSEC, the Competition Commission, ICT authorities, Information Commission and NBR to address cross-cutting issues such as digital finance, smart infrastructure, data governance and platform-based markets. Much of this can be achieved through executive decisions and interagency agreements, without immediate changes to existing laws. As the Bangladesh economy becomes more digital and interconnected, regulatory effectiveness will depend not only on the strength of individual institutions but also on how well they work together. The question is no longer whether inter-regulatory collaboration is needed, but how quickly it can become a permanent feature of the governance framework. Initially, a cell could be formed under the Cabinet Division or the Prime Minister’s Office to begin coordinating different regulators.

## Like Putin, Trump is a megalomaniac. In Europe, we can shield ourselves, not look for rational motives

Yes, there are big differences between the war of aggression that Russia has now been waging against Ukraine for four years and the war the US and Israel launched against Iran. The biggest difference: the US is still a democracy. Even a president who considers himself all-powerful is not. From scathing press coverage to anger over high oil prices, fear of the midterm elections and – the capitalist form of democracy – falling stock prices, what people think makes a difference. That is why the US president is occasionally forced to change his mind. That is not the case in Russia.

Vladimir Putin had a clear plan: Russia wanted to occupy the whole of Ukraine and turn it into a satellite state or annex its territory. Putin was preparing for this war for years, in my view; this included a cheap energy trap into which he successfully lured Germany through the construction of Nord Stream 2 and the purchase of gas storage facilities and refineries by Gazprom and Rosneft.

Israel may well have had a plan – namely to turn Iran into a country bogged down in civil war, a new Syria. But the US under Donald Trump clearly had no plan as to what its military aims were or how the war would end. Yet this is where the parallels come into view. Both Putin and Trump clearly acted out of a kind of megalomania. Their behaviour is evil and unlawful, but rational motives are not the decisive factors. Rather, Putin and Trump are primarily concerned with their own greatness. Or what

they consider that to be. That is what makes them so unpredictable. Consequently, they couldn’t care less about international law.

Second parallel: their megalomania has led to massive military miscalculation. Both leaders underestimated the resolve of the countries they attacked to make sacrifices. While Ukraine immediately began fighting for its freedom, the people of Iran have apparently seen no chance yet of fighting the regime for theirs, as Trump expected. The leaders’ miscalculation also includes a dramatic ignorance of the interests of the potential allies of those under attack. Just as Europe (and, at the time, the US under Joe Biden) was not going to simply let Putin have his way in Ukraine, so Russia and China now have an interest in the US remaining tied down in Iran for a long time to come, using up its ammunition and keeping its warships in the region. Thus, the conflict in Iran also threatened to become a Ukraine-style war of attrition. But no one can predict what would happen if the US were, after all, to deploy ground troops. As cynical as it sounds, Trump’s fickleness, which the world was able to marvel at once again this week, is the second-best hope we have that the war will not escalate. The best hope, of course, is that the people of Iran will secure their freedom. The impact on energy prices is another parallel. I remember well, from my time in government in Germany, the conference calls with counterparts from

the Biden administration after the Russian full-scale invasion in February 2022, when the oil price rose to \$130 a barrel. Even then, they wanted Germany to release its national oil reserves. I was reluctant, as I feared that Putin would completely halt oil supplies, which then still accounted for roughly 30% of Germany’s imports. In my view, the high prices were only the second-biggest problem. The biggest was whether there would be enough energy at all.

So far, the Iran war has also been perceived primarily as an energy price shock – with correspondingly gloomy repercussions for economic growth. But the inflationary contagion would not be limited to energy if the conflict were to drag on. In 2021, the EU imported about 45% of its gas and 27% of its oil from Russia. By 2025, this share had fallen dramatically to 13% for gas and 3% for oil. However, the share of total energy produced by renewable electricity had risen only 3 percentage points by 2024 (from 22% to 25%). In other words, rather than consistently electrifying its energy supply, the EU switched fossil fuel suppliers, primarily to the US. It is doubtful whether swapping Putin for Trump is a gain from a security perspective. Energy supply is again being used as a weapon to expose Europe’s vulnerability. In September 2022, Putin cut off gas supplies to Europe. In 2026, Iran is blocking the strait of Hormuz. The energy infrastructure itself is an explicit, and in some cases the primary, target of attacks.



# IPO for Sai Parenteral should You can prevent this problem or subscribe



**Mumbai:** Incorporated in 2001, Hyderabad-based Sai Parenteral’s is a diversified pharmaceutical formulations company with expertise in research, development, and manufacturing. It operates in two segments: branded generic formulations and contract development and manufacturing organisation (CDMO) products and services for domestic and international markets. Brokerage firms tracking the issue believe that the fundamentals and export expansion support long-term prospects, the IPO valuation appears expensive versus peers. However, they advise long-term investment only, warning that listing gains may be limited amid valuation and execution risks. Sai Parenteral’s operates in

the branded generic formulations and CDMO businesses, with the product portfolio covering both high-value and high-volume categories across various therapeutic areas. SPL’s offerings span across dosage forms such as injectables, tablets, capsules, liquid orals and ointments, said SBI Securities. The injectables dosage is a high margin segment for the company, and it plans to increase the share of injectables in the total revenue mix in the coming years. The issue is valued at FY25 (proforma) P/E and EV/Ebitda multiples of 88.2 times/46.3 times respectively based on post-issue capital, which appears to be at premium to its peers,” it added with a ‘subscribe for long-term’ tag. At a pre-IPO

P/E of 72.19 times and ROCE of only 9.28 per cent, the valuation appears stretched. Peers like Innova Captab trade at 32.45 times and Gland Pharma at 44.71 times with significantly higher scale and earnings. The business fundamentals and growth trajectory are solid, but the P/E of 72 times is expensive for a company of this size and RoCE, said Swastika Investmart Morgan Stanley Asia (Singapore), Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance, India Emerging Giants and Quant Mutual Fund. The Noumed acquisition is the strategic pivot, a regulated-market beachhead in Australia /New Zealand backed by 451 TGA-approved dossiers and a government-grant-subsidised facility that would have taken years

to build organically, said Ashika Research. “Management has demonstrated disciplined capital allocation across four acquisitions. We recommend ‘subscribe’ at the cut-off price for long-term investors with a 2–3 year horizon. Investors seeking near-term earnings visibility should await post-listing price discovery,” it said. “The IPO comprises a fresh issue and an offer for sale, intended to fund capital expenditure for facility expansion, support working capital requirements, reduce debt levels, and provide partial liquidity to existing shareholders while improving visibility and access to capital markets,” it added with a ‘subscribe’ Sai Parenteral’s has reserved 50 per cent of the net offer for qualified institutional bidders (QIBs), while non-institutional investors (NIIs) will have 15 per cent of allocation.

Retail investors have 35 per cent of the reservation in the issue. Last heard, Sai Parenteral’s was commanding no grey market premium (GMP) of Rs 7 apiece, suggesting a muted listing for the investors. Arihant Capital Markets is the sole book running lead manager of Sai Parenteral’s IPO and Bigshare Services is the registrar of the issue. Shares of the company shall be listed on both BSE and NSE on April 2, Thursday.

# NSO polls suggest that private capital



**Mumbai:** A fixed panel of 3,819 enterprises reported provisional unweighted capex of Rs 6.11 lakh crore for FY26 and intended Rs 6.11 lakh crore for FY27, showing only a modest 1.9% increase over actual spending of Rs 6 lakh crore in FY25. Weighted estimates align with the broader figures of Rs 11.44 lakh crore for FY26 and Rs 9.55 lakh crore for FY27. The survey also provides insights into investment focus. In FY26, around 48.63% of enterprises directed spending toward core assets, while 38.36% aimed at value addition to existing ones.

Additionally, 60.13% prioritized income generation, and 42.12% focused on upgrading capacity. “It may be noted that out of the 5,366 operational enterprises that responded to the survey, 4,203 (about 78.3%) reported their CAPEX investment plans for the next financial year (2026–27). Enterprises generally tend to adopt a conservative approach in reporting such estimates for a future year,” the NSO said. India’s private corporate sector reported a pick-up in capital expenditure (capex) in the current financial year, but in-

vestment plans signal a noticeable moderation heading into FY27, according to the latest forward-looking survey released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) on Monday. The companies surveyed estimated provisional aggregate capex on new assets at Rs 11.44 lakh crore for FY26.

However, forward intentions for FY27 dropped to Rs 9.55 lakh crore, reflecting a 16.5% decline in planned spending. In contrast, the electricity, gas, steam, and air-conditioning supply sector shows a sharp uptick, with its share rising from 8.96% in FY26 to 14.94% in FY27, indicating stronger focus on energy-related investments.

According to the survey, the sectoral trends reveal uneven patterns in investment priorities. Manufacturing continues to dominate as the top recipient of private capex but sees its share decline from 50.17% in FY26 to 44.35% in FY27. The information and communication (encompassing data centres, telecom, and digital infrastructure) see a mild slowdown, with its share likely easing from 16.38% in FY26 to 14.38% in FY27.

# MCX evening session are available here NSE and BSE will close Stock Market Holiday:

**Mumbai:** The Indian stock markets will take a break on Thursday, March 26, as the exchanges will remain shut for Ram Navami. Trading on NSE and BSE will be suspended on Thursday and will resume on Friday, March 27. Along with equity, the currency derivatives market will also suspend trading on Thursday.

Banks across various cities of the country will shut for the same reason. MCX observes partial closure.

However, Multi Commodity Exchange will only observe partial closure and will remain closed for its morning session (9:00 AM to 5:00 PM IST). The exchange will resume trading for its evening session (5:00 PM to 11:30/11:55 PM IST) to follow the movements in global markets. Ram Navami is an important

Hindu festival which celebrates the birth of Lord Rama. It usually falls on the ninth day of the lunar month of Chaitra. The festival is celebrated with great devotion throughout the country, as people from different backgrounds join in the devotion and festivities.

While the month of March nears its end, the stock market will observe one more holiday this month. Domestic indices will remain shut on March 31 on the occasion of Shri Mahavir Jayanti. This marks a total of three holidays for the equity markets in March. This also includes March 3 holiday for Holi. The Indian equity markets will be closed for 2 days in April 2026. On April 3, 2026, NSE and BSE will remain closed for the occasion of Good Friday, followed

by another closure on April 14 for Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Jayanti.

TVS Motor announces Rs 12 interim dividend for FY26; Check record date, key details

For the month of May, markets will observe two holidays as well: first on May 1 for Maharashtra Day and second on May 28 for the festival of Bakri Eid. Banks shut on March 26

Not just the equity markets, financial institutions across various cities of the country will also remain closed on the occasion of Ram Navami. However, in some states the festival will be celebrated on March 27, and so the bank closure would be in accordance with the RBI calendar. Readers are advised to check the official website of RBI for detailed information on city-wise bank closures

# 2 stocks Sunil Singhania is holding tight despite a 52-week low crash

**New Delhi:** Ace investor and one of the Warren Buffetts of India, Sunil Singhania is a well-known and highly followed super investor of India. Known widely for his strategic hold on midcap and smallcap stocks across varied industries, his investment philosophy is more about finding fairly or under-valued companies with strong fundamentals and significant growth prospect. What makes Singhania stand apart from the average investors is that he does not get affected easily by market sentiments and tends to stick to his picks during market cycles, just like any true follower of Warren Buffett would. Currently, two of his most recent picks for Abakkus Funds are trading at a discount of over 40%. However, as per the last filing, Singhania has held onto the stocks despite the steep decline in less than a year since they were listed. Does he see something that the average investor does not? Regarding net profits, the company recorded compounded growth of 25% from Rs 16 cr in FY20 to Rs 47 cr in FY25. And for the first 3 quarters of FY26, the profits were Rs 26 cr. The company’s share is trading at a PE of 33x currently while the current industry PE is 34x. In the company’s latest investor presentation, the MD and Chairman, Kailash Punamchand Shah said, “During the quarter, we also progressed on our long-term sustainability and material diversification roadmap with the signing of an MoU with the North East Cane and Bamboo Development Council. This engagement enables us to explore engineered bamboo products in a structured and asset-light manner, leveraging our design-to-delivery capabilities while staying aligned with our strategic priorities. Overall, the sequential improvement seen in Q3 reinforces our confidence in the business. With incremental capacity coming on stream, strong customer relationships and a disciplined approach to execution, we remain focused on sustaining profitable



growth in the quarters ahead.” M & B Engineering Ltd: Why Abakkus holds firm despite a 50% share price slump

Incorporated in 1981, M&B Engineering Ltd is a design-led engineering solutions provider. At the current share price of Rs 251, the stock is trading at a discount of over 50% from its all-time high and trading near a 52-week low of Rs 243. This downward pressure is primarily due to a compression in operating profit margins (OPM) and deteriorating efficiency ratios over the last year. Quarterly results show that OPM has struggled to stay above the 19% peak seen in September 2024, sliding to 11% in the December 2025 quarter, which reflects rising operational costs despite steady sales growth. Also, Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) significantly reduced their stake from 13.46% in September 2025 to 10.24% in December 2025, suggesting a cooling of institutional confidence which often acts as a catalyst for price corrections. Let us move to the financials of the company to try and find what makes Singhania confident about this stock. The Rs 212 cr order and expansion FY26, the sales logged were Rs 770 cr. With a market cap of Rs 1,437 cr, the company is a leading player in India’s Pre-Engineered Buildings (PEBs) sector, operating through two key divisions. Singhania’s Abak-

kus Funds bought a 2% stake in the company per the exchange filings for the quarter ending September 2025. And as per the filings for the quarter ending December 2025, the stake remained 2% worth Rs 29 cr. Just like All Time Plastics above, M&B was also listed in August 2025 at a price of around Rs 409.

The price went on to hit its all-time high of Rs 536 in November 2025, before it went on a downward spiral to its current price of Rs 251 as on 24th March 2026. Let us look at the stocks to try and find out. With a market cap of Rs 1,307 cr, the company specializes in production of plastic consumer ware designed for everyday household use. It primarily operates on a B2B model, manufacturing consumer ware for clients who market products under their own brands. Sunil Singhania’s Abakkus Fund bought a 6.2% stake in the company per the exchange filings for the quarter ending September 2025. As of the quarter ending December 2025, the holding was the same 6.2% worth Rs 80 cr. The company was listed in August 2025 at the price of around Rs 280 and it climbed to a high of around Rs 335 in the same month. However, it has logged a downward spiral since then, to its current price of Rs 200 as on 24th March 2026. With that 40% decline in 6 months, the share of All Time Plastic is trading near its all-time low of Rs 194.

# How to verify status as GMP zooms manifold step-by-step



**Mumbai:** Central Mine Planning & Design Institute (CMPDI) is likely to finalize the basis of allotment of its shares on Wednesday, March 25. Applicant bidders will get the messages, alerts or emails for debit of their funds latest by Friday, March 27. The Coal India Ltd subsidiary received a muted response from the investors during the three-day bidding period. The IPO of Central Mine Planning & Design Institute was open for bidding between March 20 -March 24. It had offered its shares in the price band of Rs 163-172 per share with a lot size of 80 shares. The company eyed to raise a total of Rs 1,842 crore via IPO, which was entirely an offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to 10.71 crore equity shares. The issue was overall subscribed only 1.05 times with nearly 1.10 lakh applications, fetching bids for almost Rs 1,450 crore. The portion for qualified-institutional bidders (QIBs) was subscribed 3.48 times. The quotas for non-institutional investors (NIIs) and retail bidders were undersubscribed at 35 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively. Employee portion was booked 21 per cent only. The IPO of Central Mine Planning & Design Institute was open for bidding between March 20 -March 24. It had offered its shares in the price band of Rs 163-172 per share with a lot size of 80 shares. The company eyed to raise a total of Rs 1,842 crore via IPO, which was entirely an offer-for-sale (OFS) of

up to 10.71 crore equity shares. Investors can also check the allotment status on the online portal of KFin Technologies Limited (<https://kosmic.kfintech.com/ipostatus>), the registrar to the issue. The registrar is a Sebi-registered entity, qualified to act as such and which electronically processes all applications and carries out the allotment process, as per the prospectus. The registrar is responsible for complying with the timelines for updating the electronic credit of shares to successful applicants, dispatching and uploading refunds, and attending to all investor-related queries.

Go to the web portal of KFin Technologies Limit. Select the IPO in dropdown whose name will be populated only if the allotment is finalized.

You may be required to select either one of the three modes: Application number, Demat Account number, or AN ID. In application type, select between ASBA and non-ASBA. Enter the details of the mode you selected in Step 2.

(QIBs) was subscribed 3.48 times. The quotas for non-institutional investors (NIIs) and retail bidders were undersubscribed at 35 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively. Employee portion was booked 21 per cent only. Investors, who had bid for the issue of Central Mine Planning & Design Institute, can check the allotment status on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE).

# Palm Oil price spike: 3 reasons Indian refiners cut edible oil imports

**New Delhi:** Edible oil prices, particularly palm oil, climbed earlier this month as crude surged amid the Middle East conflict. However, Indian refiners are not rushing to buy. In fact, Indian vegetable oil refiners are pulling back on fresh imports of palm oil, soy oil and sunflower oil, betting that the recent price spike may not sustain, Reuters reported, citing industry of-

ficials. Instead of rushing to secure supplies at higher prices, buyers are choosing to wait, hoping to restock once prices ease if tensions cool. No rush to buy at elevated prices Part of the reason for the cautious stance is that refiners are not short on supply. Strong imports in recent months have left inventories at comfortable levels. At the same time, fresh arrivals from India’s rapeseed crop

which is expected to be a record harvest, are helping bridge the gap, reducing the immediate need for imports, Reuters added. Since palm oil is also used in biodiesel, higher crude tends to push its prices up. But Indian importers don’t seem convinced the rally will last, as per Reuters.

“There’s no need to panic-buy. There are ample stocks available in the glob-

al market, and prices will come down sharply the moment the war ends,” Reuters quoted key industry stakeholders. As a result, imports are already slowing. India’s monthly vegetable oil imports are expected to fall to about 1.1 million tonnes in March, down from an average of 1.36 million tonnes in the previous marketing year, according to trade estimates cited by Reuters.

## As the Iran conflict continues, the Philippines proclaims a ‘national energy emergency’ and increases coal power production



**Asia:** The president of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, has proclaimed a “national energy emergency” as a result of the Middle East conflict, which his government says poses “an imminent danger of a critically low energy supply”. The state of emergency, which will last for a year, was proclaimed just hours after the Philippines’ energy secretary announced plans to increase the output of coal-fired power plants to keep electricity bills low while the conflict disrupts gas exports. “A state of national energy emergency is hereby declared in light of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, and the resulting imminent danger posed upon the availability and stability of the country’s energy supply,” according to an executive order issued on Tuesday. The directive authorizes the Department of Energy to take direct action against hoarding or profiteering, as well as to make advance payments to

secure fuel contracts. Later on Wednesday, the Philippines’ ambassador to the US, Jose Manuel Romualdez, told Reuters that the government is seeking exemptions from the US State Department so that it may acquire oil from US-sanctioned countries, perhaps including Iran and Venezuela, to maintain its fuel supply. When asked if Washington had answered, Romualdez indicated it was a “work in progress”. As of March 20, the administration stated that the nation has roughly 45 days of gasoline supplies remaining and was looking to purchase additional 1 million barrels of oil to establish a buffer. Meanwhile, the Department of Migrant Workers has been urged to prepare for the probable rescue and evacuation of Filipinos in the Middle East. Around 2.4 million Filipinos reside and work in the Middle East, including around 31,000 in Israel and 800 in Iran. The government

on imported fuel to run its power facilities. The archipelago nation of 116 million people depends on coal for almost 60% of its electrical output. The energy secretary, Sharon Garin, told reporters earlier on Tuesday that with the cost of liquefied natural gas (LNG) soaring, the country would “temporarily” be forced to lean even more heavily on coal. While hoping to “maximise” the use of local coal, the Philippines was also keeping the option of upping its purchases of coal from top supplier Indonesia, the energy secretary said. “We talked to the generation companies, the coal-powered plants, to check how much they can increase their generation,” Garin said, calling it a “temporary measure” that could start as early as 1 April. “If we are successful in implementing this, at least we can decrease the electricity rate hikes because of the conflict in the Middle East,” she said. Indonesia has assured the Philippines it would place no limits on coal orders, Garin said. “There’s no restriction on our importation of coal from Indonesia as of today,” she said, adding that increased purchases may not be necessary. Marcos in January announced a “significant” discovery of natural gas made near the country’s rapidly depleting Malampaya offshore natural gasfield. It was hoped the discovery could extend the life of the field, which supplies about 40% of power to main island Luzon and was expected to run dry within a few years.

## No Israeli charges for killing Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank since the beginning of the decade

**Israel:** According to a Guardian study of legal data and public records, Israel has not punished its citizens for killing Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank since the beginning of this decade, allowing a campaign of violence to continue without consequences. Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has called on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to intervene to “save the Palestinians and us [Israelis]” from state-sponsored settler violence, which is carried out with the complicity and occasionally participation of the police and military. “I have decided not only to not remain silent, but to draw the attention of the ICC in The Hague so that it may take enforcement measures and issue arrest warrants,” Olmert stated in written responses to The Guardian. Former Israeli security chiefs called immediate action to end “almost daily” assaults on Palestinians. In a public letter to the country’s current military chief, they warned that failing to address “Jewish terrorism” poses an existential risk. This month, Israeli settlers and police killed ten Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank, including five and seven-year-old boys and their parents, all of whom were shot in the head as they returned from a Ramadan shopping trip. “We are no longer dealing with a small group of lawbreakers.” This is organized behavior, which often involves uniformed individuals who shoot at innocent people and destroy civilian property and residences,” the letter stated. Signatories to the letter, which has not been previously reported, included two former heads of Israel’s military – one of whom also served as defence minister – five chiefs of the Mossad and Shin Bet intelligence agencies and four former police commissioners. Their call



to enforce the law ascribed past military success to the “moral strength” of the Israeli armed forces and said it was vital for future victories. “Without it, we have no right to exist,” they said. Since 2020 Israeli soldiers and settlers have killed at least 1,100 Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank, at least a quarter of whom were children, UN data shows. No one has been charged over any of these deaths. The last deadly attack by Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank that led to an indictment was in 2019, public records and data from legal rights group Yesh Din shows. The last killing by an Israeli civilian that led to an indictment was in 2018. An Israeli court ruled this week that the defendant threw a rock that hit Aisha Rabi. Israeli security forces are responsible for the majority of Palestinians killed in the occupied West Bank, but violence by Israeli civilians intensified after the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attacks, as Israel waged a war in Gaza which a UN commission, rights groups and genocide scholars say is genocide. Murders, arson, theft and other crimes by Israeli settlers,

including incidents caught on camera and alleged sexual assault, have gone almost entirely unpunished. Between 2020 and 2025, over 96% of police investigations into settler violence in the occupied West Bank concluded without an indictment, Yesh Din said. Out of 368 cases only eight, or 2% of the total, ended with full or partial convictions. Olmert called for international prosecutions of violent settlers who are “assisted, supported and inspired by government circles” as they wage a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Pogroms in Palestinian villages are reminiscent of those “once directed against Jews in Europe”, he said. “If law enforcement authorities in Israel do not fulfil their duty, perhaps international legal authorities will do what is necessary to save the Palestinians and us from the criminal acts being committed by Jewish terrorists right in front of all our eyes.” The Israeli settler population in the occupied West Bank has increased steadily for several decades, including when Olmert and the security elite now speaking out about violence held positions of command or political power.

## A Sydney teenager accused with terror offenses reportedly obtained ‘guides’ to mass fatality strikes, the court heard



**Australia:** A 16-year-old kid has been charged with various terrorist offenses after allegedly obtaining “guides” on how to carry out a “mass casualty event,” a court heard. On Wednesday, the kid appeared in a children’s court in Sydney, where a Commonwealth prosecutor stated that the adolescent had obtained the documents “for the purpose of a contemplated mass casualty attack”. The guides, which Guardian Australia has chosen not to name, instruct on how to kill and commit mass casualty events using various weapons, including knives, the court heard. On Tuesday, he was charged with five terrorism offenses, one of which was the collection and creation of documentation that may enable a terrorist act. According to an Australian fed-

eral police statement, the youngster was first charged with firearms crimes in December, after the New South Wales joint counter-terrorism squad received allegations of someone making violent threats online. Police allegedly discovered a flick knife and a gel blaster during a check of his residence. According to the AFP, a study of the devices revealed violent extremist content as well as paper-work providing information that may be used to carry out a terror strike. “It will be alleged the young person held a mixed ideology and outlined plans for acts of violence,” the news agency reported. The group that authored the instructions is known to collaborate with white extremist outfits. The teenager was denied bail on Wednesday for terror-related charges. During the

hearing, the court heard the boy has “severe mental health issues”, including a diagnosis of depression, and had been attending weekly counselling sessions voluntarily since he was initially released on bail in December. During Tuesday’s arrest, he was allegedly found to be in possession of his mother’s mobile phone and a laptop, which the magistrate, Keisha Hopgood, accepted was a breach of his bail. But Hopgood said the terrorism offences were “significantly more concerning ... certainly in regards to the material located on the devices”. She said while the police had suggested to the court that there “may be some attention-seeking behaviour” in what the boy had done, the threats were not just “mere words” and showed “planning”.

His Legal Aid lawyer told the court the boy had committed no other offences since being released on bail in December, and – other than being found with a phone and a laptop – had complied with strict bail conditions. This included reporting to his local police station with his mother or grandmother – who were both in court on Wednesday – three times a week. “He wants help and is seeking help and follows through with getting counselling which he has done,” the lawyer told the court during an unsuccessful application for bail. The boy is due to reappear in court on 1 April. The weapons offences carry a maximum sentence of 14 years in jail, while the most serious of the terrorism charges have a maximum sentence of 15 years.

## ‘Political band-aid’ lowering Australia’s gasoline excise may worsen petrol shortages, experts fear

**Australian:** Economists have cautioned that fuel duty cuts would be a “political band-aid” that might exacerbate gasoline shortages and increase inflation. The mining billionaire Gina Rinehart, Tasmania’s state premier, and Liberal opposition leaders in New South Wales and Victoria have urged the Albanese government to reduce petrol and diesel excise. Petrol prices have risen to 250c per litre, while diesel prices are over 300c per litre, up from 180c at the beginning of March. Retailers, such as gas stations, pay a fuel tax of 52.6 cents per litre. The federal Liberals and Nationals had so far refrained from joining their appeals on Wednesday. The treasurer, Jim Chalmers, stated that the government was not contemplating the move. Richard Holden, an emeritus professor of economics at the University of New South Wales, said it would be a “very bad idea” for the government to give in to mounting pressure. “That is simply going to make demand higher than it otherwise would be, which is going to make the fuel shortages we’re already experiencing worse,” said Mr. Obama. He predicted that higher costs would motivate those who could afford it to reduce their gasoline consumption. Australia’s gasoline supply remains uncertain in the coming weeks, and the government has not set a quota on household petrol sales. Excise cuts also risked adding to Australia’s high inflation rate by enabling some households with enough income to spend more, Holden



said. “It’s going to make inflation worse, and it’s really a political band-aid rather than any kind of sound economics,” he said. Halving the fuel excise for a month would hand back about \$23 to inner-city households, \$35 to regional households and \$38 to outer-suburban households, according to 2025 analysis from the University of Canberra’s John Hawkins and Yogi Vidyattama. Fabrizio Carmignani, an economics professor at the University of Southern Queensland, said the revenue from the excise tax would be better spent on cost-of-living policies for poorer households. Scott Morrison’s government halved the fuel excise at a cost of nearly \$1bn a month for six months after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine sent oil prices surging in 2022. Well-off house-

holds took the biggest share of the benefits as they tend to use more petrol, e61 Institute research has found. Lower-income households are worst affected by fuel price spikes, though, according to Adit Maitra, an e61 economist, meaning an excise cut would not be targeted at supporting those in most need. “Everyone receives the benefit, even households and perhaps businesses that we might think that the government shouldn’t be supporting at this time,” Maitra said. Australians under financial strain may be better supported by boosts to payments like jobseeker, commonwealth rental assistance and family tax benefits, he said. A spokesperson for Rinehart’s company, Hancock Prospecting, said Rinehart had long advocated for cuts to fuel excise. “It seems you’ve only

spoken to leftwing, high-tax-loving economists who have offered a predictably one-sided assessment,” the spokesperson said. The NSW opposition leader, Kellie Sloane, said the Albanese government should still consider cutting the excise regardless of economists’ concerns. “It’s a very hefty tax,” Sloane said. “Rather than a flat no from Canberra, how about show us your figures, demonstrate why you think this won’t work?” Sloane and her Victorian counterpart, Jess Wilson, have each written to Anthony Albanese requesting an excise cut. Wilson, when asked whether an excise cut would worsen shortages or inflation, said: “Victorians households and businesses need cost relief now, that is why I have called on the prime minister to temporarily cut the fuel excise.”

## Russia launches roughly 1,000 drones in one of its greatest aerial strikes against Ukraine

**Ukraine:** Russia has fired a massive wave of over 1,000 drones into Ukraine, killing at least seven people, as Moscow seeks to ramp up a spring offensive aimed at breaking Ukrainian resistance along the front. According to Ukrainian sources, Moscow launched roughly 400 long-range drones and 23 cruise missiles overnight, followed by another 556 drones in a rare daylight assault on Tuesday, targeting cities in the country’s west. Taken together, the barrage marks one of the largest aerial bombardments of Ukraine since the start of the full-scale invasion more than four years ago. One Russian drone struck the Bernardine monastery, a 16th-century church in Lviv’s UNESCO-listed medieval centre, causing damage, local authorities said. Dramatic footage circulating online showed a large kamikaze drone hitting a busy street in Lviv. The Ukrainian

president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said the barrage had caused damage in 11 regions and he renewed calls for allies to urgently supply Kyiv with more air defence munitions. He has said repeatedly that Ukraine, which relies on the US for systems capable of intercepting ballistic missiles, faces looming shortages as Washington’s attention remains focused on the US-Israeli conflict with Iran. Neighbouring Moldova also said a key power line linking it to Europe had been damaged in overnight Russian strikes, and urged citizens to reduce electricity use during peak hours. After enduring a winter of widespread power and heating cuts, Ukraine is braced for a renewed Russian push. Moscow’s war of attrition typically intensifies in the spring as weather conditions improve. Russian forces, who outnumber Ukrainian troops by roughly three to one, are seeking

to make gains along the eastern and southern fronts. Russian troops have continued a slow advance in the eastern Donetsk region during the winter, edging closer to the key city of Sloviansk from the north and east. They hold positions about 12 miles (20km) from its outskirts. Open-source analysts also report Russian gains near Zaliznychne in the Zaporizhzhia region. The Kremlin has dispatched heavy equipment and extra troops to the frontline, the Institute for the Study of War announced late Monday. According to Michael Kofman, an analyst at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington DC, “Usually there is a Russian wave of mechanised assaults around April, and they once again prove costly and ineffective.” He said that Ukrainian defenses had been “optimized for defeating mechanized assaults,” with much of the battle now centered on silencing or relo-

cating opposition drone units. Ukraine has also received a significant boost on the battlefield this year, reclaiming almost 150 square miles of terrain in southern Zaporizhzhia where Russian forces had previously advanced. According to military analysts, February became the first month since 2023 in which Kyiv recaptured more land than it lost.

The counteroffensive was boosted by Elon Musk’s move in February to disable Russian forces’ access to Starlink internet links, cutting off a critical line of contact for the troops. Ukraine is in a perilous situation, with most of the world’s attention focused on the Middle East conflict, creating worries that the country’s air defences, which rely on US Patriot missile interceptors, may run out. Ukrainian and US delegations held two days of talks in Florida over the weekend intended to find

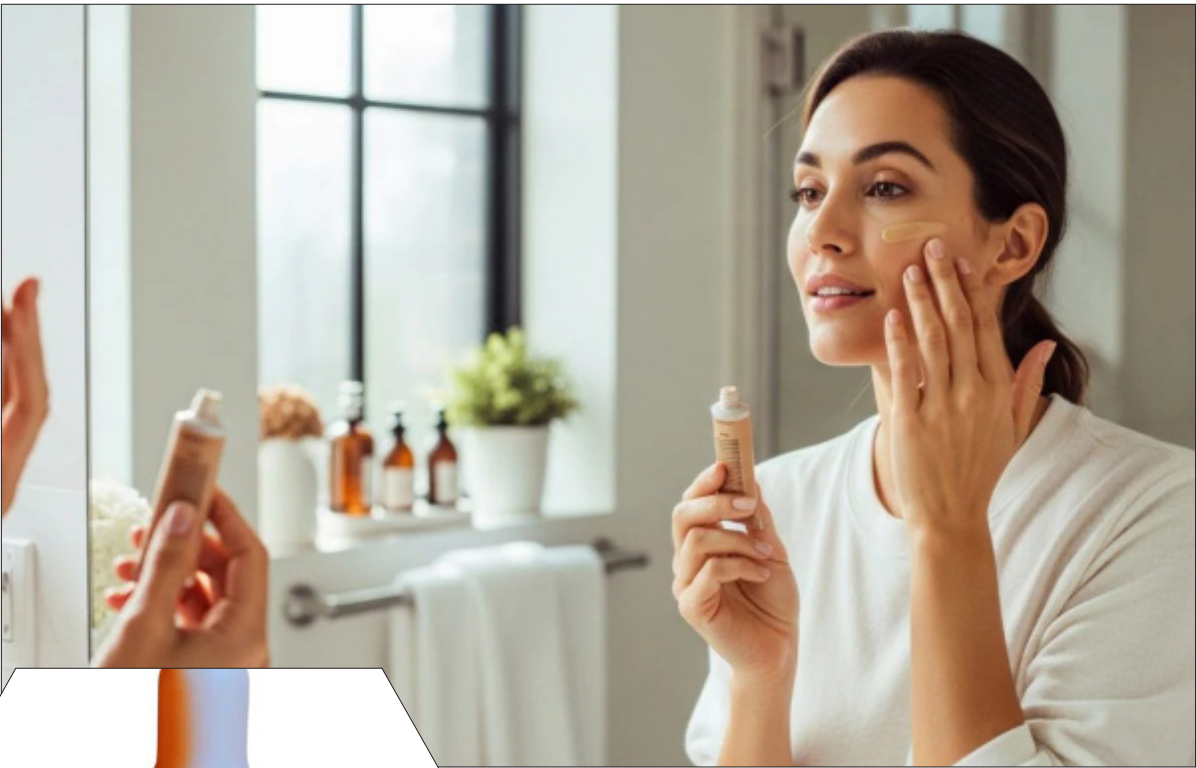
a path to ending Russia’s full-scale invasion, but no breakthrough was reported. A key sticking point remains the Donbas, which Moscow wants Kyiv to cede in full. On Tuesday Zelenskyy wrote on X: “We had a detailed discussion on the outcomes of the meetings in the United States. It is telling that while our negotiators were reporting, Russia launched a new wave of ‘shaded’ drones against Ukraine. “The geopolitical situation has become more complicated due to the war against Iran, and unfortunately, this is emboldening Russia.” The well-sourced outlet Ukrainska Pravda reported that the US had put pressure on Ukraine to withdraw its troops from the Donetsk region during the Florida talks, saying Washington could step back from peace negotiations and shift its focus further to the military operation in Iran.

# This 3,000-Year-Old Ayurvedic Oil Promises Radiant Skin And Everyone’s Talking About It

Skincare today has moved far beyond basic beauty routines and is increasingly seen as an important part of overall health and self-care. With rising awareness about ingredients and their long-term effects, many are now cautious about using chemical-heavy products that promise instant results. Instead, there is a growing preference for traditional remedies. Nalpamaradi Tailam, one such herbal oil known for improving skin health and glow, is making a comeback.

## Why Is Nalpamaradi Tailam Going Viral?

Originating from Kerala, Nalpamaradi Tailam is a classical Ayurvedic formulation traditionally used to treat various skin concerns. Typically prepared using a base of coconut or sesame oil, it is widely known for reducing tan, improving skin texture, and enhancing natural glow. The oil’s rising popularity can be linked to two major skincare trends, the growing preference for natural beauty solutions and the revival of traditional wellness practices. Social media has further amplified its reach, with users sharing visible be-



fore-and-after results and endorsing its effectiveness for tan removal and skin nourishment. The appeal

also lies in its legacy. Products rooted in centuries-old traditions are increasingly being perceived as safe, reliable, and holistic, especially among younger consumers exploring clean beauty alterna-

tives. **What Is Nalpamaradi Tailam Made Of?** Nalpamaradi Tailam is made using the bark of four sacred ficus trees: banyan, peepal, cluster fig, and Indian fig. The formulation is prepared using sesame or coconut oil as a base and enriched with ingredients like turmeric, vetiver, and amla, which help rejuvenate and protect the skin. **The Origins Of Nalpamaradi Tailam** You May Like Believed to date back over 3,000 years, Nalpamaradi Tailam has its roots in Kerala’s rich Ayurvedic heritage. The name “nalpamaram” refers to the mix of four ficus tree

barks traditionally used in the formulation for their healing and skin-enhancing properties. The oil was used to treat skin inflammations and post-burn wounds. It was also commonly applied in diluted form for neonatal massages to protect and nourish infants’ skin in humid climates. During the World Wars, the formulation saw a revival in Kerala and parts of Tamil Nadu, where women prepared and preserved the oil in coconut leaf baskets. This period helped cement its place as a household staple. Today, Nalpamaradi Tailam has transitioned from an ancient remedy to modern skincare essentials.

# How Instagram, K-beauty And Global Trends Are Redefining Indian Salon Culture

Not too long ago, Indian salons were largely defined by routine services, haircuts, facials, and the occasional bridal makeover. Today, they are something else entirely: trend hubs shaped as much by Seoul, Paris, and Los Angeles as by local preferences. The shift is neither subtle nor accidental. It reflects a deeper transformation in the Indian consumer, more aware, more exposed, and far more demanding than ever before. “Global beauty trends are influencing Indian salons today more than ever before,” says Raghav Bhambri, co-owner of Toni&Guy North, West & Central India. He attributes this to a new kind of clientele, well-travelled, digitally connected, and armed with references. “Clients don’t just walk in for a haircut anymore. They come with global references and very specific expectations,” he explains. This change in consumer behaviour has forced salons to evolve rapidly. The focus is no longer just on service delivery, but on technique, training, and experience. International benchmarks are no longer aspirational, they are expected.

At brands like Toni&Guy, this shift has translated into an education-first approach. Stylists are trained on global collections and techniques, often working with internationally developed product lines like label.m, used backstage at fashion weeks. The goal is simple: to deliver the same finish and quality that a client might expect in London, New York, or Milan. But globalisation in beauty is not just about aesthetics, it is also about values. “Today’s consumers are far more conscious about ingredients, sustainability, and ethical formulations,” notes Subham Virmani, Director, Esskay Beauty Resources. One of the most visible outcomes of this shift is the growing demand for vegan beauty. What was once a niche category is now entering mainstream salon menus, spanning both haircare and skincare. According to Virmani, salons are increasingly expanding into a “vegan universe,” offering plant-based treatments that promise both performance and responsibility. This is a significant departure from earlier trends, where efficacy often trumped ingredient transparency. Today, the two must coexist. If consumer awareness is one driver of change, technology is another. “The pace of change has accelerated dramatically,” says Deepak Gupta, co-founder, Style Lounge. Trends that once took years to travel now move in weeks, sometimes even days. Social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube have effectively collapsed geographical boundaries, turning global beauty into a shared, real-time experience. A skincare routine trending in Korea or a haircut popularised in Hollywood quickly becomes a reference point for clients walking into salons in Delhi, Mumbai, or Bengaluru. The influence of Korean beauty, in particular, is hard to miss. Concepts like “glass skin,” layered skincare, and gentle, barrier-focused treatments are increasingly shaping sa-

lon conversations in India. The same holds true for hair. Global styles such as curtain bangs, balayage, and natural texture styling are no longer “international trends”, they are everyday requests. And yet, for all this global influence, Indian salons are not merely imitating, they are adapting. “What’s important is adapting these global trends to suit Indian hair types, climate, and lifestyle,” Bhambri points out. This localisation is critical. Indian hair textures, skin tones, humidity levels, and cultural preferences demand a level of customisation that global templates alone cannot provide. Gupta echoes this, noting that a treatment popular in Europe may need significant modification to work in Indian conditions. The real skill, he suggests, lies in blending international inspiration with local expertise. This ability to adapt may, in fact, be the defining strength of India’s beauty industry. What is emerging is a hybrid model, one that borrows freely from global trends but filters them through an Indian lens. It is a space where vegan formulations meet traditional sensibilities, where Korean skincare philosophies coexist with local practices, and where international techniques are reinterpreted for Indian realities. The larger implication is clear: Indian salons are no longer playing catch-up. They are becoming active participants in a global beauty dialogue. And in doing so, they are redefining what it means to be local in an increasingly borderless world.

# ‘They stole my childhood’: Paris Hilton on teenage trauma, sex tapes and having a baby by surrogate

“All of the things that every teenage girl would go through: going to school, going to the prom, going to college, I missed out on so much of that,” Paris Hilton tells me. It would be natural to assume this was just the opportunity cost of her fame; the Shirley Temple of partying, she’s been red-carpeting so long that even if she’s younger than you – she’s 42 – it probably feels as if she’s lived longer. Of course she didn’t go to college: those sequins weren’t going to wear themselves to Coachella. In the beginning, Paris Hilton was famous because her parents were, and they were famous because of her great-grandfather, hotel tycoon Conrad Hilton, and the whole family was famous because of its wealth. As she moved into her late teens, she became a name in her own right: a model and It girl, the “OG influencer”, as she describes it – the first person on record to seek and attain payment for turning up at parties. This, at the time, seemed to seal her in the public imagination as a bauble, one of life’s fripperies. Certainly, we didn’t spend a lot of time pondering that it takes quite a lot of entrepreneurial moxie to recognise the value of your stardust and monetise it, especially when you’re already minted. Hilton’s gear change to global fame came in 2004, when a former boyfriend, Rick Salomon, released a sex tape filmed the year before that rapidly caught fire online. At this point, Hilton was already becoming known for the reality show The Simple Life, which she did with Nicole Richie: two fabulous, pampered socialites, slumming it in minimum-wage jobs, living with a regular family in Arkansas. It was strangely compelling and memorable: I can still get a pin-sharp visual on Hilton and Richie trying to make onion rings in a fast-food restaurant. That show seemed to fix her reputation as the punchline of a joke she’d actually authored. The Simple Life marked the dawn of the age of a certain type of structured reality TV; the next nearest thing was Laguna Beach, which didn’t air until the following year. Hilton, obviously along with numerous TV execs, created what would become an endlessly replenishing genre, and yet managed to emerge from it the ditzzy, clueless little rich girl. With sidelines in perfume, boutiques, beach clubs and other product lines, she started DJing in the 2010s and, unarguably, by then had cre-

ated more wealth and notoriety than had ever been bestowed on her by the accident of birth. Granted, none of this would have shaken out the same way without the privileged start, but she’s no Donald Trump character, sitting on piles of inherited gold and claiming to have made it. The late Barron Hilton probably put it most pithily when he said that he used to be known as Conrad Hilton’s son, until he was known as Paris Hilton’s grandfather. But none of that is why she missed out on her teenage years, has no education to speak of, and spent years battling “so much trauma that I didn’t want to think”. She was “going out, travelling, doing all these things just to not have to think about what I had been through”. It sounds so improbable, impossible even, for anything that bad to have happened in a family so scrutinised, but her teenage years were horrific. She’s speaking to me over Zoom from Los Angeles, and we’re talking about Paris: The Memoir – she looks on the screen much as she does on its cover: blond, glossy, flawless, features so strong and symmetrical that it makes her seem self-possessed and a bit remote, irrespective of what she’s actually saying. Her friend Kim Kardashian once said, while they were making frittata and french toast coated with Frosted Flakes, “I don’t know anyone who parties as hard as you do and looks as good as you do”, and that’s as true now as it was any other year. In a story probably familiar to anyone with ADHD who grew up before it was common to get a diagnosis, Paris Hilton struggled at school, and the upsides of attention deficit disorder – “We’re so creative, we’re constantly thinking, our minds move as fast as a race car” – went unrecognised. “My childhood would have been very different if I’d been diagnosed: I definitely wouldn’t have been sent away,” she says. When she was 14, she was groomed by a teacher at her school, and her parents came home to find her in a car on the drive, kissing a grown man. They were about to move from Bel Air to the Waldorf Astoria anyway, and “they were worried”, she says, “to have a young girl in New York City at that point, and thought I would be safer with my grandma. But they had no idea it was a teacher.” So the Hiltons, having asked no questions about the incident, sent their oldest daughter to live in Palm Springs

and moved with their other three children, Nicky, Barron II and Conrad. This isn’t the horrific bit, by the way: this is just predatory behaviour resulting in a period of exile from the family. When she talks about it, Hilton acknowledges that it had a long tail – “That was the beginning of me not being able to trust people, especially adults,” she says – but her language is quite neutral and, if anything, very forgiving, particularly towards her parents. “That generation, that’s just how it was. You just didn’t really talk about things.” Yet, straight after this, she manages to identify the flaw in her own argument: “My mom was so young when she had me, she was only 19. She was like a kid herself. She was at an age where you are learning the whole time.” It’s true: this code of silence can’t really be chalked up to generational differences; her mother, Kathy Hilton, born in 1959, isn’t even that old. In Palm Springs, she was drugged and probably raped – her memories are fractured and fleeting – by a man she met in a shopping mall, when she was 15. She never mentioned it to her grandmother or anyone else. “Move past the easy assumption,” she writes in her memoir, “that men are pigs and models are dumb. That’s not fair or true or useful. Most men are basically decent, I think, and successful models travel all over the world.” I mean, sure: I think men are decent, I don’t think models are dumb, and I don’t think travelling and being dumb are mutually exclusive, but I’m still surprised, after these experiences – plus, a few years later, being chased into a toilet by Harvey Weinstein and only just managing to get the door locked in time – that she thinks that. “I just meant men are decent in general, in the world,” she says, laughing. Then, soberly: “Specifically in Hollywood, there’s a lot of bad guys out there. It’s the type of place where people try to take advantage of girls.” So that was the backstory when she was finally brought back into the family fold in New York: she was in no mood for formal education, and went a bit wild. Still only 15, she snuck out of the apartment to go clubbing every night, slept all day, stopped going to school. That was when her parents took an extraordinary decision, to send her, aged 16, to what is euphemistically known as a “therapeutic boarding school”, for – another euphemism – a “behaviour mod-

ification programme” Today, with her husband, entrepreneur Carter Reum, she has a newborn son, Phoenix. He was carried by a surrogate: Hilton says she couldn’t get pregnant due to trauma, the legacy of abuse, which we’ll come to. I assume she means tokophobia, a fear of pregnancy and giving birth, but that’s not quite it. She would have loved to have been pregnant, was looking forward to “amazing maternity looks, Beyoncé-belly-among-the-roses photo shoot” (this makes me chuckle; only in Hollywood), but after two years of IVF, it didn’t happen for her. She concludes in her book that “my mind and body had never fully healed – and probably never will fully heal – from the trauma I went through as a teenager”. Phoenix’s arrival has made her more understanding of her parents. “Even though he’s a baby, I’m already worrying about that one day when he’s a teenager and he’s gonna sneak out at night. So it definitely makes me understand even more why my parents were so protective and so strict. This is your little baby, you don’t want anything to happen to them. So I could understand why my family wanted me to stay home. They were just worried.” She has her family carefully planned and ultimately wants two sons and a daughter. She will doubtless achieve this – there’s very little left to chance when you have all your eggs in a row – but it strikes me as ineffably sad that her idea of the perfect family is the one she was raised in, without her in it, as it was so often. She says of her plan: “I would love to have a girl next. I wanted her to have a big brother, because I feel like if I’d had a big brother, a lot of the things that happened to me wouldn’t have happened, because I would have had someone to protect me from people.” It’s a naive, almost arrested perspective, that parental care can be outsourced to a sibling if the birth order aligns. Hilton’s boarding school experience started with two men dragging her from her bed in the middle of the night, handcuffing her, and putting her on a plane to a remote part of the San Bernardino mountains in California. I’d read about these places before, but never in such detail: kids are underfed, underslept, subjected to a barrage of impossible rules – no looking out of the window without permission, no going to the toilet without permission, no asking permis-

sion to look out of the window or go to the toilet – and baroque punishments. The list of proscribed conversations makes your eyes prick for these friendless teens, so far from home. “No talking about music, sports, television shows, movies, news events, your parents, your siblings, your friends, your clothes, your room, your school, or anything else about home. No mention of Marilyn Manson. No mention of candy, pizza, hotdogs, cheeseburgers, lasagne, McDonald’s, Burger King or Wendy’s. No talking about bikes, skateboards or inline skates.” There were marathon sessions known as “raps”, when kids were enjoined to verbally abuse one another to a screaming crescendo, typically centred on their disgusting personalities and sexualities: after hours of this, everyone crying and dehydrated, there was a forced group cuddling session, a repugnant insistence on rituals of fake nurture in an environment of every kind of cruelty. It sounds very like a cult, and indeed, CEDU, the organisation that ran the schools, originated from Synanon, a drug rehab programme created in 1958 that disintegrated into a violent cult. Hilton escaped three times: each time, she was caught and sent to a new institution that was worse. By the time she arrived at the final school, in Utah, it was routine for the kids to be given invasive and painful cervical exams as punishment; to be locked naked in solitary confinement for 24 or 48 hours; to be sedated on a whim, beaten on a pretext. She spent 11 months there and came out just shy of her 18th birthday. She had had no education during these two years: all the time they weren’t being screamed at, forcibly cuddled or punished, they had spent moving logs. It was known as “wilderness therapy”. CEDU ceased operations in 2005. “What’s horrifying is the fact that it’s still happening today,” she tells me. “It’s a multibillion-dollar industry with hundreds of thousands of kids being sent to those places every year. It’s heartbreaking to me that people could treat children like this. Now, hearing about so many things, the deaths that have happened, it’s just heartbreaking: so, even though it’s hard for me to talk about, I think it’s so important for people to understand what’s happening behind closed doors.” Again, she finds ways to justify what her parents did, both in sending her

away in the first place, and all the times they sent her back, when her distress was so palpable. “They brainwash the kids and they also do that to the parents. They say ‘Your daughter is a liar, she’s just manipulating you.’” The Hiltons were also deceived, to an extent, by their own wealth; they assumed that the bad boarding schools were where foster kids were sent: because these schools were costing so much, they must be humane. “The moment I got out of there, it was the happiest day in my life,” she tells me. “I was so grateful, and I just made a promise to myself that I was never going to talk about this. This is not part of my story. I would never mention this again. I would pretend it never happened and just bury it there, basically. I just promised myself I would work so hard and become so successful that no one would ever be able to control me again.” Only she and her parents knew where she had spent the previous two years: to everyone else, even her siblings, they held the line that she had been “away at boarding school in London”. Back in the Waldorf, she had plenty going for her – modelling contacts from her earlier teenage years, tons of cash, a lot of business savvy. Awake, she was the girl who had everything, the embodiment of a dream, but she hated going to sleep, because she would wake up screaming from nightmares for the next 20 years. Her cultural standing was riven with very recognisable contradictions: on paper, people admired and were fascinated by her, but it was freighted with assumptions about her character – that she was trivial, airheaded, famous for being famous, narcissistic. Indeed, looking back, a lot of anxieties about the future, about the emptiness of branding, image and consumerism, a lot of social disgust around the concentration of wealth, were mediated directly through critique of Hilton: of which she says, levelly: “I’m a human being so things would be hurtful when people would just assume . . . but I always loved when people underestimated me, I loved proving people wrong.” It was only when the sex tape was released on DVD that this gleeful schadenfreude found expression, in a riot of slut-shaming, cynicism and voyeurism. People said she had released it herself, for attention; that it was all part of her plan to stay edgy. “It was extremely painful,” she remembers.

## Afzal Ansari criticizes the way Atiq Ahmed is portrayed in Dhurandhar 2

**Mumbai:** Dhurandhar The Revenge, directed by Aditya Dhar, has been in the public eye ever since it was published. Social media hasn't refrained from criticizing its shortcomings, despite the fact that it has received a generally positive welcome. Afzal Ansari, an MP for the Samajwadi Party, has now criticized the filmmakers of Dhurandhar 2 for how they portrayed gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed. Many people on social media thought that UP mobster Atiq Ahmed served as the inspiration for the character of Atif Ahmed in Aditya Dhar's film Dhurandhar 2. On April 15, 2023, Atiq, a former MP and former Mafioso turned politician, and his brother Khalid Azeem, also known as Ashraf, were assassinated. Afzal Ansari criticized the film franchise's producers in an interview for profiting from a real-life person. Afzal Ansari stated in Hindi, "I have not watched that film," in reference to Dhurandhar: The Revenge. Stories are part of the film industry. The screenplay is not based on actual events. They publish a disclaimer. However, they consider the success of their movie. The narrative need to be captivating. They can use any identity they wish to sell movie tickets, acquire government assistance, and receive benefits. "They portrayed Atiq Ahmed's character and possibly declared him an ISI agent," he continued. He is no longer with us. However, those who are still alive have created a fake "baikunth" here and, with Dawood Ibrahim at their side, committed a crime. They are not being made into a movie. Thus, the general people can comprehend all of this." Meanwhile, casting director Mukesh Chhabra discussed how he discovered Atiq Ahmed and Nawaz Sharif look-alikes for Dhurandhar 2 in an interview. On March 19, the follow-up, Dhurandhar The Revenge, came out. In addition to Ranveer Singh, the movie stars R Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, Sara Arjun, and Rakesh Bedi. Dhurandhar, which was set in Karachi's Lyari neighborhood, which is well-known for its deadly turf wars and gang conflicts, focused on clandestine intelligence operations against the backdrop of terror and geopolitical events such as the 2001 Parliament Attack, the 26/11 Mumbai assaults, and the hijacking of the Kandahar airliner. The follow-up chronicles the ascent of Ranveer's character, Hamza Ali Mazari, in the underworld of Karachi and explores his beginnings as Jaskirat Singh Ranghi, following the path of the young man who ultimately turns into a clandestine agent.

## On the 14th birthday of her twins, an emotional Celina Jaitly misses them



**Mumbai:** On the fourteenth birthday of her twin kids, Winston and Viraj, actor Celina Jaitly wrote a lengthy letter expressing her sadness. On Tuesday, Celina posted on Instagram that she had no idea that she wouldn't be able to see their faces or hear their voices "for so many months leading up to your 14th birthday." Celina posted photos of herself and her sons as they grew up. She added in her note, "#HappyBirthday. Happy 14th,

my darling Winston & Viraj. I never imagined that I would not be able to be there... that I would not have heard your voices or seen your faces for so many months leading up to your 14th birthday." Like my mother did for me, a mother goes through a lot to bring her children into the world, nourish them, and show them love every single day. "I would do everything over again a million times just to have you in my arms again. I feel that truth in

every breath I take today," she continued. "You will always be my greatest assets and my greatest accomplishments in life, Winston, Viraj, Arthu, and Shamsher. God has given me the honor of being your mother, and I will always be proud of that blessing. Thank you for choose me to be your mother, Winston and Viraj. She went on, "I am so very proud of you for your love, kindness, compassion, and wonderful sense of humor, as well as the amazing young men you are becoming." In her message, Celina expressed her optimism that her gifts and letters will arrive on their birthday. "I hope that this message reaches everyone. I'm hoping the cosmos lets our hearts meet today. You will receive my affection. You will hear my petitions. I hope the letters and presents I sent you were received. "I hope to see you and talk to you today," she continued. Everything she has been doing, she continued, "is for our future so that we can be together again as a family." "Never

forget that your life is endless. You can accomplish everything you set your mind to. Share whatever goodness life bestows upon you. She wrote, "Until Mama holds you again, be safe, be strong, and know that everything I am doing is for our future so that we can be together as a family again. Mama loves you beyond this world." In 2010, Celina wed Austrian businessman and hotelier Peter Haag.

Winston and Viraj, who were born in 2012, and Arthur, who was born in 2017, are their three sons. Shamsher, one of her sons, passed away from a cardiac ailment. She filed a lawsuit against Peter in November 2025, accusing him of cruelty, manipulation, and domestic abuse. In compensation for her loss, she demanded ₹50 crore and other amounts.

The matter was brought before Mumbai's Andheri's Court's Judicial Magistrate First Class. Celina claimed that shortly after their marriage, the abuse started.

## Mukesh Chhabra analyzes Aditya Dhar's "peak detailing" in the casting of Dhurandhar



**New Delhi:** A discussion over a Bollywood movie rarely revolves around the casting, especially when it comes to the supporting cast and even characters that just make brief appearances on screen. However, like with its predecessor, director Aditya Dhar's "peak detailing" has been the main focus of Dhurandhar: The Revenge. The applause for the casting of characters based on real individuals in the movie has been genuine, albeit it started off as appreciation before turning into a joke. Casting director Mukesh Chhabra talks with Hindustan Times about the entire

casting process, from the first brief to the numerous auditions to the breakthrough talents, as the movie enjoys its box office success. At first, Dhurandhar was intended to be a single movie. However, due to length issues, the project was divided into two parts weeks before the movie's premiere. Nearly 300 characters, both important and small, make up the nearly 8-hour-long duology. According to Mukesh, casting them all was difficult. "There are over 300 persons in two sections, and it was challenging to cast each position. Eight of my assistants worked nonstop

on the movie for two years, designing every appearance and selecting the right actor for every part. However, he assures us it was a lot of fun. Aditya Dhar, a writer and filmmaker, was the inspiration behind Dhurandhar. Despite their "fights," Mukesh claims that he and Aditya collaborated on the casting. "Aditya and I have been friends, so we can fight a bit," he clarifies. We can find that common ground. We had numerous conversations in which I heard him, he heard me, and we got into arguments. However, his brief was quite explicit, which was beneficial. I could see what he wanted and what he was seeing. There was no misunderstanding. The casting director thinks that because the film's casting has resonated with viewers, it is receiving appreciation. "This is the prize for us. We put a lot of effort into getting these actors perfect, and now people are debating who portrayed Atiq Ahmed and the origins of Babu Dakait. It indicates that they relate to the narrative and the characters. The job has been quite thorough. On the surface, nothing has been done. There's a ton of detail. Naturally, because Aditya's brief was

so precise, I completed half of my work using it," he continues. For the past 20 years, Mukesh Chhabra has assisted with the casting of some of the largest Indian movies, including Jawan and Gangs of Wasseypur. He claims that the casting director's freedom is what sets Dhurandhar apart from a typical Bollywood production. "It was just him (Aditya Dhar) and me here," he says, adding, "Jab kaafi log casting mein ghuste hain, tabhi casting kharab hoti hai (When too many people are involved in casting, then it all goes wrong)." Many people offer a lot of gyan in these situations. Despite the commercial investment from large studios, nothing similar occurred on the Dhurandhar sets, Mukesh continues. Ranveer Singh plays an Indian spy in Pakistan in the Dhurandhar movies. In order to gain access to Pakistan's terror network, he joins Rehman Dakait's (Akshaye Khanna) gang in the first movie. R Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Asan Jay Dutt, and Rakesh Bedi all play significant parts in the movies. At the box office, Dhurandhar 2, which is currently in theaters, is about to surpass ₹1000 crore.

## The autodriver of Ranveer Singh in the climactic scene of Dhurandhar 2 is yet to view the movie



**Mumbai:** If you've seen Dhurandhar 2, you undoubtedly remember the car driver who appeared on screen beside Ranveer Singh at the end of the movie. The man hasn't yet seen the Aditya Dhar spy thriller, which is a twist. He disclosed that high ticket prices have prevented him from going to theaters for the time being, even though he was a part of one of its most talked-about events. Ranveer's character Jaskirat, also known as Hamza, is shown leaving the brutal world of espionage and violence in the film's last scenes. He returns to his hometown of Pathankot after over twenty years. After being away from his family for years, Ranveer's Jaskirat is shown facing their reality. He understands that his mother and younger sister have accepted his death for a long time and have built a peaceful existence free from bloodshed and violence. He can be seen seeing them from a distance, clearly moved and crying. This is how the movie

ends. He gets transported to his home in his hometown by the auto driver. The car driver, Harjeet, is now shown discussing the movie in an interview with the Punjabi news outlet Daily Post Punjabi. "I haven't seen it yet," he replied in Punjabi when asked if he had seen the movie. The tickets cost about ₹500, and as it was just launched, I haven't had a chance to see it yet. He was then questioned about whether or not his family encouraged him to take them to see the movie. He said, "Yes, they did," in response. However, I informed them that there are five of us and that the total fee will be ₹2,500. I didn't accept them because we only manage to save ₹2,500 a month. I informed them that we would watch it later and wait a little. On March 19, the follow-up, Dhurandhar The Revenge, came out. In addition to Ranveer Singh, the movie stars R Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, Sara Arjun, and Rakesh Bedi. Dhurandhar,

which was set in Karachi's Lyari neighborhood, which is well-known for its deadly turf wars and gang conflicts, focused on clandestine intelligence operations against the backdrop of terror and geopolitical events such as the 2001 Parliament Attack, the 26/11 Mumbai assaults, and the hijacking of the Kandahar airliner. The follow-up chronicles the ascent of Ranveer's character, Hamza Ali Mazari, in the underworld of Karachi and explores his beginnings as Jaskirat Singh Ranghi, following the path of the young man who ultimately turns into a clandestine agent. Produced by Jyoti Deshpande and Lokesh Dhar, Dhurandhar The Revenge is available in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam. The movie received mixed reviews when it first came out, with most of them being good, but it has also received some criticism outside. "By the end, it's downright routine for someone to be beat up, chained, stabbed, doused with gasoline, shot, and then set on fire in order to be killed," Sarah Manvel said in her review of Movies We Texted About. Boney M's usage of Rasputin in a blatantly racist scene is not hilarious because the violence and gore are so severe. The whole thing is sociopathic. Up to now, the movie has made ₹575.67 crore in India and ₹900 crore worldwide.

## Rajpal Yadav claims that his stay in prison was similar to a near-death experience

**New Delhi:** According to Rajpal Yadav, he feels like a youngster again. The actor has had a challenging few weeks. In a years-old cheque-bounce case, he was sentenced to prison. This led to an outpouring of industry support and an attempt by the actor to make amends. After a few days, the court granted Rajpal bail, which resulted in his release from custody. Days after the court declined to put him under arrest once more, the relieved man visits us while promoting his next movie, Bhooth Bangla. Now that he has moved past his legal issues, we ask him if he is okay. "You are all here, people from all over the country and the world," he continues philosophically, "Raahat hi hai zindagi mein (There is

only relief in life)." Many of his co-stars, producers, and supporters banded together to assist him in repaying his debts in the ₹9-crore cheque-bounce case after the Delhi High Court remanded him to Tihar Jail in February. Rajpal was given relief by the court when he paid back a portion of the amount by the time he was eligible for release. When he discusses the support he received, he becomes emotional. "The folks you have been working for for twenty years support you when you are in a difficult circumstance. It makes no difference if it is a youngster or an elderly person. Others offered me support in the form of tan, mann, dhan, and prayers. I felt a hundred years younger after that. In keeping with his per-



sonality, Rajpal makes light of the new debt he owes to those who prayed for him from their homes. "I don't feel like I owe a lot of individuals from all around the world who sent me well wishes. He smiles and says, "Yeh jo karz hua hai poori duniya ka mere upar, iss karz mein main doobna

chahta hoon (I feel I am in debt to the entire world, and I want to stay in it)." However, he acknowledges that the event has altered him. Since I began performing in theater at the age of 14, I must have lived 500 lives over the past 40 years. However, I feel like I've been born anew. The seasoned actor declares, "I feel like a child again." Anyone can be broken by protracted legal issues and incarceration. Rajpal, however, claims that he is composed of diverse materials. He states, "I have seen death from up close," recalling a childhood near-death experience. In the Ganga, I nearly drowned. I told myself to keep battling and attempt to come to the surface at that point. You resist the water's force that is dragging you

down. You lose half of your strength, aapki aadhi jaan nikal jaati hai. He adds, "I'm a fighter," and claims that this experience was similar to that period for him. My family and many other families throughout the world have shown me love and sympathy throughout my life. I've been given so much by the world and Indian cinema that it keeps me going. I wish to live in peace for the rest of my life. Raahat ki saans chahiye. I can only laugh and make other people laugh when Tabhi has paunga or hasa paunga. Rajpal will next appear on screen with Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal, Tabu, and Wamiqa Gabbi in Bhooth Bangla. On April 10, Priyadarshan's horror-comedy will be released in theaters.

## Akshay Kumar downplays his romance with Wamiqa Gabbi

**Mumbai:** The Hindi film industry has long debated the age differences between starring couples. In Bhooth Bangla, 58-year-old Akshay Kumar is expected to fall in love with 32-year-old Wamiqa Gabbi.

The actor queries why this should even be a problem. Akshay discussed his opinions on age-gap love stories in an interview with News18. Akshay remarked, "Toh kya hai? Humne pehle dekha nahi hai kya kabhi?" in reference to the age-gap discussion. (So what? Have we not previously seen this? It also occurs in Hollywood. Occasionally, it's a script necessity. Many people marry partners who are either younger or older than them in real life as

well. Director Priyadarshan remarked that he sees no issue with age gaps in cinema, comparing an actor's screen age to their chronological age.

He quoted MGR and NTR on acceptance of screen personas. Salman Khan also defended age differences with co-star Rashmika Mandanna, stating that as long as neither the actress nor her family minds, others shouldn't either. The film Bhooth Bangla, marking the return of Priyadarshan and Akshay Kumar after over a decade, features a strong cast and is set to release on April 10. Following this, Priyadarshan will direct Haiwan, with Akshay also working on Welcome to the Jungle and Hera Pheri 3.

## Athiya Shetty and KL Rahul use animal-themed cakes to commemorate their daughter Evaarah's first birthday



**Mumbai:** Evaarah's first birthday was honored by Athiya Shetty and her husband, cricket player KL Rahul. Athiya and Rahul made a combined Instagram post on Tuesday night that included a few pictures of the youngster celebrating her big day with her parents. In the first picture, Athiya was giggling as KL Rahul lifted Evaarah. "Evaaru is one!" was written on a balloon behind them. Evaarah's hand was shown close to a cake in the following photo. A preview of Evaarah's animal-themed desserts was also provided by Athiya and Rahul. The cakes were arranged on a table with floral arrangements and cupcakes. In the final close-up, Evaarah was seen gripping her father Rahul's finger while he stood behind her. "Happy

first birthday, my jaana (white heart emoji)" is how they captioned the photo. We appreciate you selecting us. We adore you more than words can express. Anushka Sharma commented, "Sweet sweet baby (red heart, face with three hearts and nazar emojis)," in response to the post." Masaba Gupta stated, "My evaaru kuku cat." Mrunal Thakur remarked, "Omgeggg happy birthday munchkin." Ananya Panday wished, "Happy birthday, sweet angel." Red heart emojis were shared by Sonakshi Sinha, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, Akansha Ranjan Kapoor, and Patralekhaa. White heart emojis were released by Ahan Shetty. Actor Ahan Shetty, Athiya's brother, also sent his niece a message and a picture. He shared a photo of her sitting on

his lap on his Instagram Stories. He said, "1 year already?!? Happy Birthday, my Evuuu (white heart emoji)." On January 23, 2023, Athiya and Rahul were married in a private ceremony at the Khandala farmhouse of father star Suniel Shetty. Evaarah, the couple's first child, was born in March after they announced their pregnancy on Instagram in November 2024. Later, the couple posted a cute photo of themselves and their baby on Instagram, revealing her name, Evaarah. "Our baby child is everything to us. The caption for their post was, "Evaarah/ivaaraa ~ Gift of God." Hero marked Athiya's acting debut in 2015. She later appeared in movies like Motichoor Chaknachoor and Mubarak.

# Sonia Gandhi became ill and was admitted to a hospital in Delhi

New Delhi, Mar 25 : According to sources on Tuesday, senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was admitted to the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi due to illness. They further mentioned that both of her children, Lok Sabha MPs Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, were in the hospital. But Rahul departed later. The precise reason for Sonia Gandhi's most recent medical stay was not immediately apparent. Due to respiratory difficulties, the Rajya Sabha MP was previously taken to the same hospital in January of this year. At the time, medical professionals



concluded that the combination of Delhi's winter and air pollution was mildly aggravating her bronchial asthma. In December, Sonia Gandhi celebrated her 79th birthday. She presently represents Rajasthan in the Rajya Sabha. Before her time in the Upper House, the seasoned Congress leader was a Lok Sabha

MP for five terms. The well-known lawmaker served as her party's president twice. Sonia Gandhi was admitted to the hospital for a variety of reasons at least three times throughout the previous year. She was taken to Sir Ganga Ram in June 2025 because of a gastric problem. The Congress politician was admitted to the hospital in Shimla earlier that month for a standard examination due to minor health issues. Sonia Gandhi was admitted to the Sir Ganga Ram hospital in February 2025. Another reason for that hospital stay was a stomach problem.

# Jannik Sinner defeats Michelsen to go to the Miami quarterfinals

New Delhi: Jannik Sinner crashed into the Miami On Tuesday, he defeated unseeded American Alex Michelsen in straight sets to advance to the "Sunshine Double" of the Open quarterfinals. Sinner, the second seed from Italy, bided his time before winning 7-5, 7-6 (7/4) in 1 hour and 41 minutes in Miami, hoping to build on his victory at Indian Wells. The 40th-ranked Michelsen put a lot of pressure on the four-time Grand Slam champion, who will play 19th-seeded Frances Tiafoe in the final eight. In the ninth game of the first set, Sinner started applying pressure



to Michelsen's serve after a cagey start, creating three break points. Sinner eventually made a breakthrough in the eleventh game before serving out for the opening set, but Michelsen weathered the storm. In the second set, Michelsen responded by breaking Sinner to take a 4-2 lead, which he then

held to take a 5-2 lead. Sinner stormed back to force a tiebreak as Michelsen seemed to struggle in the intense late afternoon sunlight on the main court of Hard Rock Stadium. Michelsen was only able to return a thundering serve from Sinner that secured the victory. Sinner, who blasted 15 aces to Michelsen's three, said, "I feel like I served very well in important moments and that helped me out, especially in the tough moments." However, it wasn't an easy day because I played a night match yesterday, and the conditions were completely different today."

# The Center issues an order to fortify the infrastructure for piped natural gas

New Delhi, Mar 25 : In response to worries over the supply of natural gas because of the crisis in West Asia, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas announced on Tuesday an order to establish a simplified and time-bound framework for building and extending pipelines throughout the nation. The Natural Gas and Petroleum Products Distribution (Through Laying, Building, Operation and Expansion of Pipelines and Other Facilities) Order, 2026 was passed by the ministry in accordance with the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, according to a press release. In addition to resolving regulatory and land access delays and facilitating the quicker development of natural gas infrastructure, even in residential areas, the Order offers a simplified and time-bound framework for the construction and expansion of pipelines across the nation. The decision, which was published in India's Extraordinary Gazette, takes immediate effect and creates a thorough, open, and investor-friendly framework for effective gas distribution, quick infrastructure development, and fair access to greener energy. The directive intends to boost energy security and support India's transition to a gas-based economy by facilitating the growth of piped natural gas (PNG) networks, enhancing last-mile connectivity, and encouraging a switch to cleaner fuels for transportation, industry, and cooking. According to the announcement, the directive creates a standardized, unambiguous framework for pipeline infrastructure installation, construction, operation, and expansion. It eliminates uncertainty and administrative discretion by introducing standardized procedures and deadlines. The ministry has mandated time-bound approvals with deemed approval provisions to eliminate procedural delays, a single, uniform framework across jurisdictions to reduce permission fragmentation, and the removal of arbitrary levies and charges to ensure transparency and cost predictability in order to facilitate business dealings. The order introduces mechanisms for compensation and restoration to minimize disputes with local authorities and reduce compliance burdens. It facilitates rapid expansion of pipelines and City Gas Distribution networks, improves service delivery, and ensures a smoother transition from LPG to PNG in areas with existing infrastructure. Furthermore, it addresses operational issues and includes safeguards like bank guarantees to enhance accountability. The government's goal is to create a transparent regulatory environment, enhance energy security, and support a transition to natural gas as a key energy source. This is part of a broader strategy to diversify energy supply, boost investor confidence, and promote clean energy, particularly amidst global supply concerns.

# When a PNG switch is available, the LPG supply will be cut off for those who refuse

New Delhi, Mar 25 : According to the government, homeowners that have access to piped natural gas (PNG) would apparently need to convert from LPG or face having their cooking gas supply cut off. Although authorities maintain that there is no LPG scarcity in the nation, the action is part of a larger effort to increase gas pipeline networks and lessen reliance on a single fuel. According to news agency PTI, which cited a recent directive from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, LPG delivery "shall cease after three months" if a family chooses not to use PNG even while it is accessible. If a piped connection is "technically infeasible," the LPG supply will nevertheless continue as long as a no-objection certificate (NOC) is granted. In addition to encouraging "fuel diversification" during a period of global supply difficulties, the government claims that the plan is to reroute LPG supplies from areas with pipeline access to those that currently lack such infrastructure. The drive coincides with increasing geopolitical tensions in West Asia, which include disruptions to important infrastructure and shipping routes, putting strain on the world's oil supplies. The directive is a component of the distribution order for natural gas and petroleum products, 2026, which was issued on March 24 in accordance with the Essential Commodities Act. By streamlining clearances, standardizing fees, and imposing stringent deadlines, it aims to expedite pipeline rollout. Permissions



must be granted within the timeframes specified; otherwise, they will be considered granted. Last-mile PNG connections must be finished within 48 hours, and access to residential complexes must be granted within three working days. In these places, pipeline connectivity applications cannot be denied. Additionally, the order gives authorized officers the same authority as a civil court to settle land access issues and guarantee pipeline installation rights of way. According to the PTI article, companies authorized to dig pipes must start construction within four months of approval or risk fines, which could include losing their exclusivity. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) will keep an eye on compliance and execution. In a post on X, Oil Secretary Neeraj Mittal commented on the development, stating that "a crisis (has been) turned into an opportunity," citing changes

meant to boost energy security and make doing business easier. The government has stated that LPG refill booking regulations are still the same in response to several online accusations. "The government has noticed that some news articles and social media posts claim updated LPG refill booking timelines. No such modifications have been made, the government stated in a statement.

The present norms are 25 days in urban regions and 45 days in rural areas, according to the statement that "the existing refill booking timelines remain unchanged and continue to be." Additionally, the ministry emphasized that there is "no cause for concern" and advised people not to disseminate false information or turn to panic booking. Additionally, state-owned oil marketing firms have refuted allegations of fuel shortages, claiming they are unfounded.

According to Indian Oil Corporation, "there is no shortage of gasoline or diesel," and its stores are "well-stocked and fully operational." Rumors "can create unnecessary concern and disrupt normal supply patterns," it cautioned. Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. declared that "there is no shortage of fuel across the nation" and called reports of shortages "completely unfounded." It stated that supply lines are operating "smoothly without any disruption" and that India is still a net exporter of gasoline and diesel. The similar position was taken by Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd.

# Following IDFC, Kotak Mahindra Bank in Haryana is hit by a Rs 160-crore FD fraud



Chandigarh, Mar 25 : A top official stated on Tuesday that the Panchkula Municipal Corporation has discovered disparities in its Fixed Deposit Receipts (FDRs) with Kotak Mahindra Bank totaling about Rs 160 crore, one month after a fraud worth Rs 590 crore was discovered at the Chandigarh branch of IDFC First Bank. These funds, which were put as Fixed Deposits (FDs), are said to have been transferred into fake accounts while the Haryana-based Corporation received counterfeit paper records. When the Corporation asked for the maturity proceeds of a Rs 58-crore FD to be transferred

into its account, the scam became apparent. The money never showed up, even though the bank statement showed the transfer was finished. The money had disappeared and the statement itself was fake, according to a later examination. In this case, it was discovered that all of the bank's FDs were fraudulent and that there were no real cash in the account. Bank staff are accused of using fake paperwork to cover up the embezzlement for a long time. "A few of the FDRs were longtime members of the Panchkula branch. Only when the bank was requested to transfer money at the maturity of one FDR was the dispar-

ity discovered, according to Vinay Kumar, Commissioner of the Panchkula Municipal Corporation. Similar disparities in other FDRs were found after additional investigations, increasing the total to around Rs 160 crore. Along with bank staff, certain Municipal Corporation officials are suspected by authorities of being involved. The Commissioner affirmed that State Vigilance has been notified of the issue. The Corporation has petitioned the Haryana Government to de-empanel the lender and filed a formal complaint against the bank. Nayab Singh Saini, the chief minister of Haryana, has mandated an inquiry into the situation. A thorough reconciliation of fixed deposits and associated bank accounts kept by the Municipal Corporation has been started by the bank. "As part of this exercise, the Bank has verified that all account opening procedures, KYC paperwork, authorized signatories, and instructions received from the Municipal Corporation were in order, and that the accounts and transactions were handled strictly in accordance with due process and applicable

banking norms, based on records examined thus far.

According to a Kotak Mahindra Bank representative, "the reconciliation process is continuing in an orderly manner, and a significant portion of the amounts under review have already been reconciled with the Municipal Corporation." Additionally, the bank has complained to the Panchkula Police. The Bank has filed a formal complaint with the Panchkula Police in accordance with its governance principles and to guarantee that the issue is investigated impartially and thoroughly. The spokeswoman continued, "The Bank is fully cooperating with the Municipal Corporation, government authorities, and law enforcement agencies in this process." This incidence comes after a similar theft involving Rs 590 crore from accounts connected to the Haryana government at IDFC First Bank. In that instance, the private lender stated that branch employees' "unauthorised activities" were the cause of the fraud, and it has since reportedly reimbursed the government for 100% of the claimed amount.

# Changes in the IPL 2026 playing conditions

New Delhi : In the 2026 season, the IPL will maintain its ball-change policy, which permits the team bowling second in an evening match to request one replacement ball following the conclusion of the tenth over of the second innings. Only the bowling captain may make this request at the conclusion of an over, and the replacement ball must have similar wear and tear. The umpires make the final judgment; the bowling side is not allowed to select the ball. For IPL 2026, the rule itself is not new. It was initially implemented prior to IPL 2025 following the captains' meeting, when the IPL officially stated that the bowling side in a nighttime game's second innings would be permitted to switch balls once after the tenth over. It was also made clear in that announcement that the replacement ball would not be brand-new but rather one with wear comparable to the ball being removed from play. The most recent version of the playing conditions issued to franchisees is what has brought the rule back into attention prior to IPL 2026. Rule 4.4 has been among the sections highlighted ahead of the new season, with the provision again underlining that the request is limited to one in the second innings of an evening match and cannot be made during an over. The rule's structure is still unambiguous: the bowling captain submits the request, the umpires accept and carry it out, and the officials—rather than the fielding team—replace him. When the rule was implemented prior to the 2025 season, the broader framework surrounding it was already in place. After the tenth over, the umpires were allowed to replace the ball upon request. They also had the option to replace the ball on their own earlier in the innings if it got unduly damp, broken, lost, or out of shape. Because it distinguishes between the bowling side's regular one-request option and any additional ball changes the umpires may determine are required during play, this wider authority is still crucial. A few other regulations have also been briefly discussed in the most recent debate regarding the playing conditions. Clauses pertaining to bat checks, intentional short runs, a fielder making contact with the area beyond the boundary, limitations on fielder placement, and combining umpire review with player review are some of the ones that have been noted. However, the ball-change clause continues to be the most noticeable and well-defined of all the rule references prior to the season. The rule position for IPL 2026 is simple. After ten overs of the chase in an evening match, the team bowling second will have one chance to look for a new ball. The replacement must have comparable wear and tear, the request must be made at the conclusion of an over, and the umpires will make the final decision about that replacement.

# Andre Russell's No. 12 jersey will be retired by the KKR, giving the all-rounder a permanent place in the history

New Delhi: In a historic homage to one of the most significant foreign players in the organization's history, the Kolkata Knight Riders have retired Andre Russell's No. 12 shirt, officially keeping a number that had grown to be synonymous with the West Indies all-rounder over his lengthy tenure with the squad. CEO Venky Mysore made the announcement at KKR's preseason event, Knights Unplugged, in Kolkata. He described it as a deserved honor for a player who has contributed to defining an era for the team. With the exception of the 2017 season, Russell played for KKR from 2014 to 2025, making 133 of his 140 IPL games for the Kolkata team. Before joining the franchise setup as power coach, he retired from the IPL prior to the 2026 season after being a member of KKR's championship-winning teams in 2014 and 2024. Mysore stated, "We've had a long association with Andre Russell, not just with KKR but also on a personal level," when speaking at the occasion in Kolkata. Over the years, he has provided us with numerous reasons to appreciate his on-field accomplishments. Dre Russ always wore the number 12



with pride, and since it is so special to him, he wanted to pay a fitting homage. Therefore, we would like to retire this number for KKR in his honor in keeping with the Knight Riders tradition of beginning a new legacy. For KKR, who had based a large portion of their current brand on Russell's exploding all-around worth, the gesture had both symbolic and emotional significance. He grabbed over 120 wickets and amassed over 2,600 runs at a strike rate above 174 throughout his IPL tenure with the team, demonstrating why KKR decided to make No. 12 a permanent part of their legacy. Russell, in tears, said he was moved by the memories associated with his KKR journey and the tribute video. "After more

than ten years of incredible success with this series, watching the video made me feel a little sentimental. It's an incredible feeling to be a member of two championship-winning teams with KKR and to witness what it means to everyone. It feels different to win the IPL than it does to win the World Cup. I would want to express my gratitude to this franchise for making our journey so memorable. Russell's remarks encapsulated the reason why KKR fans found such resonance in the occasion. This was more than just a retiring player's formal farewell. In a move that guarantees No. 12 will always be exclusively his in Kolkata's colors, the team marked Andre Russell's place in its history.

# Congress labels the Uniform Civil Code Bill passed by the Gujarat Assembly as "anti-Muslim"

Gandhinagar, Mar 25: After a lengthy seven-and-a-half-hour debate, the Gujarat Assembly passed the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill on Tuesday, making it the second state after Uttarakhand to do so. While the opposition referred to the Act as "anti-Muslim" and said that the administration passed it for political purposes, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel stated that the Bill grants equal rights to everybody. Regardless of faith, the Bill suggests a common legal framework to regulate marriage, divorce, succession, and cohabitation. But Congress staged a walkout to demand that the Speaker refer the bill to a Select Committee before it could be approved by voice vote. "This bill was introduced on behalf of Gujarati sisters and daughters. Through the UCC, the state has made a step toward speeding the development of India by 2047. No community will be subjected to discrimination thanks to this bill. It doesn't limit anyone's freedom or take away their rights," CM Patel stated. However, the opposition said



that the bill solely serves the political interests of the ruling party and deals with sectarian matters. They claimed that in order to address anti-incumbency sentiment against the BJP prior to the local body elections, the Bill was expedited. Gujarat Congress MLA Imran Khedawala told India Today TV that he opposed the Uniform Civil Code Bill, saying, "This Bill is against our society and will not benefit us." We are against the Bill because we adhere to Sharia and the Quran.

The government should grant Bilkees Bano justice and take action against the welcome accorded to her accused if it cares about Muslim women. AAP MLA Chaitar Vasavane told India Today

TV that there was no clarification regarding the status of tribal communities under the new UCC and that the government brought the Bill only for its electoral purposes. "A certain amount of clarity is necessary.

He continued, "The government has not made clear which laws will apply to tribal women who marry into other communities." Uttarakhand became the nation's first state to adopt the Uniform Civil Code in February 2024.

Notably, one of the main pledges made by the Bharatiya Janata Party in its 2022 Uttarakhand Assembly election program was the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code.

# Can Riyan Parag Lead The Reimagined Rajasthan Royals To Glory In IPL 2026?

## Can Riyan Parag Finally Lead RR To Glory?

**New Delhi:** All the talk of a takeover, and we almost forgot there is still a season of the Indian Premier League to be played this year. Rajasthan Royals are back, albeit in a new avatar, for the 2026 edition of the IPL. But the question remains: is this the year they can get back into the title picture? For so many years, the Royals and Sanju Samson have been a familiar sight. But now the latter has moved on, and in comes Ravindra Jadeja, the only active cricketer from the original 2008 side that won the title under Shane Warne.

The franchise decided to move on from Samson and appointed Riyan Parag, a player they have backed since he was 17, as their new captain. They head into a new era both on and off the field, but the question remains whether they can finally Crack



The code this Season. Arguably, the Best thing going for the Rajasthan Royals is their stacked top order. Yashasvi Jaiswal and Vaibhav Suryavanshi at the top have shown signs of being a lethal combination, one capable of taking the game away from even the best attacks in the opposition. In the seven games the pair opened together, they accumulated 422 runs at a run rate of 12.17 runs per over, the second-highest among Openers last season. There is

Little reason to believe they will not continue where they left off. Spin is another key area of strength. The acquisitions of Ravi Bishnoi and Ravindra Jadeja give them additional firepower that they have lacked since the era of Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravichandran Ashwin. But it does not stop there. Should they need more overs of spin, they can turn to the likes of Riyan Parag and Donovan Ferreira, or bring in a specialist like Vignesh Puthur.

# Sinner Reaches Miami Quarterfinals to Extend Incredible ATP Masters Streak

**Miami:** The world number two Italian tennis sensation Jannik Sinner made it to the quarterfinals of the ongoing Miami Open, making a late comeback against home favourite Alex Michelsen in a gripping contest. On Tuesday, Sinner beat Michelsen 7-5, 7-6(4) at Hard Rock Stadium, coming back from being down 2-5 in the second set, went into a tie-break, and then completed a win after one hour and 42 minutes. He also kept his happy ATP Masters 1000 events streak going, making it 28 successive set wins in a row, a record-extending effort. "I felt like the serve helped me quite a lot today, especially in important moments and in the tie-break, so I'm happy about that," said Sinner as quoted by ATP's official website.

At the same time, I know that if I want to go far in this tournament, I have to improve from the back of the court. Tomorrow is a day off, which helps me, and I will try to find a good rhythm in the practice session. Then we will see how things go," he said.



"It is completely different conditions to last night, so I am happy with how I fought. It was very close. A very close match against Alex. He is a tough opponent, so I'm very happy," he added. Sinner won 90 per cent of his points behind his first serve during the win and would be aiming to produce a dominant show against 19th seed Frances Tiafoe in the quar-

terfinal. The Italian said that he did not feel he played his best tennis during the match, so "he tried to find a way through." "I know myself a little bit better now, so I know that every day can be a little bit different," he added. Despite Sinner's class, nothing could stop Michelsen from producing some magic. When the American was serving at 5-3, Sinner

capitalised to break back and kept hopes of a 14th successive straight sets Masters 1000 win alive. Michelsen managed to take things into a tie-break, where Sinner dominated proceedings by winning six out of the next seven points to seal the match. With this win, Sinner's head-to-head record against Michelsen is 3-0. The 24-year-old Italian is the third man to reach the quarter-finals in all of his first five Miami Open appearances, joining Yannick Noah and Stefan Edberg. Six days after lifting his first title of the calendar year, the world number two tied with Serbian icon Novak Djokovic for the most successive sets won at ATP Masters 1000 level events, with 24. Sinner is currently on a 12-match win streak in this tournament category following title wins at Paris last November and later in California during Indian Wells. It was his top-class serving which helped him dominate Damir, the world number 76th and he won 14 out of 17 points while moving forward the net.

# Tom Brady Eyes WrestleMania 42 Debut Following Heated Spat With Logan Paul



**Washington:** The National Football League (NFL) icon and seven-time Super Bowl winner, Tom Brady, could be venturing into the world of professional wrestling, with the New England Patriots legend in talks with World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) for a potential appearance at their marquee event, Wrestlemania 42 following a heated confrontation with Logan Paul, a YouTuber and WWE wrestler. As per Goal.com which quoted veteran pro wrestling journalist Dave Meltzer on

Wrestling Observer Radio, things are happening behind the scenes to bring the quarterback, also the minority owner of Birmingham City FC, to WWE's marquee event in Las Vegas. WM 42 will take place from April 18-19 and will feature superstars like WWE Undisputed Champion Cody Rhodes and World Heavyweight Champion CM Punk, defending their championships against icons like Randy Orton and Roman Reigns in high-profile bouts. Speaking on a potential deal between both

Parties, Meltzer stated as quoted by Goal.com said, "From what I have been told, they are in negotiations for Tom Brady. But there is absolutely not a deal at this point. So it could happen, obviously, Logan Paul and Tom Brady are working, everyone knows they are working the angle.

I think people have seen that coming in, but there could be something in some form at WrestleMania." The groundwork for a possible segment/match involving Brady and Logan has al-

ready been laid. Tensions rose between two sporting stars during the Fanatics Flag Football Classic in Los Angeles, where both teams captained their respective sides. Brady expressed how he felt about pro wrestling, calling it "cute and scripted" during a media appearance. "You know, all their stuff is so cute and scripted, and they know what is going on. In a football game, you do not know, so they would not get near me. Plus, if I had a good offensive line, they will punch those guys right in the throat, and they would be probably crying," said Logan as quoted by Goal.com. Logan responded with a fake apology video and trolled the 48-year-old American football icon. Wrestlemania 42 will take place at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, the home venue of the Las Vegas Raiders. Brady notably holds a minority ownership stake in this team as well. Speculation from outlets like 'Fightful Select' and 'WrestleVotes' indicates that in-ring names like The Untouchable Tom Brady' and 'T-Bone' have been discussed internally for Brady.

# Esterhuizen And Bowlers Drive South Africa To Dramatic Series Win Over NZ

**New Delhi:** Connor Esterhuizen blasted a career-best 75 from 33 balls to propel South Africa to a 33-run win over New Zealand in the fifth T20I on Wednesday and a 3-2 win in the five-match series. Esterhuizen's second consecutive half century after his previous best of 57 in the fourth match on Sunday saw South Africa make 187/4 after being sent in. New Zealand managed only 154/8 in reply. Esterhuizen paced the second half of the South Africa innings after coming to the crease in the 11th over with a total of 76-2. He was dropped a place in the order Wednesday and batted behind Rubin Hermann, who hit 39 from 31 balls to pick up the run rate after a slow start. South Africa was only 43-1 after the power play and 76 at the midpoint of its innings. The last 10 overs produced 111 runs, thanks to Esterhuizen and Dian Forrester, with whom he added 61 in just over four overs for the fourth wicket.

"I think the nice thing was that I got to come in and play with some freedom because of the nice platform from the guys up top with wickets in hand," Esterhuizen said. "Early on the openers assessed it and said 160 was competitive. The more myself and (Forrester) was out there we said 170 was a good score and we got 187." Esterhuizen's innings included five fours and six sixes. He was dropped on 49 by Bevon Jacobs from the bowling of Zak Foulkes and made New Zealand pay, stretching his innings into the last over. In total



the South Africa innings contained 15 fours and 10 sixes along with 47 dot balls. With wickets in hand South Africa added 52 runs from the last five overs, including five sixes. New Zealand's problems were compounded by poor catching, though Nick Kelly held a brilliant one-handed catch, the best of the series, to dismiss Hermann. The New Zealand run chase was also poorly executed and the home side found itself bogged down by accurate bowling, well supported by the field. Gerald Coetzee bowled quick at both ends of the innings and took 2/21 from four overs while Otneil Baartman used variation and took 2/33. The spinner Preenelan Subrayen allowed only 22 runs from his four overs and captain Keshav Maharaj also tested the New Zealand batters. New Zealand was 46/2 after the power play and 65/3 after 10 overs

when the run rate required was 12.3 per over. After 15 overs New Zealand was 116/4 and the required run rate had crept up to 14.4. New Zealand finally needed 47 from the last two overs. Jacobs was the best of the New Zealand batters, scoring 36 from 19. The match was the most high-scoring of the series. New Zealand was bowled out for 91 in the first match which South Africa won by seven wickets; South Africa was bowled out for 107 in the second match which New Zealand won by 68 runs and held to 136/9 in the third match which New Zealand won by eight wickets. South Africa restricted New Zealand to 145 in the fourth match which it won by 19 runs. Mumbai Indians are looking to come up with an improved showing after having been knocked out in the first playoffs match last year.

# Mbappe Played Through Ligament Tear After Real Madrid Scanned The Wrong Knee Injury

**New Delhi:** Real Madrid have found themselves in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons at a defining juncture of their season. With the club trailing Barcelona by four points in La Liga and gearing up for a high-stakes UEFA Champions League quarter-final against Bayern Munich, attention has drifted away from their on-field ambitions to mounting concerns over the club's medical management. At the centre of the controversy is star forward Kylian Mbappe, who was allegedly cleared to play despite carrying a knee injury after a major diagnostic error. According to a report by The Athletic, as quoted by Goal.com, Real Madrid's medical staff mistakenly performed an MRI scan on Mbappe's right knee instead of his injured left knee back in December 2025.

Since the right knee was healthy, the scan showed no issues, and Mbappe was given the green light to continue playing. The Frenchman went on to feature in three matches, unknowingly aggravating the injury before the mistake was eventually discovered. A fresh scan on his right knee later revealed a partial tear in the posterior ligament of his left knee. The 27-year-old was reportedly "furious" upon learning of the misdiagnosis, with the incident said to have played a role in his decision



To dismiss members of his personal medical team earlier this year. The episode has intensified scrutiny on Real Madrid's medical department, which has seen multiple changes in recent years. Former head doctor Dr. Niko Mihic, who had departed in 2023, was rehired after a restructuring last summer. Persistent injury concerns within the squad have also raised alarms, with players like Jude Bellingham and Alvaro Carreras missing action in recent weeks. Further controversy emerged after former nutritionist Itziar Gonzalez alleged that the club's staff had relied on AI tools such as ChatGPT for advice on nutritional supplements, sparking debate over professionalism and standards. Despite the uproar, Mbappe has publicly downplayed concerns around his fitness.

"My knee is fine. It is getting better. Things are going pretty well, and I know there was a lot of speculation about it and false things were said. That is the life of a top-level athlete," he said. He added that he underwent a more thorough diagnosis in Paris and is now "100 per cent fit" as he builds towards the upcoming FIFA World Cup. Real Madrid medical staff mistakenly performed an MRI scan on Kylian Mbappe 's right knee instead of his injured left knee. This diagnostic error occurred in December 2025 after the player reported discomfort.

Since the right knee was healthy, the initial scan showed no issues, and the forward was cleared to play in three subsequent matches. A later scan eventually identified a partial tear in the posterior ligament of his

left knee, an injury that was reportedly aggravated by the delay in correct diagnosis. Following a major medical error involving a diagnostic mix-up at Real Madrid, Kylian Mbappe reportedly dismissed members of his personal medical team. The 27-year-old forward was said to be "furious" after learning he had unknowingly played several matches with a partial tear in his left knee ligament. The controversy arose when club staff mistakenly performed an MRI scan on the player's healthy right knee instead of the injured left one in December 2025. This error led to Kylian Mbappe being cleared to play three additional matches, which aggravated the injury before a second scan eventually revealed the true extent of the damage. Rodrygo has been ruled out of the upcoming 2026 World Cup after suffering a torn ACL and meniscus in his right knee. The injury occurred while playing for Real Madrid during a La Liga match against Getafe on March 4, 2026. The 25-year-old forward's knee buckled just 11 minutes after he entered the pitch as a second-half substitute. Rodrygo expressed deep heartbreak over the diagnosis, describing it as one of the worst days of his life as it ends his season and his dream of representing the Brazil national team at the global tournament. final World Cup May.

# Livingstone Still In England Contention Despite Heated Outburst, Says Rob Key



**New Delhi:** Rob Key has insisted that Liam Livingstone continues to be in England's selection plans despite his outburst against the board and the current team management in an explosive interview. Livingstone has criticised head coach Brendon McCullum and Rob Key, citing poor communication and a lack of backing during one of the most difficult periods of his international career. The strong comments come after the 32-year-old all-rounder, who has represented England in 100 matches across formats, admitted he has been out of the national setup for nearly a year and feels a comeback

now looks unlikely. Livingstone last played for England during the Champions Trophy last year. He claimed that Key had initially promised a conversation "in the summer", but months went by with little to no contact.

When they finally spoke in late September, just before Livingstone's central contract expired, Key informed him it wouldn't be renewed—and reportedly brushed off concerns over the silence, saying he had "100 more important things" to deal with. "Look, I'm not going to go into private conversations," Key told Sky Sports News. "Obviously, there's another side to that

conversation as I saw it. What I did say to Liam at the end of what was a fairly tetchy phone call to say the least [was that] there's no way I see a player of Liam Livingstone's ability not being up for selection for England." Key said that Livingstone was in consideration for being a part of England's tour of Sri Lanka just ahead of the T20 World Cup 2026. The England director said Livingstone is still highly-rated and pointed "We debated him for the Sri Lanka series. Liam Livingstone is very much a player that we would love to see back to his best, scoring runs, and then back in the England set-up.