

First edition of Indian sailing league inaugurated at the umiam water sports complex

Shillong, Mar 28: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Friday inaugurated the first edition of the Indian Sailing League (ISL) at the Umiam Water Sports Complex in Umiam. The league, being held from March 27 to 31, is organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Meghalaya, in collaboration with the Umiam Sailing Club and the United De Novo Association of Yachting.

The event brought together 14 teams with 182 participants, including 58 international sailors from 8 countries, highlighting its international scale and competitive stature. Tourism Minister Timothy D. Shira was also present, along with other dignitaries and representatives from various sailing associations. In his keynote address, Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma described the Indian Sailing League as part of a long-term vision to unlock the full potential of Umiam and position Meghalaya as a leading destination for tourism and international events. Reflecting on



earlier visits to the site, he noted that its potential had long been underutilised and emphasised the government's efforts to transform it through planned development.

"This initiative has been in the making for a long time... we real-

ised that the immense potential of this area was being underutilised. We therefore made a conscious decision to develop it in a manner that would unlock its full potential," he said. He acknowledged the contributions of Lt. Col. Alok Yadav and his team,

along with Cyril V.D. Diengdoh and supporting agencies, in making the league a reality. Emphasising the broader approach of the government, he stated that events such as the ISL are part of a larger strategy. "Our goal is clear: to create an environ-

ment where people say, 'We want to visit Shillong, we want to visit Meghalaya.' The larger message is that Meghalaya has arrived, Shillong has arrived—we are ready." Organizers expressed optimism that the Indian Sailing League will become an annual fixture, expanding to other water bodies across the country. Plans are underway to involve more teams, introduce advanced training programs, and collaborate with international sailing federations. The long-term vision is to nurture talent that can represent India at global competitions, including the Olympics.

The inauguration of the Indian Sailing League at Umiam Water Sports Complex marks a bold step in diversifying India's sporting landscape. By combining competitive spirit with tourism potential, the league promises to elevate sailing from a niche pursuit to a recognized national sport. As the sails catch the wind at Umiam, they symbolize not just the start of a competition but the beginning of a new journey for Indian sailing.

In Brief

AR conducts coordination meeting in Kakching

Imphal: Continuing its mission to foster peace and inclusive development, the Assam Rifles organised a comprehensive Civil-Military Liaison and Coordination Meeting at the Kakching Garrison. The forum brought together a total of 27 key stakeholders, comprising senior officials of Assam Rifles and civil administration, alongside law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The high-level interaction included District Commissioners and Superintendents of Police from Kakching and Chandel as well as officials from the offices of Thoubal and Tengnoupal. Representatives from the NIA, State Intelligence Bureau, Special Bureau, Narcotics and Customs Departments and Divisional Forest Officers also participated. This diverse assembly chaired by the Senior Officer of Assam Rifles provided a constructive platform for open dialogue and collaborative planning aimed at the long-term socio-economic progress of the four districts.

Addl CS reviews ongoing works at Imphal Airport

Imphal: Additional Chief Secretary (Transport & TCI) Anurag Bajpai, IFS today reviewed the progress of construction of the New Integrated Terminal Building (NITB), its Apron, its approach road from NH, power supply, water supply and other various ongoing project works at Imphal International Airport at the Project office of Airport Authority of India (AAI). The meeting was attended by the Transport Director, Khumanthem Diana Devi; Deputy Commissioner (Imphal West) Mayanglambam Rajkumar; Superintendent of Police (Imphal West), Director (AAI) and representatives from PWD, MP-DCL, CISF and the project team. It was noted that construction activities have resumed in full swing since last review held in December 2025, following a prolonged delay due to various issues, including conflict-related challenges. The overall physical progress of the NITB project currently stands at approximately 50% completion.

Mizoram CM inaugurates Thenzawl Road Division

Aizawl: Chief Minister Lalduhoma inaugurated the Thenzawl PWD Road Division at the PWD Complex, Thenzawl on Friday. He was accompanied by B. Lalchhanzova, Minister for Information & Public Relations, and T. Lalhlipmua, MLA. In his address, the Chief Minister described the occasion as a significant milestone for the Public Works Department and a moment of joy for the people of Thenzawl. He stated that the establishment of the new Thenzawl PWD Road Division would contribute meaningfully to Mizoram's continued progress. He noted that Mizoram had lagged behind in development due to two decades of insurgency, particularly in infrastructure, industry, and investment. The state's road density remains considerably lower than that of other states.

MP Sanajaoba urges Centre to confer Bharat Ratna on Ratan Thiyam

Imphal, Mar 28: BJP MP Maharaja Sanajaoba Leishemba on Friday demanded that the government confer the Bharat Ratna posthumously on Ratan Thiyam, one of India's foremost theatre personalities who passed away recently. Raising the issue during Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha, the MP described Thiyam as a "towering cultural icon" from Manipur whose landmark productions -- including Chakravayuha, Andha Yug, and Ritusamharam -- brought global recognition to Indian theatre. "Ratan Thiyam was a multifaceted genius -- a playwright, director, painter, and writer -- who transformed Indian theatre through a unique blending of traditional Manipuri aesthetics with modern theatrical expression over a career spanning more than five decades," Leishemba said. Ratan Thiyam was the first National School of Drama (NSD) graduate from Manipur. He went on to serve as its director from 1979 to 1989 and as chairman from 2013 to 2017. In 1976, he founded the Chorus Repertory Theatre in Imphal, which grew into a nationally acclaimed centre of experimental and socially conscious theatre.



Among his several honours, Ratan Thiyam received the Padma Shri, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship. In 2018, then Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu conferred on him the Legend of India Lifetime Achievement Award. Urging the government to act, the MP said conferring the Bharat Ratna on Thiyam would be "a fitting tribute to a legendary son of Manipur and one of the greatest cultural ambassadors of India."

NDA will win all 15 BTC seats, says Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma at Bijni rally

Guwahati, Mar 28: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today said that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is confident of winning all 15 seats in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections. He made the statement while addressing a large election rally in Bijni constituency in Chirang district, even as the area witnessed bad weather. The Chief Minister said that the NDA in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) currently includes the BJP and the BPF. He clarified that the UPPL is not part of the alliance, as it is contesting the elections separately. Sarma stressed that both the BJP and BPF must remain united to ensure development in the BTC region. He expressed strong confidence in the alliance's prospects and said that the NDA is certain to win all 15 out of 15 BTC seats. He also said that BJP candidate Arup Kumar Dey is set to win from the Bijni constituency. During the rally, Sarma chose not to comment on reports of a late-night conversation with Akhil Gogoi, saying nothing on the speculation. Despite heavy rain and difficult weather conditions, a large number of people attended the rally. The event saw the presence of senior leaders, including BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary and Union Minister Rameswar Teli, along with many party workers and supporters. Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah cancelled his scheduled rally in Gossaigaon due to bad weather. However, he is expected to continue his campaign in the constituency at a later time.

AR conducts coordination meeting in Kakching

Imphal, Mar 28: Continuing its mission to foster peace and inclusive development, the Assam Rifles organised a comprehensive Civil-Military Liaison and Coordination Meeting at the Kakching Garrison. The forum brought together a total of 27 key stakeholders, comprising senior officials of Assam Rifles and civil administration, alongside law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The high-level interaction included District Commissioners and Superintendents of Police from Kakching and Chandel as well as officials from the offices of Thoubal and Tengnoupal. Representatives from the NIA, State Intelligence Bureau, Special Bureau, Narcotics and Customs Departments and Divisional Forest Officers also participated. This diverse assembly chaired by the Senior Officer of Assam Rifles provided a constructive platform for open dialogue and collaborative planning aimed at the long-term socio-economic progress of the four districts. Discussions prioritised real-time intelligence sharing and improved operational synergy to address the prevailing internal security situation across the valleys and hills. Signifi-



cant focus was placed on the Indo-Myanmar Border, particularly regarding post-election activities in the neighbouring country, illegal movement of drugs, timber and the smuggling of war-like stores. Critical administrative issues were also addressed, including the resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons in Kakching and Chandel, land acquisition and the progress of border fencing along the International Boundary. Vowing strict action against anti-national elements through synchronised counter-insurgency and anti-contraband drives, the participants reaffirmed their commitment to sustained peace.

Awareness programme on stress management for cops conducted

Imphal, Mar 28: Manipur Police Training College (MPTC), Pangei, in collaboration with Shija Hospitals, conducted a one-day awareness training programme on "Stress Management: Psychological Wellbeing and Mental Health Awareness" at the Conference Hall, MPTC, Pangei. The programme was organized for police personnel ranging from Constable to Head Constable, with over 20 participants in attendance. The sessions were conducted by Dr. Meesha Haorongbam, Consultant Psychiatrist at Shija Hospitals, who addressed "Stigma and Sup-



port: Mental Health and its Impact on Police Work," and Nidhibala Athokpam, Consultant Clinical Psychologist at Shija Hospitals, who covered "Understanding Stress and Psychological First Aid." The programme aimed to

enhance awareness, reduce stigma associated with mental health, and strengthen the capacity of police personnel to effectively manage stress and related psychological challenges in the course of their duties.

Transgender community not adequately recognised by society: RVS Secretary

Imphal, Mar 28: A two-day Training of Trainers (ToT) program, which is to be conducted as per the "Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 & Rule, 2020", began on Friday at Kshetri Sanglen, adjacent to the Women Police Station, Thoubal, organised by New Life Sanglen, Garima Greh Shelter Home for Transgender (Only for Transmen) located at Wangjing Bazar, Thoubal. Wangbal Mayai Leikai of Rural Voluntary Services (RVS), District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) Thoubal K. Nongpoknganba Salaicha and Rural Vol-

untary Services (RVS) Secretary Babita Sapam attended the inaugural function as chief guests. In today's training, divided into two sessions, HRLN Director Rakesh Meihoubam spoke on the topic "Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 & Rule, 2020 and their constitutional Provisions", and Jen Yengkhom, a Member of Empowering Trans Ability (ETA), Manipur, spoke on the topic "Transgender Empowerment - Issues & Initiatives Health, Education, Employment, livelihood". An open discussion was also held along with the pre-

sentations by the Resource Persons. Speaking at the function, RVS Secretary Babita Sapam stated, "Our society has people of many kinds. Among them, the transgender community, which is a smaller group of people, is not adequately recognised by society. Therefore, for them to understand the "Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 & Rule, 2020", which was enacted in 2019 and came into force as Rules in 2020, and to help them overcome the numerous challenges they face, this Trainers of Trainees program has been organized."

Addl CS reviews ongoing works at Imphal Airport

Imphal, Mar 28: Additional Chief Secretary (Transport & TCI) Anurag Bajpai, IFS today reviewed the progress of construction of the New Integrated Terminal Building (NITB), its Apron, its approach road from NH, power supply, water supply and other various ongoing project works at Imphal International Airport at the Project office of Airport Authority of India (AAI). The meeting was attended by the Transport Director, Khumanthem Diana Devi; Deputy Commissioner (Imphal West) Mayanglambam Rajkumar; Superintendent of Police (Imphal West), Director (AAI) and representatives from PWD, MP-DCL, CISF and the project team. It was noted that construction activities have resumed in full swing since last review held in December 2025, following a prolonged delay due to various issues, including conflict-related challenges. The overall physical progress of the NITB project currently stands at

approximately 50% completion. During the review, all concerned agencies were directed to strictly adhere to follow time schedule prescribed in last review, complete the construction of NITB, Apron, Power Supply, Water Supply etc and ensure completion of all works before December 31, 2026 in accordance with the PDC. DC (Imphal West) and PWD officials were asked to expedite Social Impact Assessment (SIA) process for acquisition of land for the construction of approach road from NH to NITB. Additionally, the Transport Department, in coordination with AAI, held discussions with Alliance Air officials regarding the early commencement of flight services on the Imphal-Silchar route, and also explored the feasibility of enhancing regional connectivity by linking Imphal with Dibrugarh Airport. Further, the ACS and Director Transport along with Director



(AAI) and CISF officials also inspected new Cargo Terminal and directed the project agency to complete installations of necessary machines and start operations latest by April 30. Director (AAI) was also requested to expedite

necessary security clearances from BCAS to make it operational. ACS concluded the meeting with a strong emphasis on inter-agency coordination, timely execution of project works, and the enhancement of regional air connectivity.

NE/EAST

NDA eyes stellar performance in Bodoland ahead of Assam Assembly polls

Guwahati, Mar 28: The NDA eyes a stellar performance in the 15-seat Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) in the April 9 Assam elections, and a lot of factors may influence the success. The BJP is hoping to ride piggyback on the Bodoland People’s Front (BPF). The Hagrama Mohilary-led party had decimated the ruling BJP-United People’s Party Liberal (UPPL) combine in the autonomous Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections last year to return to power.

The drubbing made the BJP re-strategise its alliance. It cosied up to the BPF, cold-shouldering the UPPL with whom it had ruled the BTC for five years. The UPPL has walked out of the NDA and is contesting the Assembly polls on



its own. The BPF is going all guns blazing, buoyed by the success in the BTC elections. It is contesting 11 seats and the BJP is contesting 4 seats in the BTR, which comprises

the BTC, said on Friday. He disclosed that when BPF planned to contest all 15 seats in the BTR, he was sure of winning more than 15 seats. Meanwhile, the UPPL is equally upbeat about its success. It is contesting 18 seats, 15 in the BTR and 3 elsewhere in the State. “I believe we will win 12 to 13 seats. Whoever forms the next government will need the support of the UPPL,” said student leader-turned-UPPL president Pramod Boro confidently. He said peace and security would remain the two priority areas of his party. “We worked for peace and development of all communities in the last five years in the BTC. I am confident that people will vote for the UPPL. We will go to the state Assembly with a good team,” Boro further stated.

Conservation experts stress sustainable solutions for human-wildlife conflicts at JNC panel

Guwahati, Mar 28: Jawaharlal Nehru College (JNC) in Arunachal Pradesh’s Pasighat hosted a panel discussion on “Human-Wildlife Interactions: Conflict and Coexistence” organized by the college’s Debating Society. Experts in conservation discussed solutions for managing human-wildlife conflicts and promoting coexistence. The session was coordinated by Kaling Darung and Apilang Apum and moderated by journalist Marina Dai. The event was sponsored by the college’s Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and Research & Development (R&D) Cell. Panelists included Maksam Tayeng, honorary wildlife warden and chairman of the Eco-Development Committee of Daying Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, who identified habitat destruction and hunting as primary causes of conflict. He suggested that sustainable use of resources, preservation of breeding habitats, and regulation of traditional practices are key to reducing friction between humans and animals. Jibi Pulu, indigenous conservation practitioner and member of the Elopa Etugu Community Eco-Cultural Preserve, stressed the importance of prioritizing conservation over material gain.

He cited community-led efforts that increased fox and barking deer populations and advocated for local communities to play a central role in conservation policies. Kento Kadu, head of the Department of Zoology at JNC, noted that rural



populations and farmers are most affected by human-wildlife interactions. He called for long-term sustainable development policies rather than reactive compensation. Tajum Yomcha, research officer in the Office of the PCCF (Wildlife & Biodiversity), stressed viewing these interactions as challenges to be addressed, rather than conflicts, and pointed out the importance of protecting wild-

life. Panelist Maksam Tayeng, honorary wildlife warden and chairman of the Daying Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary committee, cited habitat destruction and hunting as main causes of conflict. The discussion included questions from students and faculty members, fostering active engagement. The event was live-streamed on Pasighat News and JNC social media pages.

Assam records 65% compliance in arms surrender drive ahead of polls

Guwahati, Mar 28: Nearly 65 per cent compliance has been achieved in the ongoing weapon surrender drive in Assam, even as security agencies maintain close surveillance on surrendered militants and licensed firearm holders to prevent any misuse during the election period. Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Akhilesh Singh said enforcing compliance among licensed firearm holders is aimed at preventing the use of weapons during the polls. “Apart from those traditionally exempted, weapons must be surrendered by one and all until and unless there is a serious and specific threat percept endorsed by the district committee,” he added. Officials said exemptions from depositing licensed weapons would be granted only in the rarest of rare cases, and strict action would be taken against those failing to comply. Around 30 per cent of licence holders are still under scrutiny, with district-level committees analysing each case individually before deciding whether exemption is justified, intelligence sources said. Security agencies have also stepped up monitoring of surrendered militants to ensure they do not regroup or attempt to influence the electoral process.

“Alongside the surrendered militants, licensed firearm holders across the state have been directed to deposit their weapons. Assam is estimated to have around 12,000 licensed arms, and with 70 per cent already surrendered, the



drive is nearing completion,’ the source informed. District committees are verifying compliance, maintaining records and ensuring safe custody of the deposited arms. Until the arms are fully deposited, surrendered militants or any licensed firearm holders remain restricted from participating in political rallies or public activities, a measure aimed at maintaining peace and order during the polls.

Since 2021, more than 9,000 militants have formally laid down arms in Assam, handing over 1,000 weapons including AK-series rifles, pistols, grenades and ammunition. Officials said the disarmament of such a large number of cadres is a significant step towards stability, while vigilance remains necessary during the election period.

Meghalaya’s NPP in Assam Assembly poll fray with a larger goal

Guwahati, Mar 28: The National People’s Party (NPP), which heads Meghalaya’s ruling coalition, is taking a small step into Assam but with a bigger goal in mind. With some mainland India-based political parties contesting the April 9 Assam elections, the NPP is contesting three of the state’s 126 seats in its maiden electoral foray into Assam.

The party fielded MLA Mohammed Aminul Islam in the Mankachar seat, Daniel Langthasa in Haflong and Ganseng B Sangma in Boko-Chaygaon. Langthasa and Sangma are tribals. Mankachar lies in the South Salmara-Mankachar district, Haflong is present in the Dima Hasao district, and Boko-Chaygaon is in the Kamrup district, respectively. The three districts share their borders with Meghalaya. The National People’s Party (NPP), which heads Meghalaya’s ruling coalition, is taking a small step into Assam but with a bigger goal in mind. With



some mainland India-based political parties contesting the April 9 Assam elections, the NPP is contesting three of the state’s 126 seats in its maiden electoral foray into Assam. The party fielded MLA Mohammed Aminul Islam in the Mankachar seat, Daniel Langthasa in Haflong and Ganseng B Sangma in

Boko-Chaygaon. Langthasa and Sangma are tribals. Mankachar lies in the South Salmara-Mankachar district, Haflong is present in the Dima Hasao district, and Boko-Chaygaon is in the Kamrup district, respectively. The three districts share their borders with Meghalaya.

Security forces dismantle in Manipur’s Ukhrul and Kamjong districts 58 illegal bunkers

Imphal, Mar 28: In a coordinated operation, security forces dismantled 58 illegally constructed bunkers in Manipur’s Ukhrul and Kamjong districts, officials said on Thursday. The joint action involved personnel of the Army’s 8 Bihar Regiment, Manipur Police and the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF). The bunkers, allegedly set up by armed groups linked to Naga and Kuki communities, had been a source of concern for nearly two months. According to officials, 52 bunkers were demolished during operations carried out at Mahadev Thoyee Ridge and Zalengbung Ridge in Ukhrul district on Thursday. A day earlier, six bunkers were



dismantled at Litan and Mongkat Chepu, rendering most of the fortified positions in the violence-affected Litan region ineffective. Security forces had also conducted simultaneous operations on March 24 within the jurisdiction of Litan police station, targeting bunker

sites at Lengiangching and Mongkat Chepu villages. A large number of spent cartridges were recovered during the operations. Officials said the demolition of bunkers on both sides has led to a marked reduction in firing incidents. Security agencies have since intensified area domination through regular patrols and the strategic deployment of troops to prevent any escalation of violence. Meanwhile, the Kuki Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Working Committee in Ukhrul district welcomed the joint operations, describing the dismantling of bunkers on both sides as a necessary step to safeguard civilians, including schoolchildren.

68 candidates including 28 women file nominations for Aizawl civic polls

Aizawl, Mar 28: A total of 68 candidates, including 28 women, from four major political parties have filed nominations for the upcoming elections to the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC), officials said on Thursday.

Polling for the 19-member municipal body is scheduled for April 21, while counting of votes will be held on April 27. According to election officials, the ruling Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM), the main opposition Mizo National Front (MNF), and the Congress have fielded 19 candidates each, covering all wards. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has nominated 11 candidates

Scrutiny of nomination papers will be conducted on March 27, and the last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 30. More than 2.37 lakh voters, including around 1.28 lakh women, are eligible to cast their votes in the AMC polls. The municipal corporation comprises 19 wards, of which six are reserved for women, while the remaining 13 are open to all candidates. In the previous AMC elections held in February 2021, the MNF secured a majority with 11 seats, followed by the ZPM with six seats and the Congress with two. According to election authorities, the ruling Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM), the main opposition Mizo National Front (MNF), and the Indian National Congress have fielded 19 candidates each. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has nominated 11 candidates. The nomination process concluded on Wednesday. Scrutiny of nomination papers will take place on March 27, while March 30 has been set as the last date for withdrawal of candidature. Officials said over 2.37 lakh voters, including 1.28 lakh women, are eligible to cast their votes in the AMC elections. In the previous AMC elections held in February 2021, the MNF secured a majority by winning 11 seats, while the ZPM won six and the Congress secured two seats.

Tamil Sangam delegation calls on CM Khemchand



Imphal, Mar 28: A delegation of the Tamil Sangam, Moreh, led by its General Secretary K.B.S. Maniam, called on Chief Minister Y Khemchand at the Secretariat on Friday. The delegation apprised the Chief Minister of the prevailing conditions of the Tamil community and other communities residing in Moreh. The Chief Minister emphasised that ensuring a peaceful and secure environment in Moreh remains a top priority of the Government. He affirmed that all necessary measures will be undertaken to uphold peace, stability, and inclusive development, while underscoring the importance of mutual trust, harmony, and cooperation among all communities.

Security group points to cross-border nexus in Mizoram case

Aizawl, Mar 28: A New Delhi-based security think tank has alleged links between the recently detained Russian national in Mizoram and a Bangladesh-origin insurgent outfit, raising fresh concern over cross-border movements and security in the North East.

In a statement on Friday, the Centre for North East India Security Studies (CNEISS) claimed that the arrest of 41-year-old Russian national Igor Babko in Mamit district may be connected to the activities of the Parbatya Chatagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS). Babko was reportedly found to have entered the State without the mandatory Protected Area Permit (PAP). According to the think tank, BSF personnel detained Babko on Wednesday from Rajiv Nagar, a Chakma-inhabited village in the north-western district bordering Tripura and Bangladesh. The CNEISS said he began his journey from Agartala on March 18 and is believed to have travelled through Kanchanpur in North Tripura before reaching Rajiv Nagar.

Citing inputs from local sources, the think tank alleged that the visit was facilitated by individuals linked to the PCJSS. It named Udayan Chakma alias Jit – described as the outfit’s Mizoram in-charge from Khagrachari district in Bangladesh – and Binanda Chakma, as handling operations in Mamit district. The statement further claimed that pri-

or to entering Mizoram, Babko had visited Mittigachari village in Kanchanpur, which it described as a base camp of the PCJSS. Swapan Debbarma of the CNEISS said that such instances were not unprecedented.

He referred to a case on November 6, 2025, when a Chinese national named Chun Kit Leong was brought to Tripura via Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport in Agartala by PCJSS representatives. The CNEISS further alleged that Bangladesh’s Directorate General of Forces Intelligence has been using the PCJSS as a proxy, claiming that its chief continues to head the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council without elections for nearly three decades. It also claimed that the outfit has established links with various armed groups, including the ULFA (I), Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation. The statement further alleged that in the last week of February this year, the PCJSS facilitated the transport of a large consignment of arms from Myanmar-based armed groups with the assistance of ULFA (I). Warning of broader implications, the think tank said the pattern of bringing foreign nationals into the North East under questionable circumstances warrants a detailed investigation by security agencies. Official agencies have not yet publicly commented on the specific claims made by the think tank.

CM urged to act on proposal for opening of nine new KVVs in Manipur

Imphal, Mar 28: Taorem Pritam Singh, Deputy Commissioner, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Tinsukia Region, paid a courtesy call on Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Friday at the Chief Minister’s bungalow. Taorem Pritam was also accompanied by noted social activist Dayanand Sharma and alumnus of KV No.1 Imphal (Lampelpat). During the interaction, various issues pertaining to the functioning and expansion of Kendriya Vidyalayas in Manipur were discussed in detail. A significant focus was laid on the proposal for opening of nine new Kendriya Vidyalayas across different districts of the state, including Senapati, Kakching, Thoubal, Jiribam, Tengnoupal, Kamjong, and Bishnupur, among others. The DC KVS RO Tinsukia apprised the Chief Minister that while proposals for the establishment of Kendriya Vidyalayas have been received from the District Magistrates of certain districts such as Senapati and Kakching, proposals from several other districts are still awaited. He requested the Chief Minister to facilitate the submission of these proposals at the earliest. The DC KVS RO Tinsukia also requested the State Government to extend necessary support in terms of provision of suitable land and fulfillment of other essential requirements for the early establishment of these new Kendriya Vidyalayas. He



also further added that an increase in the number of KVVs in Manipur would also greatly benefit the state government school education system as this would lead to exchange of ideas/teaching practices and sharing of resources between the KVVs and the state government schools. A special emphasis was laid on the long-pending issue concerning Kendriya Vidyalaya Akampat, which has been functioning from a temporary building at Khurai Lamlong for over a decade. The DC KVS RO Tinsukia highlighted that the allotment and development of land is a prerequisite for handing over the site to KVS for construction of permanent school infrastructure. He made an appeal to the Chief Minister to personally intervene and expedite the resolution of this matter

in the larger interest of the students. Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh, assured that the State Government would look into all the issues raised during the meeting. He acknowledged and appreciated the significant role played by Kendriya Vidyalayas in strengthening the school education system both across the country and within Manipur. He commended the efforts of DC KVS RO Tinsukia and assured full cooperation from the State Government. In conclusion, Taorem Pritam Singh conveyed that, subject to the timely provision of land and other required support from the State Government, he would be glad to facilitate the opening of an additional Kendriya Vidyalaya in Imphal, considering the growing demand for admissions in KVVs among the public.

Two Rare Snake Species Recorded in North East India for the First Time

Aizawl, Mar 28: India’s rich biodiversity has received a major boost with the discovery of two snake species never before recorded within the country.

Scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, have reported the presence of two rare keelback snakes, marking a significant addition to India’s reptile fauna.

The study documents the Rakhine Keelback (*Herpetoreas davidi*) in Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Kachin Hills Keelback (*Hebius gilhodesi*) in Namdapha National Park and Kamlang Tiger Reserve. Until now, both species were believed to be found only in Myanmar.

Researchers said the discovery highlights the ecological continuity between Northeast India and Southeast Asia. The forests of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh are part of a larger biodiversity hotspot extending into Myanmar, allowing species to move across borders.

They noted that large parts of Northeast India remain underexplored due to difficult terrain and limited scientific surveys, suggesting that many species may still be undocumented.

Keelback snakes are generally non-venomous and are

commonly found near water bodies such as streams and wetlands. Their presence often indicates a healthy ecosystem, especially in forested and riverine habitats.

A key feature of these snakes is their “keeled” scales—each scale has a raised ridge running down the center, giving the skin a rough texture. This helps them blend into surroundings like leaf litter, mud, and wetland vegetation.

The newly recorded species are believed to inhabit moist tropical forests, which are increasingly threatened by habitat loss and climate change.

The discovery also underlines the importance of protected areas like Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary and Namdapha National Park, both known for exceptional biodiversity. Namdapha, in particular, is one of India’s richest national parks in terms of species diversity.

Scientists stressed that such findings are crucial for conservation planning, as understanding species distribution helps in protecting fragile ecosystems.

The study also highlights the need for continued exploration in Northeast India—often described as a “biological treasure trove”—with experts believing that more undocumented species could soon be discovered.

NE tourism bodies unite at NEITC Convention 2026, focus on global promotion and regional cooperation

Namsai, Mar 28: The North East India Tourism Confederation successfully concluded its Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Tourism Convention 2026, held from March 22 to 27 across Namsai, Anini, and Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh. The week-long event brought together tourism stakeholders from all eight Northeastern states with a common aim to promote the region as a major global tourism destination. The AGM, held on March 22, saw participation from 24 Executive Committee members representing different states. During the meeting, key organisational matters were discussed, and a new leadership team was elected through a democratic process. Tsering Wange was elected as President, while E. Banlumlang Blah was named Advisor. Yangchen Tongden Lepcha took charge as General Secretary, and Raj Kumar Das was elected Treasurer. The Vice Presidents include Elina Satapathy and Jhantu Roy, while Joe RZ Thanga was elected Joint Secretary. Members also observed a moment of silence to pay tribute to departed members of the tourism fraternity.

The organisation reiterated its focus on building a sustainable and inclusive tourism sector in the region. The Tourism Convention 2026 was held from March 23 to 27 in collaboration with the Arunachal Pradesh Tour Operators Association, with support from the Ministry of Tourism and the Government of Arunachal Pradesh. The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein. The convention featured a series of discussions on key issues such as sustainable and community-based tourism, better regional connectivity, investment opportunities, and joint branding of Northeast India. There was also a focus on promoting Buddhist tourism circuits linking the Northeast with ASEAN countries. As part of the programme, delegates took part in a Familiarisation Tour covering Anini, Roing, and Pasighat in the Dibang Valley region. An interactive session was held with support from Mopi Mihu, Advisor to the Minister of Tourism. The session was attended by Deputy Commissioner Bekir Nyorak, along with officials and local community representatives.

CME cum workshop on phacoemulsification surgery underway at RIMS

Imphal, Mar 28: A three-day CME-cum-workshop, featuring hands-on training in phacoemulsification surgery, is being conducted from March 26 to 28 at the Department of Ophthalmology, Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal. The programme is organised by the Department of Ophthalmology, RIMS, Imphal, with technical support from M/s Alcon Laboratories India Pvt. Ltd., Bengaluru. Phacoemulsification surgery, combined with foldable intraocular lens (IOL) implantation, represents a state-of-the-art, efficient, and advanced approach to cataract treatment, which continues to be the leading cause of blindness worldwide. As a premier medical institution, RIMS was the first to introduce phacoemulsification surgery to the people of Manipur many years ago. The institute remains committed to further strengthening its capabilities by training its staff and postgraduate residents in this advanced



modality of cataract management. This hands-on CME/workshop for residents and faculty is the first initiative of its kind in the State of Manipur and marks a significant step toward enhancing ophthalmic surgical expertise in the region. It is expected to play a crucial role in disseminating these skills, ultimately benefiting not only the people of Manipur but also contributing to the advancement of healthcare across the nation. Meanwhile, a Hindi workshop on the theme “Administrative Termi-

nology: Various Dimensions” was successfully organized today at the Banting Hall of the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal by Official Language Cell. The programme aimed to promote the effective use of Hindi in administrative work and to enhance understanding of administrative terminology in various official contexts. The workshop brought together faculty members, administrative staff, and students, who actively participated in the discussions and deliberations.

Wind of change blowing in Assam: Karnataka Dy CM DK Shivakumar

Guwahati, Mar 28: A Congress government unites people, whereas the BJP divides them. Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and Assam Congress election observer D.K. Shivakumar made this remark while addressing a press conference in Guwahati today during his visit to Assam.

Referring to Guwahati’s pleasant weather, Shivakumar said that the political climate in Assam clearly indicates a wind of change. “I am not merely saying there is anti-incumbency in Assam. I want to say this is the will of the people. The people of Assam want change and a better government. If we look at the history of Congress governments, they have always



been inclusive. But under BJP governments, only authoritarianism prevails,” he said. Recalling the past, Shivakumar said that when Congress was in power in Assam, the BJP had described the present Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma—then a Congress minister—as the “most corrupt minister.” He

added that BJP had even published a booklet on alleged corruption involving Sarma. Questioning the shift, he asked how the same leader is now considered clean and has become the BJP’s poster boy, adding that Amit Shah should answer this.

Shivakumar further claimed that the BJP has

become weak across the country and has failed to strengthen itself even after 10 years in power in Assam. He said the party lacks the ability to groom leaders capable of winning elections and is therefore inducting Congress leaders, including MPs and former PCC presidents. “You have been in power for 10 years. If you have done good work and created leaders, why did you need to bring in our leaders—those who once prepared charge sheets against your top leadership?” he asked. He alleged that the Assam government under Himanta Biswa Sarma is functioning in an authoritarian manner similar to the central government led by Narendra Modi.

Mizoram CM inaugurates Thenzawl Road Division

Aizawl, Mar 28: Chief Minister Lalduhoma inaugurated the Thenzawl PWD Road Division at the PWD Complex, Thenzawl on Friday. He was accompanied by B. Lalchhanzova, Minister for Information & Public Relations, and T. Lalhlimpuia, MLA.

In his address, the Chief Minister described the occasion as a significant milestone for the Public Works Department and a moment of joy for the people of Thenzawl. He stated that the establishment of the new Thenzawl PWD Road Division would contribute meaningfully to Mizoram’s continued progress. He noted that Mizoram had lagged behind in development due to two

decades of insurgency, particularly in infrastructure, industry, and investment. The state’s road density remains considerably lower than that of other states. While the national average road density in India stands at 116 km per 100 sq. km, Mizoram has only 46.37 km per 100 sq. km. Even reaching the national average remains a challenge, and much work still lies ahead.

The Chief Minister emphasized that with increasing developmental activities, there is a pressing need to strengthen the workforce and administrative capacity. The creation of the Thenzawl Division and the new Biate Sub-Division is therefore a crucial step toward en-

hancing efficiency and accelerating development work. The Chief Minister reiterated that Thenzawl is being developed as a “Peace City,” with a Master Plan currently underway. A Greenfield City Project under SASCI has also been proposed. In addition, several major projects are planned or in progress in the area, including tourism initiatives such as ropeways, development of Vanva riverfront, Lau project, heliport, sericulture P3 unit, and relocation plans for Neihloh village due to disaster concerns. Given the scale of upcoming PWD-related works in the region, the establishment of a full-fledged division in Thenzawl is both timely and necessary.

Encouraging the officials and staff of the new office and the PWD at large, the Chief Minister urged them to carry out their duties with dedication, keeping in mind that their work and planning play a vital role in shaping the future of the state. B. Lalrinliana, representing the Thenzawl Joint Village Council, also spoke at the event. He expressed gratitude to the government, noting that Thenzawl has recently received several developmental benefits, including the inauguration of a new ultrasound machine at the local hospital, the inauguration of the PWD Road Division, and the upcoming foundation laying of Artificial Turf at the Lo Tha

Zawla playground. The inauguration programme was chaired by V. Lalsangliana, Commissioner & Secretary, PWD. Rev. T. Thumliana delivered the invocation, and Er. H. Zoramliana, Engineer-in-Chief, PWD, presented a report. For the newly created Thenzawl Road Division, the government has sanctioned one post of Executive Engineer, two posts of Junior Engineers, two posts of Upper Division clerks, along with other supporting staff. Recruitment for some posts has already been approved, and with the redeployment of existing staff, the office is expected to become fully operational from April 1, 2026.

Assam BJP expels nine rebel leaders for contesting as Independents

Guwahati, Mar 28: The Assam unit of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has expelled nine rebel leaders from the party for six years for filing nominations to contest the Assembly elections as Independent candidates after being denied party ticket.

According to an official communique from the party, the BJP state president Dilip Saikia invoked clause XXV-9 of the party’s constitution to dismiss the leaders.

The most notable among them is Jayanta Kumar Das, a ticket aspirant from the Dispur constituency who was overlooked for the new entrant, Pradyut Bordoloi, who joined the BJP after quitting Congress. Das is now contesting from the Dispur seat as an Independent candidate.

The other expelled leaders are Uddhab Das (Barpeta constituency), Jitendrajit Gaur (Kaliabor), Amalendu Das (Borkhola), Dhanjib Brahma Rabha (Goalpara West), Chakradhar Das (Bongaigaon), Gagan Chandra Haloi (Barpeta), Ankur Das (Kamarpur), and Jashoda Dulal Rakshit (Lumding).

North East Chronicle

MARCH 29 2026 VOL 02 NO. 35



The Role of Curiosity in Learning

Curiosity is the driving force behind learning and discovery. It encourages individuals to ask questions, explore new ideas, and seek deeper understanding. In a rapidly changing world, curiosity has become more important than ever. When individuals are curious, they engage actively with information. Instead of passively accepting knowledge, they question, analyse, and explore different perspectives. This leads to a more meaningful and lasting understanding. In education, curiosity enhances the learning process. Students who are encouraged to ask questions and explore subjects beyond textbooks develop critical thinking skills and creativity. However, rigid systems that focus only on memorisation may limit this natural curiosity. Curiosity also plays a vital role in innovation. Many advancements in science, technology, and society have resulted from individuals who questioned existing ideas and sought new solutions. In professional life, curiosity encourages continuous learning. Employees who remain curious are more likely to adapt to changes and develop new skills. Families and educational institutions should nurture curiosity by creating environments where questions are welcomed and exploration is encouraged. Allowing individuals to experiment and learn from mistakes strengthens their confidence. Curiosity not only enhances knowledge but also fosters a sense of wonder and engagement with the world. A society that values curiosity becomes more innovative, informed, and forward-thinking.

Guwahati needs actionable blueprint, not lofty promise

Candidates of different political parties promising to take up civic issues of Guwahati city and seeking support of the voters in the city have brought the quality of urban governance to the centre stage of public discourse. A concrete plan of action that is necessary to transform Guwahati into a truly smart city is yet to be presented by parties and candidates before the electors, and promises made are of a generic nature. Routine election-season assurances without much clarity in vision are seen as vague by electors and fail to generate enthusiasm among them, except political activities and supporters of candidates. The city continuing to suffer from chronic problems of artificial floods, poor drainage systems, drinking water shortages in many localities, traffic congestion due to mixed modes of transport, increasing pollution, and vending on footpaths blocking pedestrians' right of way, to highlight a few, is a reflection of the failure of past elected representatives to play their role in finding permanent solutions. Problems are known to the city authorities, but there are no convincing answers from them in respect of some of these problems when asked about the reasons for their persistence. Absence of dedicated vending zones, for instance, in the rapidly growing capital city baffles everyone when funds are available with the city authorities and citizens are paying tax to Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC). The lack of dedicated vending zones has significant fallout - the pavements are occupied by street vendors, compelling pedestrians to walk alongside the moving vehicles, putting their lives at risk. Shopping malls, flyovers, electric buses, and multiplexes have transformed the once slow-paced city into a bustling city. However, a few hours of rainfall not only result in waterlogging in several localities, but they also expose a failure born out of repeated neglect.

A section of city residents is also to be blamed for some of the persistent problems, but administrative and governance failures cannot always be covered up by passing the buck to city residents. If strong laws to enforce disciplined behaviour of citizens that aggravate the problems gripping the city are not in place, it is the responsibility of the lawmakers to bring amendments to give more teeth to such laws for effective enforcement. Hill cutting, for instance, which is one of the root causes of deterioration of the artificial flooding in the city, is



not permitted by law, but it is the colossal failure of the authorities to enforce the legal provisions against it. How the candidates standing in constituencies that cover the city areas propose to address this problem is still not known to the electors. Instead, permanent settlement on the city hills has become a major poll issue, and parties and candidates are rushing to make all kinds of promises in a bid to woo them without giving any serious thought to environmental consequences. Such a populist

trend does not bode well for the sustainability of the city. A pragmatic approach to putting an end to hill cutting and encroachment on city hills is leveraging central government-funded schemes for affordable housing. Rapid growth in the service sector in the city has pushed the demand for a workforce, resulting in large-scale migration of people from not just across the state but also from neighbouring states. Most of this workforce, belonging to low-income households and low-paid, cannot

afford costly rented accommodation closer to their workplace, and an easy alternative to this problem is initially taking affordable accommodation on rent in hill areas and subsequently settling by cutting trees and constructing low-cost housing. As income levels rise, temporary houses made of bamboo and tin roofs are gradually converted into concrete structures. More slope cutting means more landslides, while loss of tree cover leads to topsoil erosion and increasing sediment load in

the drains along the foothills. A hollow commitment of solving the city's waterlogging problems or improving the drainage system without deeper study of the interconnected problems and the gaps that continue to persist even after application of multiple solutions and adoption of different strategies makes no sense. While the primary responsibility of raising these issues to the city authorities lies with the elected representatives of GMC, the elected legislators from the city can coordinate with GMC councillors and raise the issues on the floor of the Assam Assembly to demand action from departments concerned, play an important role in the making of relevant laws, and raise questions on various projects and schemes which are aimed at improving waste management to make the city garbage-free and addressing other civic issues. Candidates presenting a clear vision of the role they aspire to play as elected representatives of their respective constituencies, if they are elected to the state assembly, can help electors to make an informed electoral choice. Electioneering brings an opportunity for electors to seek from the candidates a clear blueprint and purpose vision for transforming Guwahati into a future city.

Our energy crisis cannot be solved by developing “strategic capacity” in fossil fuels

Bangladesh has been entrapped in medium-term energy challenges because of the US-Israel war against Iran and its consequent impact on crude oil infrastructure and supply chains based around the Strait of Hormuz. The government has so far maintained a roll-out plan by rationing energy supply. However, with the expected demand for air-cooling systems and the need for electricity and diesel for irrigation for Boro rice cultivation, energy requirements are likely to increase further from April. The coming month(s) will also require fertiliser supply for Boro cultivation, which the government is trying to manage through imports. Meanwhile, industrial production, both in export-oriented and domestic markets, has started to decline. Rising energy prices are likely to increase the shipment costs of imported products, which could push food inflation further. Therefore, addressing challenges from a prolonged energy crisis would require medium- to long-term strategies. The government's top priority must be to establish a structured system of energy and electricity rationing, ensuring that limited resources are directed towards vital economic activities such as production, job creation, and export industries. Several think tanks, academics, and policy analysts have offered sugges-

tions for building strategic capacity in fossil fuels, particularly diesel and LNG, to address emergency requirements. Some are enthusiastic about using imported coal or exploring domestic coal as a strategic option for energy security. Such initiatives would wrongly mix short-term strategies with long-term priorities. It should be noted that borrowing to import LNG, developing additional LNG and diesel infrastructure based on interest-bearing long-term loans, and importing or mining coal from local mines using foreign loans and public funds will further deepen the indebtedness of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, and severely damage the sector's long-term energy transition plan under the Renewable Energy Policy 2025.

As part of a transition towards clean energy, a more cost-effective solution would be to explore domestic natural gas from “probable” wells. The government should immediately expedite drilling works in Sriail Deep-1, Mobarakpur Deep-1, and Fenchuganj South-1. It should also allocate additional funds to explore natural gas in other “probable” and “possible” onshore sites. Besides, foreign companies currently involved in onshore gas exploration must be pushed to update their operations regularly. The Tengratilla Gas Field (Chhatrak West) is now out of international dispute



and ready for re-exploration. The chances of discovering new reserves there are high. As a long-term strategy, the government must take bold steps to explore offshore gas blocks. Petrobangla must learn from earlier failures and proceed with re-tendering based on feedback from international oil and gas companies.

The government should also emphasise replacing diesel-based irrigation with solar-based systems soon. Approximately 13 lakh irrigation pumps annually use 10 lakh tonnes of diesel, about 15 percent of total diesel imports, costing about \$1 billion each

year. A rapid shift to solar irrigation could significantly reduce import dependency and save foreign currency. Moreover, solar irrigation with net metering could generate additional income for farmers and installers during the off-season from power distribution companies. Hence, the ministry needs to boldly act to accelerate net-metering connections through distribution companies such as the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (BREB). Diesel and LNG use in industrial units can be reduced by 15-20 percent if rooftop solar power generation is expedited. Access to low-cost financing

for installing solar panels on industrial rooftops in the Export Processing Zones or specialised industrial parks through local commercial banks, international financial institutions, and development banks could make this possible. Bangladesh Bank's Sustainable Refinance Scheme needs to be expanded and simplified for interested companies. Additionally, multilateral development banks and international financial institutions should introduce credit-guarantee schemes to support the government and reputable commercial banks in financing renewable energy projects, thereby de-risking these oppor-

tunities. Meanwhile, the transport sector is the largest consumer of total diesel imports. The transition from diesel-operated to battery-operated vehicles, or EVs, has been delayed due to many reasons, including vested interests. The government should introduce fiscal and budgetary incentives to promote EVs, charging stations, and related maintenance facilities across the country. Bangladesh's bilateral trade agreements with countries that promote diesel, petrol, or LNG-based transport need to be revisited. The ministries of transport, power and energy, finance, and planning must work together to develop nationwide infrastructure for EV-based transport as soon as possible. The power and energy ministry should also forge ahead with its renewable energy initiatives—the National Rooftop Solar Programme 2025 and utility-scale solar power plants through public procurement. Successful implementation of these programmes could generate about 8,000 MW of electricity in a short period and reduce dependence on gas, LNG, and coal-based power generation, thereby lowering reliance on imported fossil fuels, which cost about \$7 billion annually. The regional power grid for renewable energy trading—already operating at a limited scale between Bangladesh, India, and Nepal—needs further

expansion. Extending the grid through India to Nepal and Bhutan could enable Bangladesh to access more low-cost renewable electricity, reducing dependence on costlier LNG-based generation. It would also allow Bangladesh to export surplus electricity to regional markets. Such measures could further reduce reliance on high-cost fossil fuel-based power generation. Bangladesh's strategic reserves should not be directed towards expanding LNG, diesel, and coal infrastructure or increasing imports using scarce foreign exchange at a time of tightened reserves. Instead, the country's strategic focus should be on gradually implementing cost-effective and sustainable renewable energy solutions across power generation, irrigation, and industry and household use.

This transition would significantly reduce demand for imported fossil fuels—diesel, crude oil, LNG and LPG—in later years. There is no need for new investments in fossil fuel infrastructure that would burden the country with long-term debt for 20-25 years. Bangladesh is not in a position to bear that burden. Ultimately, energy security and sustainability will depend not on diesel, LNG, coal, or LPG, but on solar, wind, hydro and waste-to-energy systems for power generation, transmission, and distribution.

Girlguiding didn't have to do this to its trans members. There was another way

Great work, Guides; you've taken some members you had no idea even existed, and expelled them from your organisation with effect from September. This gives trans girls a humane half-year to extricate, because that's definitely what kids want: to participate for six months in a uniformed, voluntary, social organisation that has explicitly kicked them out, while they look for somewhere more welcoming. “Like every charity, we have to follow the law,” Girlguiding says in an online info pack whose FAQs are almost comically Stasi-lite. “Will volunteers be expected to carry out additional checks or ask for proof?” (The good news, folks, is that they won't; the mind boggles at what those

additional checks might be that didn't breach at least some safeguarding protocols.) “How should volunteers check that trans girls have left?” (Some sort of dunking stool? In actuality, again, they won't check.) The supreme court ruled unanimously last April that “sex” and “woman” referred to biological sex assigned at birth. It permitted services to be single-sex, but did not require it. Let's give the charity the benefit of the doubt and say that its board really did fear legal action if it continued to badge itself single-sex, but remained inclusive. An obvious solution would have been to change its name away from something so clearly single-sex, to Kid-Guiding, or RangersRainbow, which reference two exist-

ing categories of Guide, and sound about as gender-neutral as it gets. Indeed, all the age-grouped sections of Guides are already essentially gender-neutral – four- to seven-year-olds are called Rainbows, harking back to a time (it was named in 1987) when it was considered fun for children to be able to identify bugs and sew things without constantly being reminded how female they were. Brownies, seven to 10, were so named in 1915, after the kids complained that “Rosebuds” was saccharine and they would prefer to dress in the colour of what they intended to get covered in: mud. I'm guessing; I don't actually have the minutes of that meeting. Guides and Rangers (10-14 and 14-18) are so

gender-neutral, they could be, and most probably are, also the names of cars. It was always understood that the more questionable elements of Guiding, the background hum of Christianity, the promises to “love my God” (which held until 2013), the oaths of allegiance to the monarch, the uniforms themselves, were all fine, regardless of your worldview, because the ultimate aim was sound. What was it? Now we'd say “community-building”; in the 1980s we'd have said “socialising”; doubtless in the 1920s it was “character-building”. This was a way for girls to socialise without endlessly encountering the rules and strictures and expectations they found everywhere else. It was radical precisely be-

cause at no time in history did it insist on the femaleness of its members; it wasn't where you went to dress like a fairy princess. It was supposed to be fun. It was still too trad for some, and they went to the Woodcraft Folk, where you got to smoke weed in the teenage division. But it never had a trace of nastiness. Renaming the organisation would not have killed it, while the choice it has made could well do. It is impossible to quantify how much immediate impact this will have, since Girlguiding does not collect data on gender identity.

Trans volunteers have also been asked to see themselves out, but the organisation doesn't even know how many of those there are. Will it deter new joiners? It's hard to



see kids the age for entry into Rainbows or Brownies having made a final call on their gender identity, but it's very easy to see parents who are trans allies giving Girlguid-

ing a wide berth. Deterrence and alienation are much more likely impacts of this decision than a wave of new members, and that's just the parents. The Rangers, who are 14 to 18,

play a huge part in the lives of younger Guides. Gen Z are famously inclusive, more likely than any other generation to identify as LGBT+. In the UK, women are more trans-inclusive than men. If you scoured the country to find some late teenagers who were in favour of this new rule, they would be more likely to be male, and so wouldn't have been allowed in the first place. Girlguiding didn't have to address the supreme court judgment this way; it has centred notions of femaleness as an exclusive and fragile quality, in a way that seems counter to the spirit of its founders; it has been hurtful to its trans members. A name change might have been dicey for the brand. What it has done instead has capsized its identity.

Brent crude jumps to \$103 a barrel concerns

Mumbai:U.S. President Donald Trump will hit Iran harder if Tehran fails to accept that the country has been “defeated militarily”, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said. Trump’s Iran’s stocks of highly.

Enriched uranium, halting enrichment, curbing its ballistic missile program and cutting off funding for regional allies, according to three Israeli cabinet sources familiar with the plan. Fatih Birol for an additional coordinated release of oil stockpiles during talks on Wednesday, conflict.Fuel prices under pressure as oil hovers around \$100Adding to supply concerns, at least 40% of Russia’s oil export capacity is at a halt following Ukrainian drone attacks, a disputed attack on a major pipeline and the seizure of tankers, according to Reuters calculations based on market data.

Tata Group stock down 37% in 9 months; brokerage sees 22%

Mumbai: Tata Elxsi Ltd shares are down nearly 37% in the last nine months on BSE since the stock touched its 52-week high of Rs 6,733.50 on June 10, 2025. However, brokerage firm Geojit has issued a ‘Buy’ recommendation on the stock. According to Geojit, the company is entering a recovery phase, fuelled by strong transportation growth from SDV-led deal ramp-ups, new OEM wins, and expansion into off-road markets. “While sequential recovery was visible with 3.9% growth, led by a 7.7% rebound in transportation on SDV-driven OEM ramp-ups and normalisation of key client engagements,” the brokerage said.Geojit said high growth areas like electrification (EVs and hybrids), ADAS, and connected car platforms continue to see strong customer spending.

The brokerage values the company at 33 times FY28E EPS, citing a gradual demand recovery Geojit remains positive about the Tata Group firm, noting that, despite macroeconomic and competitive pressures, the company’s domain expertise, design-led approach, and offshore execution position it for sustained recovery.

Geojit has set a target price of Rs



5,135 for Tata Elxsi, projecting a 22% upside from its current levels of Rs 4,213 over a 12-month time frame. Tata Elxsi posted a 2% YoY revenue decline in 9MFY26, and its EBIT-DA margin took a hit, declining 534 basis points year-on-year to 22% in the same nine-month period, Geojit noted. “Margins may face near-term pressure from wage hikes & Chinese competition, but rising utilization & operating leverage provide expansion potential without large-scale hiring,”

it said.Geojit anticipates that anchor client recovery is expected over the next 1-2 quarters. The brokerage also expects the lagging healthcare and media & communications sectors to bounce back gradually from Q4FY26. Geojit remains positive about the Tata Group firm, noting that, despite macroeconomic and competitive pressures, the company’s domain expertise, design-led approach, and offshore execution position it for sustained recovery

RIL share price tumbles 4%; govt’s export duty on fuel

Mumbai: Shares of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) fell sharply on Friday after the government’s decision to levy export duty on petrol, diesel, and aviation turbine fuel (ATF, or jet fuel) raised concerns over margins. The stock dropped nearly 5 per cent intraday before settling 4.5 per cent lower at ₹1,348.25 on the BSE.RIL was the top loser in the Sensex, accounting for roughly a fifth of the benchmark’s 1,690-point (2.25 per cent) decline. Analysts said the move to levy export duty on fuel sales in international markets could dent the Mukesh Ambani-controlled conglomerate’s profitability and margins. “The levy of export duty on fuel sold in international markets will make exports costlier, hurting margins in the near term,” said Kranthi Bathini, equity strategist at WealthMills Securities. On Friday, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas



Hardeep Singh Puri said on the social media platform X that “any refinery exporting to foreign nations will have to pay export tax”.

Later, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government would levy duties of ₹21.5 per litre on diesel and ₹29.5 per litre on ATF to “ensure adequate availability of these products for domestic consumption”. RIL exports a sizeable share of its output — petrol, diesel, and jet fuel — to global markets, where prices are typically higher than in India.

The export duty, therefore, poses a risk to its revenues. The levy effectively taxes every exported barrel, reducing net realisations and putting pressure on margins, analysts said. RIL exports a sizeable share of its output — petrol, diesel, and jet fuel — to global markets, where prices are typically higher than in India. The export duty, therefore, poses a risk to its revenues. The levy effectively taxes every exported barrel, reducing net realisations and putting pressure on margins, analysts said.

India VIX rises 9% amid West Asia jitters; up 90% since



Mumbai: Indian stock market volatility surged 9.4 per cent on Friday, amid uncertainty around West Asia conflict resolution. At 12:03 PM, India VIX was up 7.92 per cent to 26.59. Since February 27, 2025, when the war initiated, India VIX has spiked over 90 per cent. On March 22, Trump had warned of strikes on Iran’s power grid if the waterway was not opened within 48 hours. He had vowed to “hit and obliterate” key energy plants unless the Strait was fully accessible.

However, a day later, Trump instructed the US Department of War to delay military action against Iranian energy sites for five days, citing ongoing diplomatic engagements amid rising tensions in West Asia.

“The on and off reaction of the market to news and events regarding the war is likely to continue in the near-term. The spike in Brent crude back to around the \$108 level will again trigger another round of risk-off in the Indian market,” said VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist, Geojit Investments.

He added: The market correction since the war began has brought down Nifty valuations to fair levels. Nifty is now trading at about 19 times, which is lower than the

last 10-year average of 22.4 times. But if India’s macros take a hit due to this energy crisis, valuations may again decline factoring-in the feared hit to earnings growth in FY27.

The volatility gauge measures the market’s expectation of future volatility based on Nifty50 index options contracts. It typically rises when market volatility is expected to increase, indicating higher uncertainty or risk in the near future.

Meanwhile, the BSE Sensex index traded 1,260.62 points or 1.67 per cent lower at 74,012.83. Likewise, the Nifty index tumbled 359.8 points or 1.54 per cent to 22,946.65 The selling pressure on the bourses came after US President Donald Trump extended his Friday deadline to strike Iran’s energy infrastructure by 10 days to April 6, allowing more room for negotiations. The extension reportedly came at Iran’s request and was granted in exchange for 10 oil tankers passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

The announcement comes as Trump continues to pressure Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial maritime route for oil shipments. This latest postponement follows his initial threats against Iran’s energy system.

Shares of Reliance Industries Ltd

RIL share price tumbles 4%; govt’s export duty on fuel spooks investors

Mumbai: (RIL) fell sharply on Friday after the government’s decision to levy export duty on petrol, diesel, and aviation turbine fuel (ATF, or jet fuel) raised concerns over margins. The stock dropped nearly 5 per cent intraday before settling 4.5 per cent lower at ₹1,348.25 on the BSE.

RIL was the top loser in the Sensex, accounting for roughly a fifth of the benchmark’s 1,690-point (2.25 per cent) decline. Analysts said the move to levy export duty on fuel sales in international markets could dent the Mukesh Ambani-controlled conglomerate’s profitability and margins. “The levy of export duty on fuel sold in international markets will make exports costlier, hurting margins in the near term,” said Kranthi Bathini, equity strategist at WealthMills Securities. On Friday, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri said on the social media platform X that “any refinery exporting to foreign nations will have to pay export tax”. However, it added that the reintroduction of export duties — similar to the July 2022 windfall tax — could cap refining margins and limit upside to O2C earnings.

Buy, hold, or wait? With margins under pressure, analysts warned the stock could remain volatile in the near term, even as they maintain a positive long-term view. “While export duties will compress margins, investors should note that RIL has been reducing its dependence on the O2C business while expanding Reliance Retail and Reliance Jio,” Bathini said. He advised accumulating the stock on dips in a staggered manner.

MOFSL has a ‘buy’ rating on RIL with a target price of ₹1,750 per share. JM Financial also



maintains a ‘buy’ rating with a target of ₹1,730, citing potential gains from rising global fuel prices. Later, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government would levy duties of ₹21.5 per litre on diesel and ₹29.5 per litre on ATF to “ensure adequate availability of these products for domestic consumption”. RIL exports a sizeable share of its output — petrol, diesel, and jet fuel — to global markets, where prices are typically higher than in India. The export duty, therefore, poses a risk to its revenues. The levy effectively taxes every exported barrel, reducing net realisations and putting pressure on margins, analysts said. During its 2025-26 third-quarter (October-December) earnings presentation, RIL said it produced 17.7 million

tonnes of refined fuel for domestic and international markets, up 1.7 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y). While it did not disclose the domestic-export split, the company said it maximised Jamnagar refinery throughput and domestic placements during the quarter, while capitalising on strong international refining margins (cracks) for transportation fuels. Revenue from the oil-to-chemicals (O2C) segment rose 8.4 per cent Y-o-Y to ₹1.62 trillion, while segment earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortisation (Ebitda) increased 14.6 per cent to ₹16,507 crore. Before the government’s announcement, analysts at Motilal Oswal Financial Services (MOFSL) had estimated that if gasoil, gasoline, and jet fuel cracks sustain at about \$15/\$5/\$15 per barrel above historical averages in the first half of 2026-27 (FY27), RIL’s O2C Ebitda could increase by ₹17,000 crore, lifting its FY27 consolidated Ebitda estimate by nearly 8.5 per cent With diesel yield for RIL’s refinery at 40–50 per cent, the brokerage said gross refining margins could rise by \$4–5 per barrel if diesel cracks sustain at \$30.“Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, gasoil refining margins remained elevated through 2022-23 (FY23) and 2023-24 (FY24). RIL’s consolidated O2C Ebitda rose 18 per cent Y-o-Y in FY23 and remained stable in FY24 despite flat to slightly lower production for sale. Adjusted for the windfall tax on the export of transportation fuel, O2C Ebitda grew 30 per cent Y-o-Y in FY23,” MOFSL said.RIL said Ebitda growth in the O2C segment was driven by higher export margins for high-speed diesel and motor spirit (petrol), where spreads rose 1.5x and about 2x Y-o-Y, respectively.

5.1% yield & zero debt ‘hidden’ firm powering 1 out of every 3 electric buses in India

Mumbai: Welcome to the latest edition of Dividend Hunter. In the past few weeks, we have looked at companies where strong cash flows could translate into consistent dividends going forward. This includes a debt-free IT Player offering a 7% dividend yield and aPSU with a 6% yield and zero debt. In our last edition, we covered a Maersk-backed India’s first private-sector port company, offering a 5.4% dividend yield.This edition of Dividend Hunter covers a business that has long been a cash generator – Gulf Oil Lubricants. The company’s presence in the petrochemical industry is backed by predictable, steady demand, resilient margins, and low capital requirements. The result is a cash-rich balance sheet and regular dividend payouts.The ‘next Coal India’? This debt-free media gem offers a 6% dividend yieldBut the real question is not about today’s dividends. It’s about how long this can last in a market that is gradually shifting away from internal combustion engines.At current prices, Gulf Oil offers an attractive dividend yield of 5.1% (based on historical payouts). But the moot question is, can this sustain? Gulf Oil operates as a dynamic, high-growth “all-rounder” in the mobility and industrial sectors. Its core business is where volumes, distribution reach, and

brand recall drive steady cash generation.

Beyond just selling engine oil, the company plays a key role in keeping vehicles, heavy machinery, and even the future of electric mobility moving. At its heart, Gulf Oil manufactures and sells high-performance automotive and industrial lubricants, greases, and related derivatives. It caters to everything from personal mobility (two-wheelers and passenger cars) to commercial fleets and tractors.Its flagship products include Gulf Pride for motorcycles and Gulf Formula SUV. To get these products to consumers, it boasts a distribution network of over 90,000 touchpoints, including around 11,600 dedicated bike and car stops across IndiaWhat makes Gulf Oil’s business strategy particularly interesting is how it is future-proofing itself against the electric vehicle (EV) revolution. This is important because EV adoption directly challenges the demand for lubricants that drives its current cash flows.Rather than seeing EVs as just a threat, they are actively building a full-stack e-mobility ecosystem. Through its subsidiary, Tirex Transmission, the company is a major player in DC fast charging, with over 3,000 units deployed across India. The company states that it charges one out of every three electric buses in the country.

Gulf Oil also invests in AC home chargers through UK-based Indra Renewables.It backs ElectreeFi, India’s second-largest EV software platform, which manages charging networks, fleet integration, and dynamic pricing. Gulf Oil has developed specialized coolants, transmission fluids, and brake fluids specifically to keep EV and hybrid vehicles running cool.Additionally, it is among the top-five players in the replacement two-wheeler battery market. The company is also a leading supplier of AdBlue, an eco-friendly Diesel Exhaust Fluid that drastically reduces harmful nitrogen oxide emissions in modern diesel vehicles, a segment seeing massive growth due to stricter environmental regulations. All this production is supported by two green-certified manufacturing plants in Chennai and Silvassa. These facilities currently hold a capacity of 140,000 kiloliters and are undergoing a 70% expansion to reach 240,000 kiloliters to meet future demand.Gulf Oil doesn’t just sell to consumers. It makes customized lubricant solutions with over 40 Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs). Such partners include industry giants like Ashok Leyland, Bajaj, Piaggio, Mahindra, Ford, and major construction equipment builders like Ammann and ACE.

Moderate IPO activity in February , in line with global mkts: SEBI

New Delhi: Resource mobilisation from the primary market not only moderated in February, but was also the second-lowest in FY26, with 17 initial public offerings (IPOs) raising ‘4,650 crore. Mainboard activities remained subdued, reflecting cautious participation from large issuers, as per Securities and Exchange Board of India’s (Sebi) monthly bulletin released on Friday. The softness in IPOs has been seen since October 2025, reflecting the pressure in the secondary market which saw volatility due to US tariffs, muted earnings growth, weakness in rupee, and volatility in crude oil prices. This is also in line with the trends in global markets, which too saw moderation in public issues in February. Both deal volume as well as fund mobilisation declined significantly. However, Indian remained the third-highest rank in IPO issuances. China retained its global public issuance rank, with 17 issues raising over \$7 billion, followed by the US with 14 IPOs raising \$4.8 billion.

“Europe remained relatively subdued with limited contribution to overall fundraising, indicating weaker issuance momentum and a more cautious investor environment amid prevailing macroeconomic uncertainties,” states the bulletin. The overall IPO performance was moderate on their listing date, with 10 companies debuting at or above their issue price. The secondary market saw sharp volatility in February, including a sharp correction on the day of the Union Budget and a recovery after the US-India trade deal announcement. By the end of the month, benchmark equity indices Nifty 50 and Sensex were down 0.6%



and 1.2%, respectively.

However, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) turned net buyers after three months, recording the highest inflows in 17 months. They net bought shares worth Rs 22,615 crore after offloading a total of Rs 62,338 crore in the prior three months. “This reversal maybe primarily due to India-US interim trade deal, which significantly reduced the export tariffs, alongside robust Q3 corporate earnings and a growth-oriented Union Budget,” as per the bulletin.

Blink and miss: Trump’s technique of threats first, U-turn later is growing tired in the Iran battle



Washington: From Wall Street to the White House, everyone is talking about the Persian Taco this week. When Trump backs down on Iran, this is what happens. In the early hours of Monday morning, as oil prices rose, stock futures fell, and bond yields rose as a result of his threat to destroy Iran’s civilian power infrastructure, the president quickly backed down, announcing that the bombing would be postponed because talks with Iran were going well. After the bombast and violence, it was time for Taco (Trump Always Chickens Out), a tactic he first used during the tariff issue last year. Bonds snapped back in a heartbeat, and the price of Brent crude fell below \$100 per barrel from more than \$112 seconds before.

By 9.30 a.m. in New York, the S&P 500 stock index had risen 1.5%, confounding futures contracts that had previously indicated a 1% daily fall. Perhaps we should applaud Trump for halting American soldiers before they committed a war crime, triggering an unavoidable tit-for-tat with Iran to blow out civilian infrastructure in the Gulf, dealing a gut punch to the world economy that would throw financial markets into a spiral. But events in the hours after the president offered up his dish

of Mex-Middle Eastern fusion cuisine suggest his tactic may have run its course. He can still inflict tremendous damage to the region and the world economy. Making extreme threats and walking them back will again provide Trump with the illusion of agency. But he no longer has control of events in Iran. He does not get to decide when the conflict ends. Markets are figuring out that that will probably be up to Tehran. Oil rebounded on Tuesday and stocks gave up much of their Monday gains after Iranian officials denied the “productive conversations” Trump claimed had taken place “regarding a complete and total resolution of our hostilities”, and sent waves of missiles into Israel, Iraq and other American allies in the Gulf. Though markets welcomed news late on Tuesday that Washington had sent Iran a peace plan, they have freaked out again since then, as investors figured out that the president’s words mean little. This is not the first time markets sense Trump’s waning power to shape events. On 9 March, the president had another Taco episode and tried to stop rising oil prices by claiming the fighting would end “soon, very soon” because the war was “very complete, pretty much”. The S&P index rebounded that day. But it quickly resumed its decline.

On “liberation day” in April last year, when the Taco trade was christened, Trump was roughly in control of events. He imposed a round of what he called “reciprocal” tariffs on imports from every patch of land on earth, including islands inhabited exclusively by penguins. Markets went haywire. So he backtracked to calm the markets down. No great damage was done to the economy. Over subsequent months, as Trump again raised tariffs against groups of countries in a somewhat more gradual, piecemeal way, markets reacted more calmly, especially since the harm from his maneuvers – to growth and inflation – appeared muted. The dollar suffered, but the stock market rallied. Trump is dealing with a trickier landscape now. The November midterm elections loom and he is underwater in opinion polls. Americans didn’t approve of this war from the get-go and their opposition has increased as the average price of gas at the pump has risen to near \$4 a gallon. The OECD forecast that US inflation will surge to 4.2% this year. Trump’s challenge is that his objectives are in conflict. He desperately needs to end the war and bring the fleet home. And he desperately needs to unblock the supply of oil through the strait of Hormuz, which Iran now controls. Iran, by con-

trast, has time. Its leadership has already been taken apart. Its military has been devastated. But the regime remains in control and there is little indication that it is about to be swept from power. As we have seen, it is capable of imposing enormous costs on the world by throttling the strait and depriving the global economy of 12.5m barrels of oil and 11.5bn cubic feet of gas a day. Tehran’s incentive to back down is minimal. It probably calculates that the only way to prevent future attacks is to demonstrate how much damage it can inflict in response. And there is nothing the US can do about this unless it puts boots on the ground, which would raise additional political problems in Washington. Indeed, Iran reportedly responded to Washington’s peace proposals by putting up some demands of its own, which included recognition of Iranian sovereignty over the strait of Hormuz and reparations for the damage caused by American and Israeli attacks. Press TV, the Iran state broadcaster, reportedly cited a senior official saying: “Iran will end the war when it decides to do so and when its own conditions are met.” Markets are starting to understand this. If the US were in control of things, Trump wouldn’t threaten to bomb civilian targets – which is a war crime. At best for the president, it means he’s degraded all of Iran’s military targets and doesn’t know what else to do. At worst, it means he hasn’t figured out how to take them out. On Thursday the S&P index lost 1.78% and closed at a new low for the year. The price of a barrel of Brent crude hovered around \$108 in mid-afternoon. Like Trump, investors have been surprised to discover that after its leader was killed and its armed forces taken apart, Iran emerged perhaps deadlier and more resolute to hang on and cause more havoc than before. Trump’s Persian Tacos may not be enough to calm their nerves.

Connecticut police fired after shooting a guy in a mental health crisis while others attempted to de-escalate

London: A white Connecticut police officer who fatally shot a Black man 30 seconds after arriving on the scene, when three other officers had spent several minutes attempting to de-escalate the situation, was dismissed Friday. Hartford Mayor Arunan Arulampalam said in a statement that he fired Officer Joseph Magnano immediately in connection with the February 27 killing of Steven Jones, who was wielding a knife on a public street. The death occurred eight days after another Hartford cop fatally shot a guy in a mental health crisis. “In the body-worn camera footage of the incident, as well as publicly shared videos, I saw three officers work together

as a team to de-escalate a mental health crisis in a way that exemplifies the best of our police department,” Arulampalam told the newspaper. “The actions of Officer Magnano do not measure up to those standards.” A Hartford police official sent queries to Chief James Rovella, who did not respond a phone call or email on March 27. The police union did not immediately respond to an email. The union has defended Magnano’s conduct on social media, claiming that his use of force was legitimate. Contact information for Magnano, who was new to the force and still on probation, could not immediately be found. The state inspector general’s office is

investigating the shooting and will determine whether to file criminal charges against Magnano. Earlier this month, the office released the body camera footage from the four officers who responded to the scene. Jones’ sister, Audrey Jones, had called 911 seeking help for her brother because he was having a mental health crisis, reporting that he had a knife and had cut himself. The body camera footage shows Steven Jones on a city street as three officers keep telling him for several minutes to drop a knife he is holding. The officers also tell him they’re there to help him. “Steve, you’re OK. We’re going to make sure you’re OK,” Officer James Prignano tells him.

“Just drop the knife. We’re going to go talk to somebody, OK?” About 12 minutes after the 911 call, Magnano arrives and draws his pistol while also ordering Jones to drop the knife, telling him “You’re going to get shot,” the video shows.

A woman is heard screaming, “Don’t shoot him!” The videos show Prignano motioning at Magnano, appearing to tell him to back away. As Jones slowly walked toward Magnano, the officer gives a final warning before shooting at Jones nine times, about 30 seconds after he got out of his cruiser, video shows. Jones died at a hospital four days later, authorities said.

Iran is increasingly outsourcing its terrorist efforts

London: For some, that was the moment the mask dropped. Mohsen Rafighdoost, former minister of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), was caught in March joyfully reminiscing with an interviewer from the Tehran-based Didban Iran news website about the assassinations he had orchestrated around Europe while wearing an open-necked white shirt. Prince Shahriar Shafiq, the last Shah of Iran’s 34-year-old nephew, was shot twice in the head outside his mother’s Paris house in 1979. The Shah’s final commander-in-chief, General Gholam Ali Oveissi, was similarly assassinated in Paris in 1984. Rafighdoost chuckled as he stated that he had also ordered the assassination of Shapur Bakhtiar, the Shah’s penultimate prime minister, who was assassinated in his Parisian house in 1991, as well as the stabbing to death of Fereydoun Farrokhzad, a

dissident Iranian artist, the following year. “Usually the Basque guys,” Rafighdoost claimed of the separatist terrorist organization he hired to do the murders.

“They were performing and no one was bothering them.” Rafighdoost explained that everything was handled through middlemen, including an Egyptian priest located in Germany. The priest handled the cash, establishing a useful gap that protected Iranian authorities from direct attribution. The IRGC later disputed the claims. Rafighdoost’s office stated he was confused after just having brain surgery. Monday’s firebombing of four ambulances owned by a Jewish charity in Golders Green, north London, and the apparent claim of responsibility, yet to be verified, from a supposed new group said to have links to the Iranian regime, has brought a renewed focus on Iran’s

use of terror against dissidents and Jewish communities. With two British nationals arrested and then bailed, police continue to keep an open mind about the possibility that no state or international actor was behind the attack.

But based on its past modus operandi, experts do see the potential hallmarks of Iranian involvement in Golders Green. In comments to the Guardian, Kevan Jones, the Labour peer who chairs the intelligence and security committee (ISC) tasked with overseeing the UK’s spy agencies, described a growing trend: the use of hired hands to do the dirty work, whether it be violence, kidnappings, assassinations or surveillance. “They are doing this through organised crime and through individuals by paying them and that’s what it is more likely to be here – if it is indeed linked to Iran,” Jones said.

Missing private investigator evidence in Daily Mail’s case ‘stark’, high court told

London: According to the high court, the number of missing or destroyed papers linked to the Daily Mail publisher’s employment of private investigators is “stark in the extreme”. According to attorneys for a group of claimants accusing the publisher of utilizing illegal practices, the little remaining evidence of payments to private investigators contains “conspicuous and often shocking evidence”. The seven claimants in the 10-week, multimillion-pound dispute against Associated Newspapers Ltd (ANL) include Prince Harry, Elton John, and Doreen Lawrence. The publisher disputes all of the charges. In closing arguments, David Sherborne, the plaintiffs’ main counsel, stated that the court should decide that “the true scale” of illegal information harvesting at ANL “was enormous”. “There would have been thousands of invoices underpinning these payments [to private investigators], all of which have been destroyed or not located,” he told me. “The difference between the known universe of payments to [private investigators], which is vast, and the small number of invoices which have been disclosed is stark in the extreme.” In court, Sherborne said that one box holding records of payments to private investigators, which he dubbed “Pandora’s box,” was discovered by coincidence by a legal worker last year. ANL stated in its final comments that it had provided a “demonstrably conscientious and generous approach to disclosure”. It stated that the corporation has turned over more than 2,700 papers. Sherborne pointed to two examples in which the existence of documents had allowed the claimants’ legal team to draw a link to alleged unlawful activity. One related to a draft story about the actor Sadie Frost’s ectopic pregnancy, which was never published. In this case, Sherborne said invoices relating to a private investigator showed that Katie Nicholl, the former Mail on Sunday journalist, had “an ongoing interest” in Frost. He also pointed to records about another private



investigator found in the “Pandora’s box”. He alleged they corresponded to detailed medical information about Frost recorded in Nicholl’s notebook. The claimants’ legal team say the information came from a “blag” carried out by the private investigator. Nicholl has said the information came from a freelance journalist who had “a very, very good source” within Frost’s inner circle. Sherborne said: “This is obviously one of a number of examples where we have direct evidence that can be linked, but that isn’t always the case. If we had that across all the articles, the exercise would be a lot simpler.” He also pointed to a story about a holiday Prince Harry was taking with former girlfriend, Chelsy Davy, by the Daily Mail’s royal editor, Rebecca English. The court had already been shown an email from private investigator Mike Behr containing Davy’s flight details. English has said the information was “never asked for and it was never acted upon”. Sherborne said the email had not been revealed by ANL, but disclosed through separate litigation. He urged the judge to infer there was a culture of unlawful information gathering that had been

concealed. The claimants’ legal team are now focusing on four journalists – Nicholl, English, the former reporter Stephen Wright and the former Daily Mail showbusiness editor, Nicole Lampert. ANL said the claimants had initially made “headline-grabbing allegations” of hacking, phone tapping and bugging in the hope that “disclosure would turn up material to support their widely pleaded allegations, and that Associated would settle”. However, ANL’s legal team said the publisher had “pleaded a positive case denying each specific instance” of unlawful activity. “This robust and comprehensive defence mounted by Associated has resulted in the most serious of the claimants’ allegations being struck out, or falling away, or being abandoned, or significantly reduced, before or during the trial,” it said in a written submission. Both sides continue to argue over the role of private investigator Gavin Burrows, who made alleged confessions of unlawful activity for ANL in a 2021 witness statement, only to later say the document had been forged by Graham Johnson, a former phone hacker who subsequently researched unlawful activity in the press.

Jane Fonda leads a demonstration against Trump’s onslaught on the arts and media

Washington: On Friday, actor Jane Fonda joined journalists, singers, and authors outside Washington’s John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to urge US people to “break your silence” and “stand tall against authoritarianism”. Around a hundred invited guests attended a rainy but feisty event organized by Fonda’s Committee for the First Amendment to hear speakers and singers rant against book bans, political censorship, and other dangers to free expression under Donald Trump. “Today, books are being banned, plaques and monuments depicting historical events this administration wants to forget are being removed,” Fonda said from a stage under a grey, rainy sky. “Museums, the National Endowment for the Arts, state arts councils, public broadcasting – they’re all being defunded.” The choice of the Kennedy Center as a backdrop was pointed: the US president has seized control of the national arts complex, targeted so-called “woke” programming, had his name added to its marble facade and announced that it will close for two years of renovations. Dozens of layoffs began this week. Fonda commented, “This cherished fortress of the arts has become a symbol of what is occurring. The center has been effectively silenced after artists refused to give in to ideological demands and racial rewriting of history.” As a cover, Trump is closing it down for at least two years, ostensibly to perform repairs, and has even hinted that it may need to be demolished to the studs. What’s he going to do? Create another ballroom where he may dance and, like Nero, fiddle while his nation burns.” The 88-year-old has a storied career as performer – she won two best actress Os-

cars – and activist dating back to the Vietnam war. Last year she relaunched the Committee for the First Amendment, the McCarthy-era initiative co-founded by her father, Henry Fonda, to combat Hollywood blacklists. She said the committee “felt it was time to expose the range and depth of the attacks on the bedrock of our democracy – the first amendment – and encourage you, the press, and American citizens in general, to understand that it’s time to break your silence and stand tall against the authoritarianism that is taking hold and consolidating fast. We know that when fear takes hold, silence spreads. We must not let that happen.” Dubbed “Artists United for Our Freedoms”, Friday’s event featured blistering critiques of the administration’s crackdown on the press. Veteran broadcasters Joy Reid and Jim Acosta painted a grim portrait of a media landscape cowed by political pressure and corporate consolidation. They urged the press not to mince words. Reid said: “We are living in autocracy and you know that the media is tainted at least, or at least is shy about giving you the facts, when every single anchor and journalist is not calling it autocracy, calling it fascism and describing this as a regime.” If it acts like a regime, if it arrests like a regime, if it mints money with the president’s face on it like a regime, if it steals the Kennedy Center like a regime to aggrandize the president of the United States, if the supreme court kneels to it like the regime, if the speaker of the House gives the president a fake, made-up new award that he’s the only one who ever got like it’s a regime, if it smells like a regime, if its diaper smells like regime, baby, it’s a regime.” Jessica González,

co-chief executive of the media policy watchdog Free Press, elaborated on the dangers of billionaires acquiring media empires to curry favor with the White House. She condemned a proposed merger between Paramount and Warner Brothers, arguing that oligarchs are systematically dismantling diversity efforts and installing “bias monitors” to appease the administration. The assault on the written word was another focus. Novelist Ann Patchett argued that, while more than 300 book titles have been purged from school libraries, genuinely dangerous items remain entirely unregulated. “What book can you think of that is as dangerous as an iPhone?” she asked the crowd, noting how mobile devices can flood a child’s life with anxiety and suicidal thoughts. “No one bans anything that they love. So no matter how dangerous it is, we are a nation in love with phones and guns and so conversations about keeping our children safe by default go to books.” Comedy writer Bess Kalb recounted how her picture-book tour was derailed in Montana by the very movement that claims to oppose cancel culture, demonstrating how local school boards are increasingly bowing to intimidation. Kalb also detailed the administration’s campaign against late-night comedians. “These permanent and temporary cancellations aren’t just about controlling jokes. They’re about controlling criticism of this administration.” To illustrate the historical gravity of the moment, actors Billy Porter, Griffin Dunne and Sam Waterston delivered a dramatic reading of the House Un-American Activities Committee testimony of Paul Robeson, the pioneering Black singer and activist whose career was

decimated by 1950s McCarthyism. Waterston, who appeared in the film The Killing Fields and the TV series The Newsroom, told the gathering: “What’s happening here at the Kennedy Center is not a culture war sideshow. As it says in the anti-authoritarian playbook, before the camps, before the purges, before the marches, there is a theatre going dark. The gallery closed, the comedian silenced, the musician banned. This is not coincidence. The assault on artistic expression in America is central to the authoritarian project.” Folk singer Joan Baez, a veteran of countless civil rights struggles, revealed she had considered returning her prestigious Kennedy Center Honor, but ultimately decided against it. “That would be admitting defeat,” she said. “It would mean that we’d given in to a bully and a tyrant who is doing his best to strip us of our freedoms, to strip us of our joy.” “I’m going to hang on to that glorious rainbow ribbon award and keep fighting like hell alongside of all of you until we restore our right to speak freely, to tell our history, to report the truth and to sing our freedom.” Baez joined the singer Maggie Rogers for a moving rendition of the Bob Dylan song The Times They Are A-Changin’, then gave an a cappella performance of the civil rights-era anthem Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round. Other performers included Kristy Lee, a country-folk singer who recently withdrew from performing at the Kennedy Center over concerns about political censorship. Baez and Fonda will also take part in a No Kings rally in St Paul, Minnesota, on Saturday. Fonda warned: “The general public may think all this doesn’t affect them but it does.”

‘You know when you’ve hit it – it’s a transformation’: Ruth E Carter on building the bold world of Sinners

Ruth E Carter’s costumes were a crucial part of establishing the identities of the two identical twins, both played by Michael B Jordan, in multi-Oscar-nominated Sinners. Particularly the hats. One brother, Stack, wore a red fedora. The other brother, Smoke, wore a blue newsboy flat cap. Finding the hats was a critical moment in the film’s backstory. When director Ryan Coogler first saw Jordan try on Stack’s red fedora, bought by Carter in Los Angeles’s Melrose Avenue, “he was like – that’s it. Then he goes up into the rest of the office, and people are coming down, like, ‘Ryan’s talking upstairs about a red hat?’ You know when you’ve hit it – it’s a transformation.”

This is just a small example of the canny period world-building that has made Carter the most-garlanded Black woman in Oscars history, and the owner of a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame (her family were in attendance, she says, of its Covid-era unveiling, while Oprah and Eddie Murphy dialled in via Zoom). Her work on Coogler’s genre-squashing, Jim Crow-era drama, which has gained a record-breaking 16 Oscar nods, has landed a fifth nomination for the two-time Oscar winner (she is, according to a poll by Variety, a favourite in the category). Among her starry upcoming projects: a biopic of the pioneering Black fashion designer, Ann Lowe – designer of Jackie Kennedy’s wedding dress – which she will produce alongside Serena Williams. We meet at a plush suite at a London hotel that’s been co-opted by Warner Bros for the Baftas. Carter – painlessly chic in a white T-shirt, high-waisted blue jeans and chunky black glasses – whizzed into town a few hours earlier, but she’s enviably sharp as she unpacks her latest hit. The costumes of Sinners are bold replicas that convey the grit and glamour of 1930s Mississippi.

But on-the-money does not mean on-the-nose. For the character of hoodoo priestess Annie (recent Bafta winner Wunmi Mosaku), Carter was keen not to be too cliché when it came to portraying an adherent of the folk religion. “There’s been a few [similar characters] in movies, and they all seem to wear the same thing – a shawl around their shoulders, a third eye, a turban of some type, and a long floral skirt ... I wanted Annie to be a part of the community, because, honestly, the practice of hoodoo is very much in the lives of many people in the south.”

Carter was also able to draw on her own experience of religious believers more broadly. “There were some things that I remembered from

people in my community that had some connection to the spiritual world – you go to a bodega and you see candles, and then you see someone who has a cluster of beads around their neck, male or female, and they’re tucked inside the shirt, and they’ve been blessed. So I felt like there were those kinds of things that I could do to make her a real person.” Annie wears Haint blue, a type of blue that borders on green and which is said to ward off evil spirits. “It’s supposed to look like water,” Carter clarifies. “And Hannah’s [Beachler, the production designer] beautiful set had a lot of Haint blue elements.” Nothing in the world of Sinners was left to chance, down to the cut of the twins’ suits: a more tailored look for the flamboyant Stack, and slouchier fits for Smoke, the more reserved sibling who also needs room to hide his weaponry.

Sinners is difficult to pi-



geon-hole, genre-wise, but its supernatural action – an Irish vampire, Remmick, tries to inveigle his way into Smoke and Stack’s rural juke joint to feed on their clientele – frequently puts it in the realm of horror. Certainly, that element meant that many of the pieces for the film had to be made from scratch. “We couldn’t really rent anything,” Carter says. “In Hollywood, they have all these rental houses, and they might have doubles and triples [of each item] in there, but you still can’t get any blood on them. Get blood on them, pay 10 times the rental price! So I did take some real vintage pieces and use them as samples.”

A lucky coincidence and a reportedly cancelled movie – Marvel’s Blade – meant Carter



already had some costumes that fit the bill. “I prepped for a year and a half [on the movie] that took place in 1928,” she says. “At one point Blade was going to Chicago to work with Al Capone, so I made suits and winter coats [Smoke and Stack, too, are returning from Chicago to the Mississippi Delta in Sinners]. Then there was a speakeasy, so I was making dresses for that. Then Ryan Coogler calls me, and he’s doing a vampire film with all of the elements I’d been working on!” She lets out a low chuckle, shaking her head at the kismet of it all and adding that

crucial costumes for Sinners at “25 cents on the dollar”.

Carter says that’s one of the stories she will elaborate on in her memoir one day – and what a memoir it will be. Hollywood film sets are a long way from her humble childhood in Springfield, Massachusetts, where her single mother raised her as one of eight, and where “my little sewing machine was a creative hub”. Her mother tried to keep her daughter occupied with camps and drama clubs. Even so, she adds, people didn’t tend to take her artistic side seriously. Not that Carter was troubled: she was

independent and adventurous, she says, going off to friends’ houses for days at a time and getting lost in art. In 2021, she was awarded the key to Springfield. “So my city now knows you could be a creative kid and have a career.” Making costumes for student productions at college (she attended Virginia’s historically Black Hampton University) got Carter hooked. Then an early job with a dance company in LA put her on the radar of one Spike Lee, then 29 (Carter was 26) who invited her to see his debut feature, She’s Gotta Have It. “I saw Nola Darling walking down the street in Brooklyn and having her little escapades with all her boy-friends,” she says. “And I was like, I’ve been doing Molière and Shakespeare – what is this?! But I was like, I could totally do this ...” She quit her job immediately

and began working with the rising director, going on to costume films such as Do the Right Thing and Malcolm X. Carter landed her first Oscar nomination via the latter’s loud zoot suits and faithful Islamic dress and, incredibly, later recycled the wire specs Denzel Washington wore to play the African American revolutionary for Jason Alexander’s George Costanza in the Seinfeld pilot. Carter’s costumes are thoroughly researched and accurate – for Malcolm X she even read letters he sent from a Massachusetts prison, while, for Sinners, production drew on evocative photography from southern writer Eudora Welty. But they’re also fun: there’s a reason why the US store Spirit Halloween created an entire Sinners collection.

While she has gone on to work with other renowned directors – among them Steven Spielberg and Ava DuVernay – her other enduring partnership, apart from Lee, has been with Coogler. She is responsible for masterminding the costumes for his Afrofuturist superhero hit Black Panther and winning her first Oscar in the process, as well as Black Panther: Wakanda Forever, which led to Carter’s second Oscar. Unbelievably for a film that went on to have the cultural and economic impact that Black Panther did – grossing more than \$1bn worldwide – she says it was initially “hard to motivate people to care – I was walking around saying: ‘This is not the Lion King, this is not Coming to America. There’s no comedy.’ Because that’s all that we had before Black Panther.” For the setting of the fiction-

al, technologically advanced kingdom of Wakanda, she drew on the beauty of African traditional dress, channelling what she calls “the melting pot” of the continent, via Maasai patterns, Zulu wedding hats, and King T’Challa’s (Chadwick Boseman) cut-out McQueen sandals. For the Dora Milaje warrior women – led by Danai Gurira’s Okoye – Coogler was keen to avoid too much nudity. “He was serious about them being taken seriously,” Carter says. “There’s no objectification in Ryan’s movies, and that is so rare in this industry.”

While Black Panther might have been future-facing, Sinners lands at a time when a debate swells elsewhere about how anachronistic costume design should or shouldn’t be (see: Wuthering Heights). Even in a post-credits scene, Sinners maintains accuracy: we flash forward to the 90s, where Jordan wears a vintage Coogi sweater à la rap icon Biggie Smalls, as requested by Coogler. “Ryan knows the 80s [and 90s] fashion so well,” says Carter. “I’m telling you, this guy who was born in 86 knows the 80s better than I do.” You can imagine it was also something of a full-circle moment for Carter, who has been a mainstay not just of Black Hollywood but of Hollywood at large ever since that era, and now finds herself at the top of her game. Having “pulled myself up by the bootstraps” and made many personal sacrifices for her craft, “[I decided], come what may, I really want to do this. And now we’re here and I’ve done it, and I’m being rewarded for it, so it feels great.”

How to turn old sourdough into a classic pudding

Bread-and-butter pudding is a zero-waste recipe that has stood the test of time, not least because it’s so practical, comforting and thrifty. Like the best no-waste dishes, it transforms something worthless such as old bread into something truly indulgent. This version is based on Raymond Blanc’s classic, with a few of my own simplifications and adaptations over the years. Wholemeal sourdough bread-and-butter pudding with prunesMost traditional bread-and-butter pudding recipes call for white bread, caster sugar and extra egg yolks, but, unless you’ve got a clear plan for those egg whites, they can very easily end up being wasted. Whole eggs work beautifully in custard, and make very little difference to the richness of the finished pudding; I simply use a touch less milk to compensate.Sourdough, especially a wholemeal one, works brilliantly here, too. It’s sturdier, more flavourful and, in my

experience, better at soaking up custard than soft white bread, which sometimes turns a little slimy. Sourdough is heavier, though, so I tend to use a bit more of it, and I like to press the slices down with a weight before cooking, so helping the bread absorb the custard. Dark brown sugar adds serious depth of flavour, as does the addition of a sneaky splash of brandy, whisky or vermouth.

Serves 4
150ml double cream, plus extra to serve
300ml whole milk
1 tsp vanilla extract
3 medium eggs
90g brown sugar – I used dark muscovado
1 pinch sea salt
20g unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing
50g dried fruit (sultanas, prunes, apricots)
20ml brandy, or whisky or marsala



(optional)
200g sliced day-old sourdough, or any other bread you haveHeat the cream, milk and vanilla extract in a

saucepan until steaming, then take off the heat before the mix comes to a boil. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk the eggs, brown sugar and salt, then slowly

pour in the warm milk, whisking constantly to make a smooth custard.Butter the insides of a small or medium baking dish, then pour in a little custard to cov-

er the base. Scatter half the dried fruit all over the top, then layer in the sourdough slices, overlapping them slightly and tucking the remaining fruit under the bread as you go (this helps ensure the fruit won’t burn during baking). Pour all the rest of the custard over the top, then place a second baking dish directly on top of the pudding and gently press down on it to compress the bread. Place a heavy weight on top (I use a stone mortar) and leave to rest for about 20 minutes, so the custard soaks into the bread.Heat the oven to 190C (170C fan)/375F/gas 5. Lift off the weight and second baking dish, dot the surface of the pudding with the butter and bake for about 30 minutes, until the custard is just set and the top is deeply golden. Sprinkle brown sugar and cinnamon over the top of the pudding, then grill briefly on high until it is a deep golden brown all over. Serve warm with lots of extra cream.

Danish Pandor says he wasn't "aware" of Yami Gautam's unexpected appearance in Dhurandhar 2



Mumbai: Danish Pandor, who portrayed Uzair Baloch in Dhurandhar and Dhurandhar 2, is enjoying the success of the movie. Danish Pandor, who rose to

popularity as Uzair Baloch, admits that he was unaware of Yami Gautam's cameo in Dhurandhar: The Revenge, despite the film's many unexpected turns. "I wasn't

aware of her cameo, in the sense that I didn't know at what point she comes in," Danish Pandor said. The filmmaker makes all of these choices. I was therefore totally unaware of it. I wasn't present when she made her cameo, so I was quite taken aback." Her role in this movie is done so beautifully," he went on. It's a powerful cameo. The entire frame rises as she enters it. Seeing her on screen was a pleasure. In my opinion, Yami ma'am is both a stunning actress and an amazing performer. She performed admirably in her most recent movie, Haq,

"What she accomplished in it astounded me. These performances motivate us as actors. It was great to break the rhythm, comprehend the universe, and provide such incredible monologues! "It's incredible how she has developed her career," Danish said. Yami Gautam plays a nurse working as an Indian undercover spy in Pakistan in Dhurandhar 2. The name tag on her uniform reads "Shazia Bano," which is an intriguing detail despite the brief visit. This was the name of her character in Haq, so for fans who were

paying attention, it was a subtle reference or Easter egg. The ascension of Ranveer Singh's Hamza Ali Mazari as Sher-e-Baloch and the unchallenged king of Lyari is followed in the Dhurandhar sequel. It also follows his transformation from Jaskirat Singh Rang to Hamza, the spy who infiltrates Pakistan to exact revenge for the country's terrorist acts. The gifted supporting cast, which includes Arjun Rampal, R Madhavan, Sanjay Dutt, Rakesh Bedi, Danish Pandor, and Sara Arjun, returns for the spy-action thriller.

Ravi Kishan explains why actresses avoided the state, saying Madhuri Dixit was safe throughout the UP shoot

Mumbai: Actor and Lok Sabha MP Ravi Kishan recently went to a function in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, where Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was also present. While there, he made light of the fact that actresses typically declined to film in Uttar Pradesh, pointing out that Madhuri Dixit spent three days there before returning to Mumbai "safe and secure." He also made light of the fact that individuals colored their hair in order to meet her. "Uttar Pradesh ki jai jai kaar hui," Ravi declared as he mounted the stage at the occasion. Jisko kehte the, nai nai Uttar Pradesh nai jaana, waha goli maarte hai, waha shooting nai karenga, heroine log bolti thi. Gorakhpur mein rehke gayi hai, Madhuri Dixit teen din yaha. Surakshit, vyavastha, teen din reh ke gayi hai woh. (A cry of triumph for Uttar

Pradesh was heard. Heroines used to claim that they would not want to visit UP because they shot people. Madhuri Dixit spent three days in Gorakhpur. After three days, she departed without incident. Ravi also made light of the large number of people who showed up to see Madhuri with hair coloring—some of them even leaking—at the event. The next Netflix movie Maa Behen, directed by Suresh Triveni of Tumhari Sulu-fame, would feature Ravi and Madhuri. Dharna Durga and Triptii Dimri are also featured in the movie. A teaser for the film, which tells the tale of a dysfunctional family with a twist, was released last month. The dark comedy's release date is still unknown. "Madhuri ji has been such a big superstar, and we've all admired her for decades," Ravi had stated. It's a wonderful sensation.



This is a huge charm, saubhagya hai ki unke saath kaam karna (it's a blessing to work with her).

I got the chance to work with Sridevi ji but never Madhuri ji. Bhabhi ji Ghar Par Hain starring Ravi! This year, enjoy Fun on the Run and the Amazon MX Player series Psycho Saiyaan. In addition to Mirzapur: The Film and Dhamaal

4, he has plans for Maamla Legal Hai Season 2 and Tax Department Story. Madhuri's most recent roles were as a serial killer in the Disney+ Hotstar series Mrs. Deshpande and as a lead in the horror comedy Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3, which aired in 2024.

Other than Maa Behen, she has not yet disclosed any projects.

Karan Johar Applauds Dhurandhar: The Revenge



Mumbai: Karan Johar commended Aditya Dhar's most recent film, Dhurandhar: The Revenge, and referred to him as a "outstanding filmmaker." The movie, which is a follow-up to Dhar's 2025 film Dhurandhar, was released on March 19. The movie, which stars Ranveer Singh, has made over Rs 1000 crore at the box office worldwide. On Friday, Johar posted the movie's poster to his Instagram account. He included a caption in which he described his viewing experience. "The heart-wrenching backstory of Jaskirat... the heartbreaking sacrifices made for our motherland... The humanisation and layered back story even of the antagonist... the impeccable craft... the soundscape and the all round cinematic prowess proves the

brilliance and directorial command of ADITYA DHAR... what an absolutely astounding and outstanding filmmaker he is... he not only raises the mainstream bar but also creates a new one... yeh naya director hai," the caption read. Box office records will break, and every record will be surpassed! @ranveersingh, your performance is career-best, showcasing your artistic caliber. The film "DHURANDHAR" evokes nostalgia for classic Hindi cinema and brings pride to the industry. It features R Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Sanjay Dutt, Sara Arjun, and Rakesh Bedi reprising their roles. He praised Singh's performance in the movie as well. 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. In addition to exploring his beginnings as Jaskirat Singh Rang, the sequel follows the development of Ranveer Singh's character Hamza Ali Mazari in the Karachi underworld. Produced by Jyoti Deshpande and Lokesh Dhar, the movie is available in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam.

'real Jameel Jamali' Nabil Gabol responds to internet trolling

Mumbai: Pakistani politician Nabil Gabol has expressed his frustration over online trolling following the release of the film "Dhurandhar 2," claiming that the character Jameel Jamali, played by Rakesh Bedi, is based on him. He argues that the portrayal distorts the truth about Lyari and insists he plans to make his own film in response, tentatively titled "Lyari Ka Gabbar." Gabol, who served as the MNA of Lyari, asserts that the Indian portrayal aims to

attack Pakistan rather than tap into military confrontation. He criticized the depiction of his character, constraining the narrative to a negative portrayal, and claimed that the film has unfairly shaped perceptions of his actions and character. Despite his grievances, he wishes to counter the portrayal but lacks the resources to seek legal recourse against the film. The "Dhurandhar" franchise, which features a cast including Ranveer Singh and Sanjay Dutt, has

been financially successful, grossing over ₹1000 crore within a week. Gabol's historical discontent with the initial film release has persisted as he prepares to make his own cinematic statement against what he views as misrepresentation.



In response to a comparison between his performance in Uri and R Madhavan's in Dhurandhar, Paresh Rawal

New Delhi: Two of the highest-grossing Indian movies ever made, particularly in Hindi, are Aditya Dhar's Dhurandhar and Dhurandhar: The Revenge. There are parallels between this and his 2019 movie Uri: The Surgical Strike. Paresh Rawal answered after an X (previously Twitter) user contrasted his participation in Uri with that of R Madhavan in Dhurandhar, based on the National Security Advisor of India, Ajit Doval. "I quite liked Paresh Rawal as Ajit Doval in Uri The Surgical Strike!" wrote an X user alongside a photo of Paresh as NSA Govind Bhardwaj from Uri. aside from the fact that he wasn't shown smoking in the movie. "You might have just won us the war, son," Paresh is seen saying in the photo. The actor joked, "Yes dint smoke but only broke the phones (laughter emoji)," after reposting the photo. One commenter said, "Ajit Doval is like the Bond franchise."

Fans of his role found his response humorous. Playing Bond is an honor. Daniel Craig, Pierce Brosnan, Roger Moore, and Sean Connery. "Sir, phones had it coming, I guess," laughed another. "You should be proud, too. "I think he is the best Doval," said one X user. One reader wrote, "No offense to Paresh Rawal..but Madhavan did a better job," while another disagreed, saying, "Pareshji has the personality and gravitas." This comes after Madhavan, who portrayed IB Director Ajay Sanyal, had to explain a scene from Dhurandhar. Many others posted images and videos of him smoking, saying he lighted the cigarette while reciting passages from the Dasam Granth by Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

The actor uploaded a video to provide clarification follow-



ing criticism from the Sikh community. "I'm positive that Aditya Dhar, who handles these things better than I do, instructed me to put out the cigarette well in advance before I spoke the lines during this scenario. He explained, "It is very pure and sacred for us, so no smoke would come out of my mouth, no smoke would appear on screen, and there would be no cigarette in my hand." Madhavan clarified. Following that, Jaskirat Singh Rang, popularly known as Hamza Ali Mazari, played by Ranveer, was also charged with smoking while donning a pagdi (turban). Aditya explained that the film's crew had the highest regard for the Sikh community and that the image was created by AI. Dhurandhar 2 was released on March 19 and is now playing in theaters.

Alia Bhatt seeks Sadhguru's guidance in raising her daughter Raha Kapoor

Mumbai: Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt recently spoke with spiritual leader Jaggi Vasudev, also known as Sadhguru, in Chennai. He shared a brief clip of the exchange on social media, in which Alia asks him for guidance on raising her daughter Raha Kapoor. Sadhguru explained to her why, as a parent, she shouldn't be concerned. Sadhguru posted a video of himself and Alia praying before their session started on his Instagram stories. "Your one advice to a parent who's worried if they're being a good parent would be?" Alia asks him in a video that he also shared. "A worried parent is not a good parent," he responds, laughing. "I don't think you can take worry out of it," Alia says, tilting her head back as the audience chuckles. I believe you



would confess. In a different video that Sadhguru uploaded, he reminds viewers that he doesn't "wind" himself in order to "unwind." If his Instagram stories are any indication, Alia and the spiritual leader appear to have concluded their session with her holding his hand and chatting away. On his Instagram, Sadhguru shared images from the exchange along with the caption, "Alia Bhatt en-

gages with Sadhguru for a delightful conversation." On social media, fans have shared the images and videos that Sadhguru shared, expressing their excitement for the upcoming publication of the complete chat. A video of Alia and Sadhguru conversing prior to their session was also shared on Instagram by a Chennai-based event planner. The conversation took occurred at Chennai's Leela

Palace, according to another video. In 2018, Alia started dating Ranbir Kapoor, her co-star in Brahmastra, and later that year, they formally announced their relationship. In April 2022, the pair tied the knot in a small ceremony at their Mumbai residence. In November of that year, Raha, their daughter, was born. After unveiling Raha's face to the media on her first birthday, Alia first posted photos of her online. However, since Saif Ali Khan's stabbing tragedy, Raha has asked for solitude. In 2024, Alia co-starred with Vedang Raina in the film Jigra, which she also produced. She will shortly co-star with Bobby Deol and Sharvari in the upcoming YRF spy movie, Alpha. Additionally, she has Love & War scheduled alongside Vicky Kaushal and Ranbir.

Cyclospora cayetanensis caused Saba Azad to be hospitalized

New Delhi: Actor Saba Azad was admitted to the hospital because of the parasite Cyclospora cayetanensis. On Friday, she shared a photo of herself in a large hospital bed, appearing smaller, on Instagram. She disclosed what transpired and described it as the "worst 14 days" of her life, assuring that Hrithik Roshan has been keeping her spirits up. Saba shared a photo of herself resting on a huge hospital bed and making the peace sign. "Worst 14 days of my life," she said in the caption, disclosing that she was admitted to the hospital. You terrible piece of work, Cyclospora cayetanensis! This virus appeared out of nowhere for someone who always eats at home and always has a water bottle with her, especially at my busiest period of the year. I can hardly walk after losing four kilograms that I had no spare in two weeks. She continued by saying that she was exercising when she suddenly became too weak to lift anything. "I train twice a day, doing pull-



ups and lifting heavy weights one day, and the next I'm half my size and lack the strength to lift even a toothpick, let alone weights." For the love of God, wash your vegetables and salad greens as if your life depended on it—because sometimes it truly does! Baking

soda and veggie wash (Herbal Strategic has a fantastic one) is our new approach," Saba added. From 2000 until 2014, Hrithik was wed to Sussanne Khan. The couple's two sons, Hrehaan and Hridhaan, were born in 2006 and 2008, respectively. They were married in a private ceremony in Bengaluru. Their divorce was finalized in 2014 after they split up in 2013. Aside from co-parenting their sons, the couple split up peacefully and have stayed friends.

In October 2025, Hrithik and Saba celebrated their fourth anniversary after they started dating in 2022. Before people realized they were dating, they were seen together at Karan Johar's 50th birthday celebration and on dinner outings. Since then, they have also spent time with Sussanne and her partner, Arslan Goni, who started dating in 2022. In addition to producing a web series on Prime Video called Storm, Hrithik will soon become a director with Krishi 4.

Varun Dhawan remembers receiving a threat call from the underworld



New Delhi: Bollywood was greatly impacted by the underworld in the 1990s. Shah Rukh Khan, Rakesh Roshan, and Karan Johar are just a few of the famous people who have talked about being threatened. Varun Dhawan recently spoke with Yuvaa about how his family was also threatened by the mafia and had to leave their home and spend the day somewhere else. At the time, Varun revealed that a number of celebrities were getting calls from the underworld, adding, "We were getting them too. They had been coming in for a while, but we were unaware of it since the staff was fighting with the caller. "Come meet me in that garden; I'll beat you there," the staff said, giving the guy

our complete address. He went on to say that an actor called his father, director David Dhawan, to warn him when things got out of hand. According to Varun, "He claimed that this had gotten out of control and that the individual was now threatening to bring guns and that he was aware of our address and office hours. My dad grabbed the employee's name when he inquired as to who had said this. As a result, we were forced to leave our home and spend the day somewhere else. It's humorous, but it's not really humorous." Varun's disclosure provides an insight into a troubling period in Bollywood's history, when numerous celebrities were allegedly living under the threat of extortion calls and threats from the mafia. The most recent movie in which Varun appeared was Border 2. Sunny Deol, Diljit Dosanjh, and Ahan Shetty played major roles in the Anurag Singh-directed movie, while Mona Singh, Sonam Bajwa, Medha Rana, and Anya Singh played supporting roles. The movie became a commercial success, earning ₹450 crore globally. Varun is currently anticipating the release of Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai, his next movie. Along with Jimmy

Shergill, Mouni Roy, and Rohit Saraf, Pooja Hegde and Mrunal Thakur play major parts in the romantic comedy. The film, which was directed by David Dhawan, is the fourth time a father and son have worked together, following Main Tera Hero, Judwaa 2, and Coolie No. 1. In order to avoid conflicting with Yash's Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups, which is planned to open on June 4, the movie's original June 5 theatrical release date was eventually rescheduled. "We would like to clarify that our film Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai was originally scheduled for release on June 5th, a date we had announced several months ago," the producers said in a statement announcing the postponement. However, we believed that it would be more appropriate to change our release given the current circumstances and recent developments. We firmly feel that supporting one another instead of needlessly competing on the same day is always better for the industry. We have made the decision to postpone the release of Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai to June 12 and release our film a week later in keeping with that spirit of togetherness.

Adani Ports introduces the first Port of Refuge system in India to improve maritime security

New Delhi, Mar 28:The first Port of Refuge (PoR) in India has been operationalized, according to an announcement made on Saturday by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ). This creates an organized system to deal with maritime emergencies and distressed vessels.

A Point of Refuge (PoR) is a defined area where ships can seek shelter in order to stabilize conditions, preserve life, and minimize environmental damage, according to the International Maritime Organization (IMO). This fills a long-standing void in India's maritime emergency infrastructure, according to a news release from Adani Ports. The statement went on, "India had not formalized one until now, despite such frameworks being standard in major maritime economies." The action being

taken as India, which has more than 11,000 kilometers of coastline and is situated along important international maritime lanes, looks to improve its emergency response capabilities." This milestone represents an important step in fortifying India's ecosystem for maritime safety."

Although ports link economies, a port of refuge safeguards human life. We are improving India's marine readiness and establishing a new standard for top-notch coastal safety by building specialized PoR infrastructure. World-class infrastructure must be matched by world-class accountability, according to APSEZ CEO Ashwani Gupta. "The project is a significant step toward improving India's capabilities for disaster response and maritime readiness. Adopting a standardized Port of Refuge structure will make



it possible to respond to marine crises more quickly and efficiently, protecting people, cargo, and the coastal environment. Director General (DG) of Shipping Shyam Jagannathan stated, "I commend all stakeholders for their collaborative efforts in operationalizing this important capability." APSEZ has declared that two locations would be designated as PoR. These include Gopalpur Port on the east coast and Dighi Port on the west. The east coast PoR will serve

vessels in the Bay of Bengal and routes towards the Malacca Strait, one of the busiest maritime commerce corridors in the world, while the west coast PoR will assist traffic across the Arabian Sea and routes to the Persian Gulf." With specialized equipment and trained response teams, the facilities will provide salvage and wreck removal, firefighting, pollution containment, and emergency coordination services," the statement continued.

Why PNG stays focused during the Iran War whereas LPG struggles

New Delhi, Mar 28: As Iran's conflict with the United States and Israel disrupts global energy supplies, India faces a significant fuel crisis, prompting the government to encourage a shift from liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) to piped natural gas (PNG). The Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime route for a fifth of the world's gas and fuel needs, has seen increased military activity that threatens oil tanker movements. In response, the Indian government issued an order mandating households with access to PNG infrastructure to transition from LPG cylinders to PNG within three months, with potential cessation of LPG supplies for non-compliance.

PNG is primarily derived from natural gas, mainly



methane, delivered through underground pipelines, and its sources in India include the Krishna-Godavari basin, Assam, and Tripura. The KG basin alone is projected to yield substantial gas production, contributing significantly to India's supply. In contrast, LPG, a byproduct of crude oil refining, heavily relies on imports, particularly from the Middle East, where geopolitical tensions now affect logistics and se-

curity. The government's rationale for promoting PNG hinges on its resilience during crises; unlike LPG, which is subject to shipping disruptions, PNG's pipeline distribution ensures more consistent delivery, minimizing impact on households.

Currently, India imports approximately 25-26 million metric tonnes of LNG annually, meeting about 50% of its natural gas demand

through imports. Despite some LNG being sourced from the Middle East, alternative supplier nations like the United States and Australia also contribute to India's gas security. The shift toward PNG not only reflects the urgent need for energy stability but also addresses India's vulnerability to external shocks associated with LPG imports.

The government's decision has been framed as a matter of national interest, underlining the considerably lower import dependency for PNG compared to LPG. As it stands, India has 16.2 million domestic PNG connections relative to over 332 million LPG consumers, amidst rapid growth spurred by initiatives like the PM Ujjwala Yojana.

In light of the Middle East issue, the PM meets with top ministers to assess state readiness

New Delhi, Mar 28: In the wake of the violence in West Asia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with chief ministers on Friday to discuss their plans and readiness, with the exception of states that are scheduled for elections. According to government sources, the purpose of the virtual gathering was to guarantee coordination of activities in the spirit of "Team India." This is the first time the prime minister and chief ministers have met to discuss the West Asian conflict, which began on February 28 with the US-Israeli attack on Iran. Iran also fired back at Israel and its Gulf neighbors in retaliation. N Chandrababu Naidu of Andhra Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath of Uttar Pradesh, Revanth Reddy of Telangana, Bhagwant Mann of Punjab, Bhupendra Patel of Gujarat, Omar Abdullah of Jammu and Kashmir, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu of Himachal Pradesh, and Pema Khandu of Arunachal Pradesh were among the chief ministers who attended the meeting. The meeting was also attended by Home Minister Amit Shah and Defense Minister Rajnath Singh. Through video conference, the prime minister discussed the West Asia conflict with the chief ministers and went over the states' preparations and readiness. According to a source, the meeting's main goal was to guarantee coordination of activities in the



spirit of Team India. The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) prevented the chief ministers of states that were scheduled to hold elections from attending this summit. The chief secretaries of the election-bound states of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, and the Union Territory of Puducherry will meet separately with the Cabinet Secretariat. In order to inform the leaders of the political parties on the situation in West Asia, the government called an all-party meeting on March 25. There, a thorough summary of the government's actions was made. The prime minister urged the country to remain prepared and united, just as it had stood together during the COVID-19 pandemic, while speaking in the Lok Sabha on March 23. He said that the challenging glob-

al conditions brought on by the conflict in West Asia are likely to last for a long time. Additionally, PM Modi brought the House's attention to the crisis's internal security component, cautioning that some forces try to take advantage of such circumstances. "Security across all domains, coastal, border, cyber, and strategic installations is being further strengthened," he added, adding that all security agencies have been put on notice. The security of everything is being strengthened, including vital installations, border security, cyber security, and coastline security," he had stated. PM Modi urged the state governments to maintain stringent monitoring and prompt action against those who could try to take advantage of the situation by spreading lies, participating in black marketing, or hoarding. He also cautioned against such elements and urged patience, restraint, and vigilance. Speaking at a press conference later that day, Prime Minister Modi stated that despite the COVID-19 outbreak, difficulties have persisted and that India and its people have been put to the test every year. But despite every calamity, India is progressing because of the combined efforts of 1.4 billion Indians," he stated. According to PM Modi, India is advancing with increased confidence and faces obstacles head-on rather than putting them off.

Two players from England decline IPL contracts



New Delhi: Ahead of the 19th edition, player injuries have severely affected the Indian Premier League teams. Numerous players are expected to miss the competition, and many will not be able to participate in the first round because of their indi-

vidual injuries. Two England players were reportedly asked to sign as replacements amid the ongoing issue, but they turned down the offers. The IPL 2026 season kicks off on Saturday at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium with a match between Sun-

risers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, the reigning champions. The Telegraph said that IPL teams asked Josh Tongue and Jamie Smith of England to cover for injured players. Interestingly, neither of the stars sold at the IPL 2026 auction. Tongue's base price was Rs 1 crore, whilst Smith's was Rs 2 crore. In order to be "in the best possible place physically and mentally" before England's home summer schedule, England batter Ben Duckett earlier resigned from his IPL 2026 deal with Delhi Capitals. At the IPL 2026 auction in December of last year, Duckett—who has never participated in the IPL—was purchased for Rs 2 crore. Now that he has made the decision to withdraw from the competition, he will fo-

cus on getting ready for England's home summer, which consists of three Test matches against New Zealand in June and three Test matches against Pakistan in August and September. In July, England will host three ODIs and five T20Is against India. Ben Duckett wrote on his Instagram story that he made the tough choice to leave the IPL in order to concentrate on being emotionally and physically prepared to give his all for England's summer home games.

In addition, Duckett expressed sadness for not being able to represent the Delhi Capitals despite his eagerness for the chance and apologized to the team and its supporters for any inconvenience his withdrawal may have caused.

Ishan Kishan will be the first Indian in IPL history to accomplish this feat



New Delhi: On Saturday at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Sunrisers Hyderabad will play the first game of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 against reigning champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru. SRH will start the new season with-

out their normal skipper Pat Cummins, who missed half of the competition due to a back injury, following a dismal 2025 campaign that saw them finish sixth on the points table. Ishan Kishan, a youthful wicket-keeper-batter, will lead the

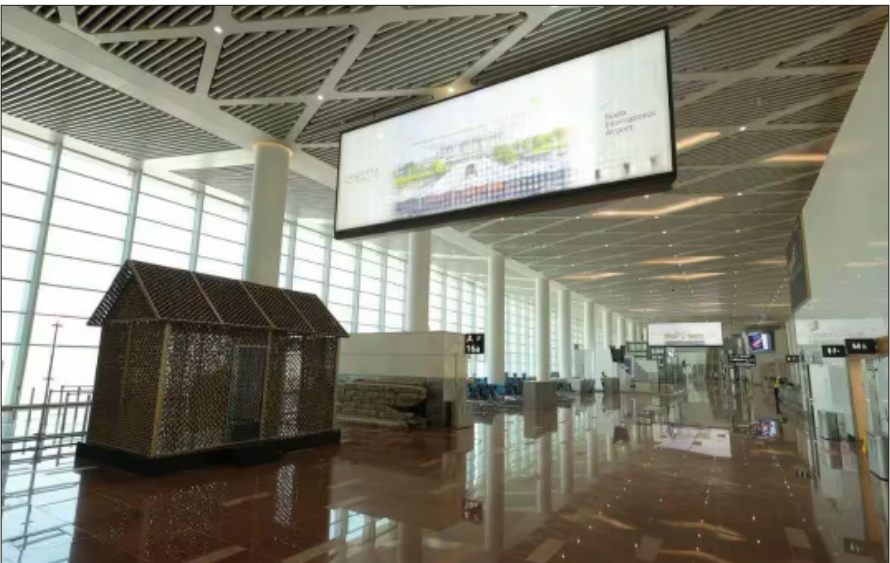
Hyderabad-based team in Cummins' absence. For the left-hander, the forthcoming match against RCB will be a historic turning point. Kishan will be the youngest Indian skipper in Sunrisers Hyderabad's IPL history at the age of 27 years

and 253 days. All things considered, he will be the second-youngest captain to lead the team, after Kane Williamson of New Zealand, who led SRH in the 2018 season at the age of 27 years and 244 days.

Other Indian players who have previously led SRH in the IPL include Shikhar Dhawan, Manish Pandey, and Bhuvneshwar Kumar. Kishan has shown himself to be a self-assured player and leader, therefore the management had no hesitation in giving him the role, according to head coach Daniel Vettori, who earlier on Friday voiced confidence in the team's choice to name him as stand-in captain. I believe Ishan has been a part of the IPL for a considerable amount of time. In

the Friday pre-match press conference, Vettori stated, "He brings in his own confidence around that because he's been with a number of teams and he's been highly successful." "The fact that he's led the U19s and his state team and they won the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy this year brings a confident person, a confident player and a really confident leader and those are the attributes that we really looked at when he was appointed." He continued, "I truly believe that he and Abhishek will lead from the front this season because they are close friends and have a thorough understanding of the club. Additionally, it is a unique occasion for all IPL teams to begin the season with Indian captains.

PM Modi discloses ambitious plans for the airport in Noida



New Delhi, Mar 28: On Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled ambitious plans for the Noida International Airport. Although the airport's Phase 1 was inaugurated today in Jewar, there are still plans to increase its capacity. PM Modi praised the airport project, stating that flights will depart from it every two minutes and that it would significantly improve Uttar Pradesh's connectivity and development. PM Modi declared, "This Jewar Airport is connecting all of North India with the world... the airport is being constructed in such a way that one plane will take off every two minutes."

These initiatives demonstrate the 'double-engine' government's efforts to advance UP. The Meerut Metro and Namo Bharat rail are offering quick, intelligent connection, and the semiconductor industry is helping India become technologically independent," he stated. "The world and all of North India are connected by this Jewar Airport. Aircraft will depart from this location every two minutes. Noida was once used as a "ATM" by the Samajwadi Party for their own benefit, but under the BJP administration, it is now the driving force behind the development of Uttar Pradesh. Yogi Adityanath, the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, the minister of aviation, and other dignitaries accompanied the prime minister. After several delays, the airport ultimately opened, and after the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), it would be the

second international airport to serve the Delhi-NCR area. According to Shailendra Bhatia, additional CEO of the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) and nodal official for Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL), this airport is anticipated to grow into India's largest, with a capacity of 225 million passengers annually. He also talked about India's continued rapid development and the US-Iran war. This is the fourth significant project finished in Western Uttar Pradesh in the past several weeks. A sizable semiconductor manufacturing was established in Noida at this time. At the same time, the Meerut Metro was enlarged and the nation's first Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat train gained traction. All of you have inaugurated the Noida International Airport today," the PM declared. Prior to the prime minister's visit, security was increased throughout the region.

Built at an estimated cost of ₹11,200 crore, the airport's first phase is intended to be a multi-modal transport hub with seamless connection via metro, rail, road, and regional transportation systems. A multi-modal cargo hub with an initial handling capacity of about 2.5 lakh metric tons yearly, expandable to almost 18 lakh metric tonnes, is part of the project, according to an official statement. With intentions to expand to 70 million MPPA, the airport's initial passenger capacity is planned at 12 million MPPA. During his visit, the prime minister also looked over the terminal.

MS Dhoni will miss the first two weeks of the 2026 IPL

New Delhi: Due to a calf strain, MS Dhoni is expected to miss the opening two weeks of the 2026 Indian Premier League, the Chennai Super Kings said on Saturday. "MS Dhoni is presently recovering from a strained calf. He will therefore probably miss the first two weeks of TATA IPL 2026, the team stated on social media. On Monday, CSK's first game is against the Rajasthan Royals. A video of the team's practice match, in which Dhoni batted and Sanju Samson took wickets, was posted by CSK earlier in the day. The veteran wicket-keeper batsman will not play in the forthcoming match against Rajasthan Royals, the team has stated. Samson will probably keep the wickets for CSK in the first few games as they strive for a record sixth IPL crown because the veteran will be sidelined for a while. As the Ruturaj Gaikwad-led team traded off all-rounders Sam Curran and Ravindra Jadeja, Samson, the former captain of RR, was traded to CSK.

It would be exciting to watch Samson and Jadeja play against their former teams on Monday when RR takes on CSK at the Barsapara Stadium in Guwahati,

even though the English all-rounder has been ruled out of IPL 2026 due to an injury. Given his ongoing knee problems, there has long been conjecture that this season may be Dhoni's final one. At the recent "ROAR 26" fan event at Chepauk stadium, Dhoni even admitted that his level of fitness was dropping, stating that "it is on the way down". In order to protect his body and amuse the "Thala Kingdom," he has shifted to the lower middle order and unleashed several massive hits during the death overs phase due to his age, knee problems, and lack of fitness. With Ruturaj Gaikwad leading the team for a while, the team investing Rs 14.20 crores in uncapped Rajasthan wicketkeeper-batter Kartik Sharma and signing Samson, a fan favorite wicketkeeping option, the rumors that IPL 2026 will be Dhoni's swang-song have only grown stronger. These investments are seen as CSK's preparations for life after Dhoni. Dhoni has scored 5,439 runs in 242 innings at an average of 38.30 and a strike rate of 137.45 in 278 games, including 24 fifties and a high score of 84*. He has the sixth-highest run total in the history of the



competition. Dhoni scored 196 runs in 13 innings at an average of 24.50 and a strike rate of over 135 in the wooden spoon final of the previous season, with a top score of 30*.

Bangladesh Lifts IPL Ban: Cricket Diplomacy Wins as Broadcast Restored

Dhaka: After banning the broadcast of the Indian Premier League earlier this year, Bangladesh have removed the blanket ban on the league this season. The development was confirmed by the country’s newly appointed Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapan during a media interaction on Saturday, March 28.

Bangladesh had banned the broadcast of the IPL in the aftermath of pacer Mustafizur Rahman being relieved from the league. Mustafizur, who was bought by Kolkata Knight Riders for a massive Rs 9.20 crore, was let go by the franchise on the directions of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). The board had informally instructed the franchise to part ways with the left-arm pacer while reacting to incidents involving the killing of Hindu minorities in Bangladesh. Relations between the Bangladesh and Indian cricket boards hit an all-time low following the episode, with Bangladesh pulling out of the T20 World Cup 2026.



However, in recent days, ties between the two countries have improved, with both sides exchanging pleasant-tries through their respective leaders.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board has also acknowledged the damage caused by refusing to participate in a World Cup, a mistake they are now willing to rectify. “No one applied to us to telecast the IPL. We don’t want to mix politics with sport. We will look at it from a commercial perspective, and if any channel applies to telecast the IPL, we will consider it positively,” Zahir Uddin Swapan said on Saturday. “We will not bar anyone from telecasting it. If Star Sports wants to telecast it,

they can. If any of our channels want to telecast it, we will take it positively, but we will not force anything,” he added. Bangladesh’s newly appointed Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapan confirmed that the country has lifted its blanket ban on the broadcast of the Indian Premier League (IPL). During a media interaction on Saturday, March 28, 2026, the minister stated that the government would not bar any carrier, including Star Sports, from telecasting the league. The decision marks a reversal of a ban imposed earlier in the year following a diplomatic and cricketing row involving pacer Mustafizur Rahman and the BCCI.

PCB issues show-cause notice to Naseem Shah over controversial social media post

Lahore: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has issued a show-cause notice to fast bowler Naseem Shah for allegedly violating the terms of his central contract and media regulations. The development comes just a day after a controversial social media post from his account during the opening night of the Pakistan Super League 2026 season. The post, which was later deleted, appeared to question the treatment of Maryam Nawaz, the Chief Minister of Pakistan’s Punjab province, at the event. In an official statement, the Pakistan Cricket Board confirmed that disciplinary proceedings had been initiated on the pacer’s actions. “The PCB remains committed to upholding professional standards, contractual obligations, and the integrity of the game.”

The board did not specify the exact clause breached but indicated that the matter would be reviewed after receiving Naseem’s

response. The controversy stemmed from a post shared on Naseem’s X account during the PSL opener at Lahore’s Gaddafi Stadium. The post included a video of Maryam Nawaz arriving at the venue and read: “Why is she treated like a queen at Lord’s?”

The post was quickly deleted, and a follow-up message claimed that Naseem’s account had been hacked and later recovered. However, the explanation did not prevent the issue from escalating. The incident gained further attention as it came on a high-profile opening night attended by dignitaries, despite earlier decisions to limit public attendance due to external factors. The PCB maintained that the pacer’s actions potentially breached both contractual obligations and media policies, which prohibit public criticism or inappropriate remarks related to officials, institutions or stakeholders. The board has taken a firm



stance on player conduct in recent times, particularly around public statements and political references. The case will now proceed based on Naseem’s explanation, following which any disciplinary action will be decided. Naseem, who represents Rawalpindi Pindiz in the PSL, is expected to feature in their upcoming fixture against Peshawar Zalmi. However, the focus remains on how the

PCB handles the situation as it looks to reinforce its code of conduct. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) issued a show-cause notice to fast bowler Naseem Shah following a controversial social media post made during the opening night of the Pakistan Super League 2026. Shah was asked to provide a formal response and justification for his actions, which the board says potentially breached his

central contract and media policies. The controversy involves a post on Shah’s X account that questioned the treatment of Maryam Nawaz, the Chief Minister of Punjab, at Gaddafi Stadium. Although the post was quickly deleted and followed by a claim that the account had been hacked, the PCB initiated disciplinary proceedings to uphold professional standards and the integrity.

R Ashwin to Partner Haris Rauf at San Francisco Unicorns in MLC

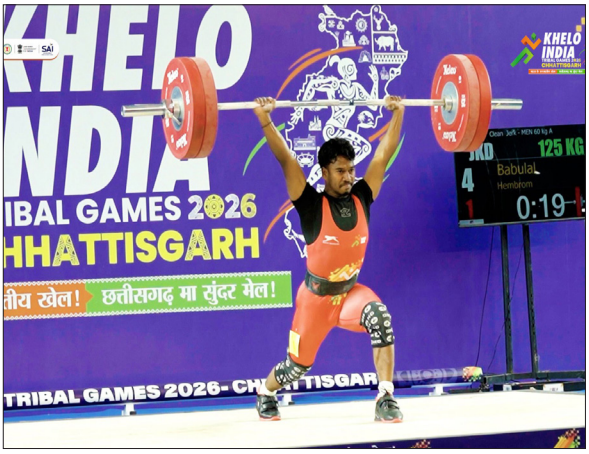


New Delhi: Former India all-rounder R Ashwin has signed for the San Francisco Unicorns for MLC 2026. Ashwin will join Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf, who has been with the Unicorns since the inaugural edition in 2023. This also marks Ashwin’s second stint as a T20 fre-lancer after he was signed by Sydney Thunder for the Big Bash League 2025-26. At Sydney Thunder, Ashwin was set to play alongside Pakistan leg-spinner Shadab Khan. However, he missed the tournament due to a knee injury. Ashwin later confirmed that he had undergone surgery for the issue, although he did not reveal when the injury occurred or when the procedure took place. On March 26, the

Unicorns announced their retentions for the upcoming season, naming Matt Short, Finn Allen, Xavier Bartlett, Cooper Connolly, Haris Rauf, Sanjay Krishnamurthi, Hassan Khan, Brody Couch, Hammad Azam, and Juanoy Drysdale. Short will captain the side in the upcoming season, which is scheduled to begin on June 16. The Unicorns will start their campaign on June 19 against the Los Angeles Knight Riders at the Grand Prairie Stadium in Dallas. Haris Rauf has been a key bowler for the Unicorns and is currently the third-highest wicket-taker in the tournament’s history. In 22 matches, the Pakistan pacer has claimed 28 wickets at an economy rate of 8.91, includ-

ing two four-wicket hauls. Rauf is currently playing for Lahore Qalandars in the Pakistan Super League 2026. Ashwin, on the other hand, has not played any form of cricket since July 2025, when he represented the Dindigul Dragons in the Tamil Nadu Premier League. Back in December 2024, Ashwin retired from international cricket after the Boxing Day Test against Australia, and in August 2025, he also called time on his Indian domestic career. The Unicorns are yet to win the title after three seasons in the tournament. They reached the playoffs last year but were knocked out by MI New York in the Eliminator. In 2024, they finished runners-up after losing to Washington final.

Jharkhand Weightlifter Babulal Hembrom Charts His Own Path at Khelo Tribal Games



Raipur: When a former Army coach, Gurvinder Singh, suggested that Babulal Hembrom stop playing other sports and take up weightlifting, given his body structure, the biggest challenge for the teenager from Keribanda village in Ramgarh District of Jharkhand was to find funds to pursue the sport. Despite the lack of funds in his district, Ramgarh, for the sport, instead of giving up, Babulal

began training by using bamboo sticks and iron rods at construction sites before joining the Jharkhand State Sports Promotion Society coaching centre, which meant commuting 60 km daily to train under Gurvinder. “It was a tough period for me when I took up the sport in 2018. Financially, we couldn’t afford the equipment and the kit to train, and hence I would make do with bamboo sticks and iron rods.

Then I got coaching support from JSPS and my coach, and here I am,” said Babulal, who won the silver medal in the men’s 60kg category at the ongoing Khelo India Tribal Games 2026 in Chhattisgarh. My mother works as a cook in a local school, and my father works odd jobs, and we always struggled for financial stability. But I am confident that all this success at Khelo India events will change as I win more such medals,” said the youngest of the five siblings at 19. Babulal Hembrom has been making his mark on the national and international stage in the age-group circuit for a while. In 2024, he clinched the Khelo India Youth Games gold in the 49kg category in Chennai and then went on to win medals at the IWF World Youth Weightlifting Championships and also the Asian Junior and Youth Weightlifting Championships.

CSK Talisman MS Dhoni Set to Miss Two Weeks After Sustaining a Calf Strain

New Delhi: Chennai Super Kings will not have the services of legendary MS Dhoni in the first two weeks of the Indian Premier League. Dhoni has been ruled out for the first few games due to a calf strain, confirmed the franchise on Saturday, March 28. The legendary wicket-keeper batter, who has faced injury issues in recent years, is expected to miss the first four games of the IPL 2026 season for the franchise. In place of Dhoni, either Sanju Samson or Urvil Patel are expected to take over the wicketkeeping duties for the team. Dhoni, who retired from international cricket in 2020, has continued to play exclusively in the IPL. Last season, he featured in all 14 matches, scoring 196 runs at a strike rate of over 135. He also briefly returned to captaincy after Ruturaj Gaikwad was ruled out due to injury.

At 44, Dhoni remains one of the most influential figures in the league. If he returns



later this season, he will become the oldest Indian to feature in the IPL, underlining both his longevity and importance to the franchise. For now, though, CSK will have to navigate the early phase without their biggest icon, with all eyes on how they adjust in his absence. Chennai Super Kings identified Sanju Samson as the successor of MS Dhoni. They traded him from Rajasthan Royals for Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran. Samson, who will be opening the innings for CSK this season is expected to keep wickets for the team as well, having ex-

ecuted in the role in the T20 World Cup recently. CSK can also opt to hand the keeping gloves to 27-year-old Urvil Patel as well, however, there are no indications of that at the moment. CSK will play their first game of the season against Rajasthan Royals. The match is scheduled to be played at the Barsapara Stadium in Guwahati on March 30. In the context of the IPL 2026 season, former India batter Aakash Chopra has not specifically provided a batting position for MS Dhoni but argued that if he is in the starting lineup, he must serve as the captain of Chennai

Super Kings. Chopra noted that there is no better leader on the field than Dhoni and suggested he should lead to ensure the team gets the best out of him for a potential turnaround.

While specific batting order advice from Cheteshwar Pujara is not detailed in the available reports, other experts like Ravichandran Ashwin have noted that while Dhoni may no longer be a top-six batter, he remains a vital “on-field compass” for the team. Dhoni is currently recovering from a calf strain and is expected to miss the first two weeks of the IPL 2026 season, with Sanju Samson or Urvil Patel likely to handle wicketkeeping duties in his absence. Speculation regarding the retirement of MS Dhoni has intensified ahead of the IPL 2026 season, which is scheduled to begin on March 28. Former India and Chennai Super Kings (CSK) batter Robin Uthappa has suggested.

Badminton Legend Carolina Marin Retires



New Delhi: Following the retirement announcement of Spanish badminton legend Carolina Marin, her long-time rival and two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu shared a touching tribute, reflecting on a journey that transformed from fierce on-court “spats” into a lasting bond of mutual respect. The Rio Olympic gold medallist and three-time world champion Marin announced her retirement from professional badminton on Thursday, saying she is still suffering from the aftereffects of the serious injury she sustained

at Paris 2024. Marin’s later career was dogged by serious knee injuries, necessitating her withdrawal from the defence of her Olympic gold and her home World Championships in 2021.

Yet, she made a comeback from those injuries that would see her reach a fourth World Championships final and almost secure an Olympic final berth in 2024. Leading He Bing Jiao comfortably in their semifinal at Paris 2024, Marin collapsed in pain, which proved to be her final goodbye on the biggest stage of all. The

mensions of badminton to a worldwide audience. In later years, this match would often be recalled with wonder for its sheer intensity. “Some rivals become part of your journey forever. Carolina was one of them. We first played each other when we were 15 or 16-year-old girls in the Maldives, and from then on we went on to share so many battles. “To be honest, you were also a complete pain on court. The constant shouting, the intensity, the little tricks, they would get

to anyone. But your skill, speed and fighting spirit were second to none,” Sindhu shared in an Instagram post. Sindhu also recalled a verbal duel between the two shuttlers during the 2023 Denmark Open semifinal, as a result of which the chair umpire showed both a yellow card. “People remember the big matches and even the ugly spat we had in that third set over picking the shuttle. I’ll admit I was completely infuriated that day. “But a few months later we sat across from each other over coffee in Madrid, talking and laughing, and in that moment there was nothing but respect. That’s the Carolina I’ll always remember,” she wrote. “I’ll also always be grateful for the incredible camaraderie our generation built. Our batch of girls made women’s singles such a special place to compete in, and I honestly don’t know if badminton has seen something like it before or will again “Thank you for every battle, every lesson and most of all the friendship.

Japanese GP: Pressure Mounts

New Delhi: Formula 1 returns this weekend, but with a slightly different edge to it. After a two-week break, the paddock heads to Suzuka for the Japanese Grand Prix, the final race before an enforced pause in April. That timing matters. Momentum built here will linger longer than usual, while struggles could feel amplified heading into the break. Suzuka, as always, is a circuit that exposes everything. There is little room to hide here. Balance, rhythm and confidence all come into play, and more often than not, it separates those ready to fight at the front from those still searching for answers. This season, those questions are piling up across the grid. From struggling manufacturers to reliability concerns and a champion under pressure, there is plenty riding on what unfolds in Japan. It wasn’t supposed to look like this.

With Adrian Newey leading the project, a bespoke Honda engine, Fernando Alonso in the cockpit and the financial backing of Lawrence Stroll, Aston Martin had all the ingredients of a front-running team. Instead, their start to the season has been a mess. Both cars have struggled near the back, and neither has managed to complete even half a race. The bigger concern has been reliability, with severe vibrations from the Honda power unit forcing early retirements to avoid long-term physical impact on the drivers. Now, they arrive at Honda’s home race at Suzuka Circuit without a clear fix. The team insists progress is being made, but with no visible solution so far, a difficult weekend in front of home fans looks increasingly likely. If Honda’s struggles were not painful enough, they are being outshone by another Japanese presence. Toyota, through its association with Haas, has quietly built momentum this season. The standout performer has been Oliver Bearman, whose drives have pushed Haas up to fourth in the standings, ahead of more established teams. It is a sharp contrast. Toyota, once criticised for underwhelming results despite heavy investment, now looks efficient and competitive.