

## NE CMs Slam Racial Abuse of Arunachali Women in Delhi

Guwahati, Feb 24: Chief Ministers of three north-eastern states on Tuesday condemned the alleged racial discrimination and abuse of three women from Arunachal Pradesh in Delhi's Malviya Nagar and demanded action against those involved. Arunachal CM Pema Khandu said such behaviour was unacceptable and had no place in the society. He said immediately after learning

of upholding dignity and mutual respect at all times. The Northeast is an integral part of our nation, and every citizen deserves dignity, equality, and respect," Tamang said.

His Meghalaya counterpart Conrad K Sangma said discrimination against people from the Northeast must stop. He termed as shameful the "racial and sexual abuse" of a resident doctor of AIIMS Gorakhpur from Nagaland.

"Outraging a woman's modesty is not what a civilised nation should tolerate. They are your sisters and daughters too. Urge authorities to take stringent actions against the perpetrators," he posted on X.

According to reports, the three Arunachal women allegedly faced racial slurs and intimidation from their neighbours over the installation of an air conditioner. The trio had engaged an electrician on their fourth-floor flat to install the AC but the neighbours objected to it, claiming that dust and debris from drilling work fell on the floor below.

he had spoken with the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, and sought swift and strict action.

"The Commissioner is personally in touch with me. The accused are currently absconding, and I have been assured that they will be apprehended at the earliest and dealt with as per law," Khandu said, adding, "We stand firmly with our three sisters, and their safety, dignity, and justice remain our highest priority."

Sikkim CM Prem Singh Tamang (Golay) said the incident of racial discrimination was concerning and unfortunate. "Such instances remind us of the importance



## From Laws to Doctrine: 'PRAHAAR' Institutionalises India's War on Terror

The policy unveiled by the Home Ministry on Monday is based on seven key pillars to counter the terror threats emanating from India or abroad

New Delhi, Feb 24: The government unveiled the country's first counter-terrorism policy, "Prahaar", setting out a multi-layered strategy based on "zero tolerance", intelligence-led prevention and disruption of extremist violence that aims to deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, weapons and safe havens.

The policy unveiled by the Home Ministry on Monday is based on seven key pillars to counter the terror threats emanating from India or abroad — prevention, responses, aggregating internal capacities, human rights and "Rule of Law"-based processes, attenuating the conditions enabling terrorism including radicalisation, aligning and shaping the international efforts to counter terrorism and recovery and resilience through a whole-of-society approach.

"There has been a history of sporadic instability in the immediate neighbourhood of India, which has often given rise to ungoverned spaces. Besides, a few countries in the region have sometimes used terrorism as an in-



strument of State policy," the document said, without naming Pakistan. "Notwithstanding this, India does not link terrorism to any specific religion, ethnicity, nationality or civilisation. India has always denounced terrorism and its use by any actor for achieving any stated or unstated ends unambiguously and unequivocally," it added. Stating that India has consistently stood by the victims of terrorism and has been steadfast in its belief that there can be no justification whatsoever for violence in the world, the document said it is this prin-

cipled approach that informs New Delhi's policy of "zero tolerance" against terrorism. "India has long been affected by sponsored terrorism from across the border, with Jihadi terror outfits as well as their frontal organisations continuing to plan, coordinate, facilitate and execute terror attacks in India. India has been on the target of global terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which have been trying to incite violence in the country through sleeper cells," it said. Operating from foreign soil, terrorists have

hatched conspiracies to promote violence in India, with handlers using the latest technologies, including drones, to facilitate terror-related activities and attacks in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, the policy said. "Increasingly, terrorist groups are engaging organised criminal networks for logistics and recruitment to execute and facilitate terror strikes in India. For propaganda, communication, funding and guiding terror attacks, these terror groups use social media platforms as well as 'instant messaging applications'," it added.

## Amit Shah in Bihar: Mega Review of Seemanchal Border Security

New Delhi, Feb 24: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will embark on a three-day visit to Bihar beginning February 25, during which he is scheduled to hold extensive deliberations with local authorities and security agencies, including the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) with regard to concerns related to alleged demographic changes, infiltration, and unauthorised religious constructions in sensitive border districts, sources said. A key highlight of the tour will be high-level review meetings in Bihar's Seemanchal region, which are described by the sources as the first initiative of its kind at this scale.

The Home Minister is set to chair a comprehensive session involving District Magistrates (DMs) and Superintendents of Police (SPs) from seven districts, including Kishanganj, Araria, Purnia, Katihar, Mad-

hepura, Saharsa, and Supaul, the sources said, adding that these districts lie along or in close proximity to the India-Nepal and India-Bangladesh borders and have historically been regarded as sensitive due to cross-border movement and internal security considerations. During the three-day engagements, Shah is expected to give focused attention to issues of demographic shifts, instances of illegal infiltration and the status of religious structures allegedly constructed without required approvals from the authorities, they said. The sources indicated that detailed presentations will be made by district administrations and police officials, incorporating intelligence assessments and ground-level reports. The deliberations aim to assess the prevailing situation comprehensively and iden-

tify vulnerabilities that may require corrective measures, the sources said. The Home Minister is likely to stress the need for close coordination between civil administration and law enforcement agencies to effectively address security



concerns. "Clear directives are expected on improving synergy between district authorities and policing units, particularly to tackle infiltration and unauthorised constructions," a source said. He suggested

that Shah's direct engagement at the district level signals a more granular review of developments in the region, marking the first time he will chair such meetings focused specifically on demographic and infiltration-related issues

at this administrative tier. The move is being viewed as an indication of the Centre's heightened focus on Seemanchal, a region that has figured prominently in political and security discourse in recent

years. Its geographical proximity to international borders, combined with a complex socio-economic landscape, has also made it an area of sustained strategic interest for both state and central authorities. Beyond the Seemanchal-specific review, Shah will also preside over broader meetings concerning Bihar's overall internal security architecture. These discussions are expected to encompass border management practices, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, policing strategies and preparedness against organised crime and extremist elements. Senior officials from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs will accompany the Home Minister, including Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan and Intelligence Bureau Director Tapan Deka. Their participation is expected to ensure that intelligence-based assess-

ments and field inputs inform the review process and any subsequent policy decisions. In addition, Shah is scheduled to hold a dedicated meeting with the SSB, the central armed police force tasked with guarding the India-Nepal border. Deliberations are anticipated to focus on strengthening border surveillance, enhancing intelligence-sharing frameworks, and curbing illegal cross-border activities. Given Bihar's long and porous boundary with Nepal, reinforcing coordination between state police forces and central agencies remains a priority for the government.

The sources suggested that the outcomes of these meetings could lead to tighter monitoring systems, improved inter-agency collaboration, and targeted administrative interventions in districts identified as particularly sensitive.



## 4 Months No Pay: GB Hospital Staff Threaten Indefinite Strike

Agartala, Feb 24: Doctors and health workers posted at the Trauma Care Centre of GB Hospital in Agartala city are facing an acute financial crisis after allegedly not receiving their salaries for four consecutive months. The prolonged delay has pushed many into severe distress, prompting the aggrieved staff to warn of an indefinite strike if their dues are not cleared immediately. Speaking to the media personnel here on Tuesday, several doctors and paramedical workers from the Trauma Care Department said that despite discharging critical duties round the clock, they have been deprived of their rightful remuneration for months. They emphasized that the non-payment of salaries has made it increasingly difficult to manage basic household expenses, children's education, medical costs, and other family responsibilities. "We are continuing our duties with full dedication, treating trauma and emergency cases every day, but our own families are suffering. Four months without salary has pushed many of us to the brink. Rent, loans, and daily expenses cannot be postponed any longer," said one of the doctors. Health workers echoed similar concerns, stating that many are struggling to even meet daily necessities. "We work in one of the most critical departments of the hospital, where lives depend on

timely intervention. Yet, our salaries have been pending for months. This is mentally and financially exhausting," a staff member said. The doctors and health workers collectively appealed to the concerned authorities and the state health department to intervene immediately and release the outstanding payments without further delay. They made it clear that while patient care remains their priority, the situation has reached a breaking point. "If no concrete steps are taken immediately, we will be left with no option but to go on an indefinite strike," another senior doctor warned, adding that such a step would be taken with great reluctance but unavoidable circumstances. The looming threat of a strike has created concern within the health community, as the Trauma Care Centre plays a vital role in handling accident cases, emergency surgeries, and critical referrals from across the state. Any disruption in services could severely impact emergency healthcare delivery. As of the filing of this report, there has been no official response from the hospital administration or the health department regarding the pending salaries. The situation continues to generate widespread concern, with many calling for urgent administrative action to prevent an escalation that could affect patient care.

## Manipur Leadership Meets PM Modi in New Delhi

Manipur, Feb 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday met a three-member delegation from the Manipur government led by Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh at the Prime Minister's Office in Seva Teerth, New Delhi. The delegation included Manipur's two Deputy Chief Ministers — Nemcha Kipgen of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Losii Dikho of the Naga People's Front (NPF). Kipgen, who represents Kangpokpi district, is the first woman to serve as Deputy



Chief Minister of Manipur. This was the first meeting between Chief Minister Khemchand and the Prime Minister

since he assumed office on February 4. During the meeting, the Chief Minister briefed the Prime Minister on the initiatives undertaken by the new state government to restore peace and promote harmony in Manipur. He also sought the Centre's support for strengthening women empowerment initiatives across both the hill and valley regions of the state. The Chief Minister and his deputies extended a formal invitation to the Prime Minister to visit Manipur.

## Nagaland: Govt orders ULBs to halt toll collection

Dimapur, Feb 24: The Nagaland Municipal Affairs Department has directed all Municipal and Town Councils to immediately stop collecting certain taxes and fees, including tolls and urban utility charges, following repeated violations of government directives. The order, issued by Additional Secretary T. Nchumbemo Odyuo, cited earlier notifications from the Home Department, the Municipal Affairs Department, and a letter regarding the closure of check gates and the prohibition on levying taxes or fees on goods under the Goods and Services Tax regime by Urban Local Bodies. Several complaints had been received against the Dimapur Municipal Council, East Dimapur Town Council, and Zunheboto Town Council for continuing to levy fees and tolls despite the directives. Invoking powers under Section 81 of the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2023, the department instructed councils to cease collection of tolls, urban utility fees, vehicle entry fees, and charges on goods and empty vehicles. The order clarified that the authority



to impose taxes or fees on items listed under Section 124 of the Act requires prior government approval, which has not been granted. All structures set up for such collections are to be dismantled or removed immediately, and no later than March 6, 2026. In a parallel directive, Deputy Commissioner of Dimapur, Tinojongshi Chang, instructed the DMC and EDTC to comply fully with government orders on the closure of unauthorized check gates and tolls.

Addressing the Chief Executive Officer of DMC and the ADC and Administrator of EDTC, Chang referred to complaints about the collection of taxes at check and toll gates. He emphasised that all check gates, except duly approved inter-state gates, must be closed. Any gates established by departments, municipal or town councils, organisations, groups, or private individuals without Home Department approval must be removed immediately.

## Naga Resident Doctor Assault Case: Three Arrested In Gorakhpur

Guwahati, Feb 24: Police have confirmed the arrest of three suspects involved in the racial abuse and sexual harassment of a resident doctor from Nagaland at AIIMS Gorakhpur. The incident, which took place on the evening of February 22, 2026, has sparked widespread condemnation from medical bodies and state leaders across the country. The victim, a third-year postgraduate student in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, was returning to the campus from Orion Mall around 8:00 PM when she was targeted. According to the police complaint, three men on a motorcycle began trailing her, hurling racial slurs and obscene remarks. The stalking

reportedly continued for nearly 1.5 kilometers as she walked toward the institute's Gate No. 2, located near the local Army camp. The harassment escalated into a physical ordeal when one of the men allegedly removed his shirt to intimidate her, while another touched her inappropriately. The doctor raised an alarm, prompting the trio to flee the scene. Following the complaint, Gorakhpur police formed four dedicated teams and utilized CCTV footage from the mall and the AIIMS perimeter to identify the motorcycle used in the crime. The arrested individuals have been identified as Suraj Gupta, Amrit Vishwakarma, and Aditya Rajpoot, all aged

between 21 and 24. The suspects have been booked under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including provisions for assault with intent to outrage modesty and criminal intimidation. The National Federation of Resident Doctors of AIIMS and INIs (NAFORD) expressed deep shock and trauma over the event, highlighting the vulnerability of medical professionals even in the vicinity of premier government institutions. Leaders from the Northeast, including Nagaland officials, have condemned the act as deeply shameful and urged the Uttar Pradesh government to ensure the most stringent punishment for the perpetrators.

## Tripura's Pradyot Condemns Racial Attack on Arunachali Women

Guwahati, Feb 24: Guwahati: Leader of the Tipra Motha Party, Pradyot Manikya Debbarma, condemned the racial insults directed at three women from the Northeast while in Delhi, saying their devotion to the nation deserves acknowledgment, not mockery. Debbarma shared on social media that despite the contributions of people from Arunachal Pradesh in safeguarding the country, these women faced unwarranted racial attacks. He added that such behavior disrespects the victims and promised that authorities would ensure justice is served. Debbarma said on X, "It's because of the patriotism of Arunachalis that not one Chinese soldier can enter our



country, yet they have to be subjected to racism and ridicule. This not only hurts but humiliates the very essence of where our country is headed. Will see that these women are given due justice". Police in South Delhi's Malviya Nagar area confirmed that a complaint has been filed against two residents for harassing and threatening the women. The FIR references several sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) related

to offenses against women's dignity, intimidation, incitement of hostility between communities based on origin, and actions carried out jointly by multiple individuals. The accused, Harsh Singh and his wife Ruby Jain of Malviya Nagar, reportedly confronted the tenants on February 20 around 3:30 pm. The dispute arose while the women were supervising electrical repairs in their flat, which allegedly caused dust to enter the apartment below. The victims reported emotional distress and embarrassment, but there were no injuries. Authorities stated that legal proceedings will continue, and the matter will be followed up to ensure accountability.

**ManipalCigna expands Northeast distribution, 'Sarvah' emerges as key growth driver**

**Guwahati:** ManipalCigna Health Insurance is strengthening its presence in Northeast India, positioning its award-winning product ManipalCigna Sarvah as a key driver of regional growth. The health insurance plan was recognised as Product of the Year 2025 – Health Insurance based on a consumer survey conducted by NielsenIQ and continues to support the company's national retail expansion.

To accelerate market penetration, the insurer has expanded its network to eight operational branches across major Northeast cities and plans to onboard around 10,000 advisors over the next three years, including a focused initiative to empower 3,000 women advisors. The company has also partnered with football icon Bhaichung Bhutia to strengthen community engagement and encourage conversations around health, wellness, and financial protection.

The Sarvah portfolio includes three variants — Sarvah Uttam, offering comprehensive personalized coverage with the Anant infinite coverage option; Sarvah Param, providing Day-1 coverage with zero waiting period and unlimited sum assured; and Sarvah Pratham, an affordable entry-level plan targeting first-time buyers and the underserved "missing middle".

**Honda expands premium motorcycle network in Assam with BigWing launch in Tinsukia**

**Tinsukia:** Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) has expanded its premium footprint in Assam with the inauguration of a new Honda BigWing dealership in Tinsukia on February 20, 2026, strengthening its presence in India's fast-growing premium motorcycle segment. The move aligns with HMSI's strategy to meet rising demand for a refined, experience-driven ownership journey as customers increasingly seek expert guidance, personalised engagement and trusted after-sales service.

Designed around Honda's signature monochromatic



black-and-white identity, the new facility offers a world-class retail environment tailored for high-performance

and mid-size motorcycles. A team of specially trained professionals will provide in-depth product consulta-

tion, accessories support and transparent assistance across the sales and ownership lifecycle. HMSI's refreshed website further complements the in-store experience, enabling customers to explore the premium lineup, compare specifications and complete bookings online, while social media platforms facilitate real-time rider engagement.

HMSI drives its premium retail strategy through BigWing Topline (200cc–1800cc) in major metros and BigWing (200cc–750cc) in emerging markets. The Tinsukia outlet will offer models ranging from Hornet 2.0

and CB350 series to NX500, CB650R, CBR650R, XL750 Transalp, Hornet 1000 SP and X-Adv. With over 150 BigWing touchpoints nationwide, the company continues investing in premium motorcycling culture.

Tinsukia is steadily emerging as a high-potential premium two-wheeler market in Upper Assam, supported by improving infrastructure and rising aspirational demand. Industry observers believe the new BigWing dealership could transform the town into a regional hub for premium motorcycle enthusiasts seeking both performance machines and a connected riding lifestyle.

**NPCI intensifies drive to shield senior citizens from rising digital payment frauds**

**Aizawl:** National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has stepped up its digital safety awareness campaign to protect senior citizens as digital payment adoption rises among the elderly. The umbrella body flagged growing instances of cyber frauds such as digital arrest scams, fake investment schemes, phishing and vishing attempts, tech support frauds, and fraudulent refund links.

NPCI said in digital arrest scams, fraudsters pose as law enforcement officials, threaten arrest on fabricated charges and demand money or personal details. In investment frauds, scammers impersonate financial experts

and use fake endorsements of reputed organisations to promise extraordinary returns. Phishing and vishing attempts involve fake emails, messages or calls seeking OTPs and login credentials. Tech support scams trick seniors into installing remote access apps, while fraudulent refund links redirect victims to fake pages that steal payment data.

The corporation advised seniors never to share UPI PINs, OTPs, passwords or bank details, and to avoid clicking unknown links or installing apps from callers. It urged verification of firms through SEBI and RBI websites, checking HTTPS domains, and resisting urgency

around KYC, SIM blocking or pension suspension messages. Suspected frauds should be reported to the cybercrime helpline 1930, the Department of Telecommunications portal, and banks immediately.

In Aizawl, where UPI-based transactions are rapidly expanding across retail outlets and neighbourhood stores, bankers and traders say senior citizen awareness is critical. With digital payments driving daily commerce, stronger verification habits and prompt reporting can help safeguard savings while sustaining consumer confidence in the city's growing cashless ecosystem.

**India positions itself as global AI talent hub at AI Impact Summit 2026**



**Guwahati:** The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) used the platform of the India AI Impact Summit 2026 to push a human-centric approach to artificial intelligence, signalling a strong alignment between AI growth and the Skill India mission. The high-level session titled "Human-Centric AI: How India Can Power the World through Talent, Trust and Technology" brought together policymakers, global experts and industry leaders to discuss building a responsible AI ecosystem.

Delivering the keynote, Professor Bhaskar Chakravorti of The Fletcher School, Tufts University, said AI leadership will depend not only on technology but also on trust frameworks, digital public infrastructure and strong national talent pipelines. The panel, moderated by Sidharth Madaan of BCG, included Yolynd Lobo of Google Cloud India, NSDC CEO Arunkumar Pillai, Rakesh Kaul of EY and Dr. Neena Pahuja of NCVET. They underlined AI's growing role in skilling delivery, institutional preparedness and workforce transformation. Pillai highlighted AI-enabled features in the Skill India Digital Hub and the SOAR initiative, which has crossed two lakh registrations. Pahuja detailed a three-tier AI framework and integration of nano-credentials aligned with the National Credit Framework. The session concluded with a live demo by Sunil Kumar of Google on GCP GenMedia tools.

In Guwahati, the expanding AI skilling push could open opportunities for training centres, ITIs and startups in Assam. With demand rising for AI literacy and modular certifications, Guwahati's education and tech services market is expected to see fresh momentum in the coming quarters.

**Govt unveils 'Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai' campaign to scale up SIDH as India's digital skilling engine**

**Guwahati:** In a major step to strengthen India's digital skilling economy, Union Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education Shri Jayant Chaudhary on Saturday launched the nationwide campaign "Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai" to expand the reach of Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH). The campaign was unveiled on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

Actor Amitabh Bachchan has joined the initiative to widen public participation

in SIDH, which has already onboarded over 1.5 crore registered candidates, emerging as one of India's largest unified digital skilling platforms. Built as a mobile-first, AI-enabled system, SIDH integrates multiple government schemes and offers industry-aligned courses, LMS-enabled learning, personalized recommendations, Aadhaar-based eKYC, OTP access, QR-enabled digital CVs, verified credentials and access in more than 21 Indian languages. The platform caters to students, graduates, working professionals and as-

piring entrepreneurs, aiming to remove barriers of access, language and credibility.

Chaudhary said the platform builds on India's digital public infrastructure such as India Stack and positions SIDH as a key driver of lifelong learning and economic opportunity in an AI-driven economy.

In Guwahati, education consultants and training centres report growing interest in digital and AI-linked skill courses. Industry observers believe the campaign could accelerate SIDH registrations in Assam and the Northeast



as awareness spreads through digital and QR-enabled touchpoints.



**TVS Motor delivers iQube e-scooters to Vatican, strengthens global green mobility portfolio**

**Guwahati:** TVS Motor Company has delivered two TVS iQube electric scooters to the Governorate of Vatican City State, reinforcing its global push toward sustainable mobility. The handover, completed on February 5, was executed in collaboration with Exelentia and TVS Motor Italia as part of the Vatican's ongoing ecological transition initiatives. The deployment supports zero-emission mobility solutions tailored to the Vatican's high-sensitivity, historic environment. The TVS iQube was selected for its silent performance and advanced SmartXconnect system, featuring a TFT display and app-based connectivity. With a range of up to 100 km in eco mode, the scooter combines riding comfort, ease of use, functional technology, and complete absence of emissions and noise.

Giovanni Notarbartolo di Furnari, General Manager, TVS Motor Italia, said the Vatican deployment validates the company's vision for reliable, intuitive urban electric mobility. Giovanni Zappia, Founder and Owner of Exelentia, said the partnership underscores a shared commitment to mature and responsible mobility solutions for institutional contexts. Founded in India and present in over 90 countries, TVS Motor operates four manufacturing facilities in India and Indonesia and is the only two-wheeler maker to have won the Deming Prize.

Such high-profile international deployments could strengthen the iQube's brand equity in emerging EV markets like Guwahati, where demand for premium, connected electric scooters is rising amid growing focus on sustainable urban transport.

**Medanta announces expansion of advanced 'Brain Pacemaker' surgery programme**



**Guwahati:** Medanta – The Medicity on Thursday announced the strengthening of its Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) programme, widely known as 'Brain Pacemaker' surgery, reinforcing its commitment to advancing neurological care in India. Neurological disorders account for nearly 10% of the country's overall disease burden and remain among the leading causes of disability globally.

Recognised as an interna-

tional destination for DBS and ranked Best Private Hospital in India by Newsweek for six consecutive years, Medanta said the programme has emerged as a centre of excellence for patients suffering from advanced-stage Parkinson's disease, dystonia, refractory epilepsy (adult onset), essential tremor and advanced obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

The DBS procedures are led by Dr. Anirban Deep Banerjee,

Director, Neurosurgery, Institute of Neurosciences at Medanta Gurugram, who has performed more than 300 DBS surgeries over the past decade-and-a-half with consistently high success rates.

DBS involves implanting electrodes in specific brain regions to regulate abnormal signals and restore motor function when medicines fail. Medanta stated that its programme combines advanced imaging, directional leads for multi-dimensional neuromodulation, real-time brain-sensing biomarker feedback, AI-guided precision targeting and remote programming capabilities to deliver personalised, symptom-responsive treatment and improved quality of life.

**Godrej Enterprises secures major aviation security modernisation contract at Cochin airport**

**Guwahati:** Godrej Enterprises Group (GEG) has secured a landmark aviation security modernisation contract from Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) to deploy next-generation gate and perimeter security systems across key airport access points. The project will include installation of advanced Under Vehicle Scanning Systems (UVSS) integrated with Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology and high-performance tyre killers to strengthen vehicle screening, deterrence, and access control at Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 entry and exit

gates. The deployment, CIAL's first large-scale vehicular access system, will enable automated undercarriage scanning, real-time threat identification, and enhanced traceability, ensuring compliance with Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) guidelines. Pushkar Gokhale, Business Head, Security Solutions, GEG, said the partnership highlights the company's leadership in high-performance perimeter security technologies and reflects the growing nationwide demand for smart vehicle screening and automated access management solutions.

The Security Solutions division has recently secured similar projects at major airports including Mumbai, Kannur, Thiruvananthapuram, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Bhogapuram, and Hyderabad, strengthening its aviation security footprint across India.

The expansion of advanced airport security technologies is expected to boost demand in fast-growing aviation hubs such as Guwahati, where infrastructure expansion and rising passenger traffic are creating opportunities for security solution providers, system integrators, and allied infrastructure firms.

**MSDE showcases inclusive AI skilling model at India AI Impact Summit**

**Guwahati:** Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary visited the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) Pavilion at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, highlighting the government's strategy to position artificial intelligence as a driver of inclusive growth, workforce productivity and human capital development.



The pavilion showcased practical and scalable India-first AI solutions designed to expand opportunities for youth, workers, entrepreneurs and the informal sector. Built around the framework of "Skilling in AI, Skilling with AI and Skilling for AI," the display featured initiatives such as SOAR (Skilling for AI Readiness), NSQF-aligned emerging job roles and industry-developed nano-credentials aimed at building foundational and advanced AI competencies. Interactive demonstrations illustrated how AI tools can support farmers in soil monitoring, electricians in fault de-

tection, construction workers through multilingual learning assistance and weavers in design creation to access new markets.

A major highlight was the AI-enabled recommendation engine developed by the National Skill Development Corporation under SIDH, which integrates learning, certification and career pathways to provide personalised skilling recommendations. AI-based monitoring and assessment tools using computer vision were also presented to enhance transparency and credibility in skill certification.

In Guwahati, AI-led skilling platforms and personalised learning systems could help Northeast youth and small entrepreneurs access industry-aligned training and employment opportunities, strengthening regional workforce readiness for emerging digital and AI-driven sectors.

**BHIM launches 'UPI Circle' to simplify delegated digital payments with built-in controls**

**Aizawl:** In a move aimed at strengthening secure and shared digital transactions, the BHIM Payments App has introduced UPI Circle, a feature that allows users to authorise trusted individuals to make payments from their bank account within defined limits. The initiative addresses growing demand for structured payment delegation in households and small businesses.

UPI Circle enables a primary user to add up to five secondary users, allowing them to transact from the primary user's UPI-linked bank account. The feature allows a monthly spending limit of up to ₹15,000 and an authorisation validity ranging from one month to five years. Secondary users can also generate their own UPI ID under the circle. All transactions remain fully visible to the primary

user, ensuring transparency and a clear audit trail. The primary user retains the ability to monitor, adjust permissions or revoke access at any time, eliminating the need to share UPI PINs or passwords.

The feature is positioned as a practical solution for senior citizens, students, working families and small businesses that require shared payment access without compromising security.

In Aizawl, where digital payments are steadily expanding among retailers and small traders, UPI Circle is expected to support shop owners and local operators who authorise staff for fuel, toll and supply payments. With rising smartphone penetration, structured delegation tools may further strengthen trust in digital transactions across the city's business ecosystem.

**Nissan rolls out 5.55% finance scheme on Magnite with 100% on-road funding till March 2026**

**Guwahati:** Nissan Motor India Private Limited (NMIPL) has announced a competitive retail finance scheme for the Nissan Magnite, offering a lowest rate of interest (ROI) starting at 5.55 per cent for all CIBIL-approved customers. The scheme is being offered in partnership with Nissan Renault Financial Services India (NRFSI) and is valid for Magnite bookings made until the end of March 2026.



Under the offer, customers can avail finance at 5.55 per cent ROI on a loan amount of ₹5 lakh, along with up to 100 per cent on-road funding. The funding covers vehicle cost, registration, insurance and other

applicable charges, lowering the upfront financial burden. The company said the scheme delivers a clear EMI advantage compared to leading banks. Additional benefits include loan tenure of up to seven years, nil foreclosure charges after 24 months, part-payment facility, priority processing, tailored finance products and a fully digital loan process except for KYC and RTO documentation. Customers opting for NRF-

SI finance can avail exclusive extra benefits of up to ₹22,000, along with special add-on benefits for existing Nissan loyalty customers.

In Guwahati, aggressive financing schemes are crucial in driving compact SUV sales. With rising demand for value-focused vehicles in the Guwahati market, the Magnite's flexible funding options are expected to support stronger retail traction ahead of the new financial year.



## Amazon rolls out AI skills vans; Jayant Chaudhary flags off mobile labs to scale government school outreach

**Guwahati:** Jayant Chaudhary on February 18 flagged off two AI Skills Vans in New Delhi, marking a fresh push by Amazon to deepen its skilling footprint in India. The initiative, part of Amazon's Think Big programme, will deploy mobile learning labs across Delhi-NCR and Haryana to deliver foundational cloud computing and artificial intelligence education to gov-

100,000 additional students over five years through classroom integration and peer-led technology clubs.

Chaudhary said the initiative complements national missions such as Skill India and the AI Mission. David Zapolsky, Chief Global Affairs and Legal Officer at Amazon, reiterated the company's commitment to provide AI education to 4 million government school students by 2030. The programme is being implemented with Learning Links Foundation and builds on Amazon Web Services' training of over 6.2 million individuals in cloud skills since 2017.



Each van is designed as a fully equipped mobile ecosystem offering curriculum-aligned modules on AI fundamentals, cloud technologies, computational thinking and ethical AI principles. In 2026, the vans are expected to directly engage over 9,000 students and 100 teachers. The teacher training component aims to create a multiplier effect, potentially reaching

At Smbhav 2025, Amazon announced plans to invest over \$35 billion in India by 2030, with AI-led digitisation among its three strategic pillars. In Guwahati, mobile AI labs could open new collaboration avenues between technology firms and public schools in Assam, where demand for STEM education and digital skilling is steadily rising.

## Mahindra-Manulife JV names Suresh Agarwal as MD & CEO designate ahead of life insurance launch



**Guwahati:** Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. (M&M) and Manulife on Monday announced the appointment of Suresh Agarwal as MD & CEO designate of their proposed 50:50 life insurance joint venture, subject to regulatory approvals. The partners had announced the formation of the JV in November last year, signalling their intent to tap India's fast-growing life insurance market.

Agarwal brings nearly 30 years of experience across

life and general insurance, and corporate and retail lending. He played a key role in building Kotak's life insurance business and later led the transition of Kotak General Insurance into a joint venture with Zurich Insurance. Since September 2025, he has been serving as MD & CEO of Mahindra Insurance Brokers Limited. He will step down on April 30, 2026, and assume the new role from May 1, 2026.

The JV aims to offer long-term savings and protection

products aligned with India's "Insurance for All" vision by 2047, combining Mahindra's strong rural and semi-urban distribution network with Manulife's global underwriting and product expertise.

In Guwahati, the development is significant as insurance awareness and demand for structured savings products are rising steadily in Assam. Industry observers say Guwahati, as the North-east's commercial hub, could emerge as a key growth market for the new venture.

## Nissan unveils tech-driven GRAVITE MPV at Rs 5.65 lakh, marks innovation push in India

**Itanagar/Imphal:** Nissan Motor India has launched the all-new GRAVITE, a seven-seater MPV introduced at an introductory price of ₹5.65 lakh (ex-showroom), marking the first product under the company's renewed product offensive and signalling an innovation-led growth strategy in the Indian automotive market. Manufactured locally at Nissan's Chennai facility, the GRAVITE reflects the company's "Made in India, Made for India" approach, combining technology, safety and practicality for modern fami-

lies. The MPV integrates advanced technology features including a 20.32 cm float-in infotainment system with wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay connectivity, a 17.78 cm fully digital multi-functional cluster, wireless charging, walk-away lock and approach unlock systems, and front and rear parking sensors. Designed with Nissan's signature 'C' design language, the vehicle offers modular interiors with flexible seating configurations from two to seven occupants and luggage

capacity of up to 625 litres. Safety remains a key focus, with more than 30 standard safety features including six airbags, Electronic Stability Control, Traction Control, Hill-Start Assist and Brake Assist. Powered by a 1.0-litre petrol engine paired with manual and AMT transmission options delivering fuel efficiency of up to 19.6 km/l, the GRAVITE is available in five colour options along with a limited launch edition featuring premium technology and comfort enhancements.

## India-France aviation skilling hub announced at Kanpur; Rs 60,000-crore PM-SETU push gains momentum

**Guwahati:** The Government of India has announced the setting up of an India-France National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) for Skilling in Aeronautics and Defence at the National Skill Training Institute (NSTI), Kanpur, under the Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU) scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the announcement during a joint press statement with the President of France while inaugurating the India-France Year of Innovation. A Letter of Intent has been ex-

changed between MSDE and the French Republic, building on the India-France Strategic Partnership and the 2025 MoU on vocational education and training. The proposed centre will deliver advanced training in aeronautics, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO), airport operations and defence manufacturing. It will feature co-designed curricula, structured training-of-trainers programmes, language training, exchange initiatives and structured mobility pathways. Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary said the initiative aligns skills with global

standards and prepares youth for emerging sectors. With an overall outlay of ₹60,000 crore, PM-SETU aims to upgrade 1,000 ITIs nationwide, with additional Centres proposed in Ludhiana, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bhubaneswar.

In Guwahati, aviation-linked businesses and training institutes see strong potential as Northeast airport expansion and defence-linked activities grow, opening new employment and supply-chain opportunities for skilled youth in Assam and neighbouring states.

placement to ensure portfolios remain inflation-adjusted and future-ready.

## Wellness gifting trend fuels rising demand for California Almonds this Valentine's season

**Guwahati:** Valentine's Day gifting trends are undergoing a transformation as consumers increasingly shift toward thoughtful, wellness-oriented products instead of traditional chocolates and flowers. Industry observers note that gifting is becoming more personal and practical, with items that support everyday care gaining popularity across urban markets. In this changing landscape, California Almonds are emerging as a preferred gifting option, combining taste, versatility, and nutritional value. Rich in 15 essential nutrients including protein, fibre, and healthy fats, almonds are being promoted as a gift that extends beyond a single-day celebration and fits naturally into daily routines such as breakfast bowls, smoothies, and soaked morning servings. Ritika Samaddar, Regional Head of Dietetics at Max Healthcare, said regular almond consumption, particularly in the morning, can help improve blood sugar response,



manage fasting insulin levels, and support weight management. Nutrition and Wellness Consultant Sheela Krishnaswamy added that almonds contribute to heart health, skin health, and overall wellbeing when consumed consistently. Actor Soha Ali Khan also highlighted almonds as a practical Valentine's gift, noting their vitamin E content and benefits for skin health. Guwahati is reporting increasing demand for premium dry-fruit gift packs and health-focused hampers during the Valentine's season, with almond-based gifting options witnessing strong traction across modern retail outlets and online platforms, reflecting a growing regional shift toward wellness-centric gifting.

## Royal Stag BoomBox launches fourth edition in Kolkata, announce smulti-city tour across India

**Mumbai:** Seagram's Royal Stag announced the successful launch of the fourth edition of Royal Stag BoomBox – The Original Sound of Generation Large – with a grand opening at Aquatica Ground, Kolkata on February 21. The platform, built around the brand's philosophy of 'Living It Large', brings together Bollywood melodies and hip-hop beats alongside immersive art, culture and gaming experiences.

The Kolkata edition witnessed strong participation, with thousands attending the high-energy evening. The venue was trans-



formed into a multi-sensory arena featuring vibrant installations, curated food experiences and interactive gaming zones. The event commenced with a live gaming face-off led by Payal Dhare, followed by performances by DJ Sahil Gulati and rapper Dino

James. Legendary rock band Fossils delivered a powerful set on their home turf, while headliner Armaan Malik concluded the night with a soulful performance of his popular tracks. Participating artists highlighted the platform's focus on cross-genre collaboration and audience engagement. Royal Stag BoomBox is set to continue its four-city tour, with upcoming editions scheduled in Vizag on March 7, Mumbai on March 21 and Mohali on March 28.

Tickets are available on Skill boxes, as the brand strengthens its position in India's experiential entertainment space.



# Glaucoma among leading causes of blindness: Simple eye check-up can prevent it

**G**laucoma is becoming a major public health concern in India, with over 12 million people affected. This chronic eye disease gradually damages the optic nerve, without showing any symptoms, but slowly leading to vision loss and even blindness, if left untreated.

The alarming fact is that nearly 90% of glaucoma cases in India go undiagnosed, primarily due to a lack of awareness, doctors have said.

Studies suggest that Asia will see a significant rise in glaucoma cases, with an estimated 27.8 million additional cases by 2040. India and China are expected to be the most affected.

In India alone, glaucoma-related blindness impacts about 1.2 million people, accounting for 5.5% of all blindness cases nationwide. The disease is more common in adults over 40, affecting nearly 2.7% to 4.3% of

the elderly population.

One of the biggest challenges in treating glaucoma is its silent progression. Many people do not realise they have the disease because it does not cause immediate vision problems.

By the time a person notices vision loss, significant damage has already occurred. This is why regular eye check-ups are crucial.

## ALL ABOUT GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma is an eye disease that damages the nerve connecting the eye to the brain, often due to high eye pressure. It can lead to vision loss if untreated. It usually has no early symptoms, so regular eye check-ups are important. Treatment includes eye drops, medicine, or surgery to protect vision.

The eye has a natural pressure, like a water-filled balloon, usually between 11 to 21 mm Hg. This pressure comes from



a fluid called aqueous humour, which is constantly made and drained. If this balance is disturbed, pressure builds up, harming the nerve fibres and affecting vision.

Open angle glaucoma is the silent chronic variety. It does not have any symptoms in the early stages. It is only seen during an eye test. Later, it could result in feelings of heaviness in and around the eyes, headache, frequent change in spectacle number or even inability to see certain areas in the field of vision.

Narrow angle glaucoma can cause acute

pain, redness, headache or seeing coloured rings around light bulbs. These symptoms are heightened during the evenings or in dim light because the pupil dilates, leading to compromised exit channels for fluid to drain out and resulting in high pressure inside the eye.

Secondary glaucoma can occur due to various causes like injury, inflammation, tumours of the eye, haemorrhage, or even drugs like steroids etc.

Congenital glaucoma is a condition where the exit channels are poorly formed since birth. Due

to high pressure, the cornea becomes opaque, and the eye may gradually become larger. The child might complain of decreased vision, glaring, watering or enlarged eyes. This should be treated immediately.

## EARLY DETECTION IS KEY

Dr. Asha M S, a senior consultant and glaucoma specialist at Nethradhama Super Speciality Eye Hospital, highlighted the importance of early diagnosis. Patients often have no idea that they have glaucoma until significant damage has been caused. Many question the need for tests when their vision feels fine. Most cases are detected during routine eye check-ups. This is why glaucoma is called the 'silent thief of sight,' she says.

Routine eye examinations can help detect glaucoma at an early stage, allowing for timely medical intervention. The only controllable risk fac-

tor for glaucoma is intraocular pressure (IOP).

If detected early, treatments can help slow down or prevent further damage.

Older adults, especially those living alone, often struggle to access healthcare, making glaucoma diagnosis even more difficult

Dr. Asha stressed the need for increased awareness campaigns, particularly for people over 40. Those with a family history of glaucoma, diabetes, or high myopia are at higher risk and should undergo regular screening.

Regular screenings and community education can help reduce the growing burden of glaucoma and protect millions from vision loss.

By making people more aware and ensuring easier access to eye check-ups, India can take significant steps in preventing glaucoma-related blindness.

## EBOLA COULD BE CURED WITH A PILL, AN EXPERIMENT ON MONKEYS SHOWS

**S**cientists are trying to develop a more practical and affordable treatment for Ebola. According to a new study, an experiment on monkeys has shown that Ebola can be cured with just a pill.

First discovered in 1976, Ebola, a deadly viral disease, has been thought to have crossed over from bats to humans. The dis-

ease spreads through contact with body fluids, causing severe bleeding and organ failure.

Since most Ebola outbreaks take place in Sub-Saharan Africa, most pharmaceutical companies have lacked financial incentives to produce more treatment options for people there. Besides that, given the sporadic nature

of the virus spread, clinical trials have been difficult.

A vaccine was only widely approved in 2019. While two antibody treatments can help, they are expensive, need cold storage, and are hard to use in some of the world's poorest areas.

"We're really trying to come up with something that was more practical,

easier to use, that could be used to help prevent, control, and contain outbreaks," Thomas Geisbert, a virologist at The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, who led the new study, published in Science Advances, told news agency AFP.

For the experiment, Geisbert and his colleagues tested the antiviral

Obeldesivir, the oral form of intravenous Remdesivir, originally developed for Covid-19.

Obeldesivir is a polymerase inhibitor, meaning it blocks an enzyme crucial for viral replication.

Researchers infected two types of monkeys, rhesus and cynomolgus macaques, with a high dose of the Ebola virus (Mako-

na variant). One day later, ten monkeys were given a daily Obeldesivir pill for ten days, while three others received no treatment and died.

The drug worked well, protecting 80% of the cynomolgus macaques and all of the rhesus macaques, which are more similar to humans. Obeldesivir not only removed monkeys'

## Can gentle parenting ever go mainstream in India?

**I** see you're upset. Would you like a hug or some space?"

"It's okay to feel angry, but it's not okay to hurt others. Let's find a safe way to express it."

"I'm here to help you figure this out. We'll solve it together."

If you ever Google phrases related to gentle parenting, chances are you may come across lines like these. And if you grew up in a typical desi household, the words probably sound like they belong in a foreign film.



In India, parenting is often seen as synonymous with discipline, strict limits, and that occasional 'flying chappal'. In fact, slapping a child for misbehaviour

has long been considered a fairly standard form of correction.

But what if we told you that there's another way to raise children - one that

focuses on clarity, consistency, respectful communication, boundaries and empathy? A style that replaces harshness with kindness? Sounds like a dream for many, doesn't it? Yes, we're talking about gentle parenting, a concept that's not entirely new in the West but is only just beginning to gain traction among young parents in India. Back in 2015, British author and parent Sarah Ockwell-Smith introduced the term 'gentle parenting', drawing from her own experiences as a mother.

## The reality of trio friendships: Can they last forever?

**T**hree Musketeers, 'The OG Trio,' 'We Three' - if you have ever had a WhatsApp group with one of these names (or something similar) with your friends? Then you probably know how tricky trio friendships can be.

There is no denying that being in a trio brings the blissful feeling of having a support system, one that is not limited to just one person or lost in a large group. But trio friendships also come with their fair share of challenges. We just saw it in The White Lotus season 3.

There is even an infamous notion on social media: "In a group of three friends, there is always a stronger duo." Mostly, two people in a trio may bond so well that the third one ends up feeling left out. Dr Sresyhta Beppari, consultant psychologist at Apollo Clinics, Pune, shares that she often gets patients facing troubles in their trio friendships. "An IT student basically tried his best to be part of this trio group.



# PM Modi Pens Letter to Bengal, Pledging Governance Reform and Policy Shift

Modi pledges "prosperous Bengal" in new appeal to voters

**Kolkata, Feb 23:** B Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday wrote to voters in West Bengal, appealing for an opportunity to serve the state ahead of the Assembly elections scheduled in April. In his letter, he outlined his vision for development in Bengal and urged electors to consider the future of the next generation when casting their votes. Modi highlighted alleged gaps in governance, infrastructure, education, and employment in the state, while detailing plans for further development and benefits under central government schemes. He also referenced the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the initiative "Vikshit Bangla," aimed at fostering growth in the region.

The letter notably did not name the ruling Trinamool Congress or Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, but it criticised what the Prime Minister described as a lack of development and alleged mismanagement in the state. Opening with "Jai Maa Kali," Modi's message marked a shift from previous party communications in Bengal, which often drew heavily on Ram. He wrote that the people of Bengal had faced deprivation, saying, "Their pain weighs heavily on my heart. From the depths of my being, I have taken



a pledge to develop and transform West Bengal into a prosperous state." Modi invoked the contributions of historical figures such as Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, while expressing concern that the state had descended into what he described as "narrow vote-bank politics, violence and anarchy."

The Prime Minister urged West Bengal's voters to support development programs already underway in other states, adding that he was seeking one chance to serve the people. He stressed that the direction in which the state progresses would ultimately be determined by the electorate. Modi also highlighted the central government's 11-year record, citing initiatives for farmers, youth, and women. He mentioned the construction of 85 lakh toilets under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, loans worth Rs 2.82

lakh crore to small traders and entrepreneurs, 56 lakh beneficiaries under the Atal Pension Yojana, over one crore LPG connections provided under the Ujjwala Yojana, and direct financial assistance under the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme to more than 52 lakh farmers in West Bengal.

The letter pledged governance free from corruption, promising a state where women could feel secure, youth would not need to migrate for work, and refugees facing religious persecution would receive citizenship through the CAA. Modi also raised concerns about illegal infiltration and alleged misappropriation of central funds in state schemes.

Recalling West Bengal's historical role as a pioneer in industrialisation and a key contributor to India's economy, Modi said he was pained by the state's current condition, attributing challenges to "six decades of misrule and appeasement politics." He noted that unemployment had forced youth to migrate, while women continued to face insecurity.

Concluding the letter, Modi invoked the role of Syama Prasad Mookerjee in keeping West Bengal an integral part of India and appealed to voters to participate in shaping the state's future.

## Patna: Two Killed at Reception; Suspects Hunted

**Chandigarh, Feb 23:** Patna, Feb 23: No arrests have been made so far in connection with the deadly shooting at a reception party in Patna that claimed two lives. The incident occurred around 11.45 p.m. in Shahpur village under the jurisdiction of Gopalpur Police Station on Sunday. According to police, two brothers -- Manish Kumar (32) and Manjeet Kumar (23) -- were shot dead following a dispute during the reception party of the son of a local resident, Daulat Rai. Both victims sustained critical injuries and were rushed to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared them dead. Eyewitnesses said the brothers got into an argument with some people at the function. During the altercation, one of the assailants allegedly pulled out a pistol and opened fire before fleeing the scene. The sudden gunfire triggered panic and chaos at the venue, with guests scrambling for safety.

Police were immediately alerted, and a team from Gopalpur Police Station reached the spot, secured the area, and

began an investigation. A case has been registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at Gopalpur Police Station. Statements of those present at the party are being recorded.

Parichay Kumar, City SP (East), Patna, said crucial evidence has been recovered from the scene. Three empty cartridges were seized. Sources said police have also obtained CCTV footage from the area and videos from the reception venue. Although the accused have been identified, their names have not yet been disclosed. "Two brothers were shot dead at a reception party under the Gopalpur Police Station limits. Preliminary investigation suggests a prior dispute as the motive behind the incident. Three empty cartridges have been recovered from the spot. The accused have been identified, and raids are underway to arrest them," Kumar said. Police teams are conducting searches at multiple locations to apprehend the accused. Further investigation is in progress.

## IAF grounds entire Tejas fleet for checks after runway incident

**New Delhi, Feb 23:** The Indian Air Force (IAF) has grounded its entire Tejas fleet as a precautionary measure following a runway incident earlier this month, even as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on Monday described the episode as a "minor technical incident". According to defence sources, the IAF has initiated a com-

prehensive technical review across critical systems to determine the cause of the incident. There has been no official statement from the IAF so far on either the incident or the temporary grounding and it remains unclear whether the airframe involved will be written off. It is learnt that the grounding comes after an



incident in early February at Naliya Air Base in Gujarat, where a Tejas MK1 overshot the runway during takeoff. Sources said the jet slid into a nearby mud patch softened by prior rainfall while in the acceleration phase of takeoff. The pilot sustained injuries in the incident but is reported to be safe. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on Mon-

day issued a clarification to SEBI, refuting reports of the crash and stating that there had been no incident involving the LCA Tejas beyond a "minor technical issue" on the ground. The company further added that Tejas MK1 continues to maintain one of the world's best safety records among contemporary

fighter aircraft.

However, if the crash is confirmed, this would mark the third loss involving the Tejas MK1. The first loss of a series-production jet occurred in March 2024, when a fighter crashed near Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, shortly after participating in the tri-services exercise Bharat Shakti. The second incident took place in November last year at the Dubai Airshow, where Wing Commander Namansh Syal was killed while performing an aerobatic display. HAL is yet to complete delivery of the IAF's Tejas Mk-1 order. Of the 40 aircraft contracted, comprising 16 IOC single-seaters, 16 FOC single-seaters and eight twin-seat trainers, only 38 have been delivered so far, with the two remaining FOC trainer variants still pending.

The delays extend to the larger Tejas Mk-1A programme as well, where deliveries of 180 aircraft are running over two years behind schedule, with timelines repeatedly slipping and being revised.

## Punjab's 'Meri Rasoil' Scheme: Free Ration for Blue Card Holders

**Chandigarh, Feb 23:** The AAP-led Punjab Government on Monday announced a new scheme--'Meri-Rasoil'--which will distribute ration kits containing dal, sugar, salt, turmeric and mustard oil to all 40 lakh blue card holders in the state April onwards. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said that every blue card holder will receive two kg of dal, two kg of sugar, one kg of iodised salt, 200 grams of haldi and 1 litre of mustard oil, along with the free wheat they are already getting each month. "The ration kits of three months will be given to these families starting from April," he said.

The CM added that regular quality control checks will be made to ensure that all beneficiaries get good quality ration. MARKFED will put together the kits which will be distributed by the Food and Supplies Department. Mann said that it was ironic that while Punjab had been feeding millions across the country, many families in the state eat only one meal a day. "Children in the state are under nourished and



suffer from iron deficiency as the meals they get are not rich in protein. As a welfare government, it is our duty to ensure that every citizen in the state gets a wholesome meal," he said. Mann added that the scheme was conceptualised following health inspection in schools which highlighted concerns regarding malnutrition among children.

It is learnt that the state government has set aside Rs 1,000 crore for this scheme as there are 40 lakh needy families registered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) or Smart Ration Card Scheme. Sources said the final clearance for the plan came from AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal. The scheme

is being introduced on the lines of a similar programme run by the party in Delhi.

The distribution is scheduled to begin in April 2026, with subsequent rounds likely in June, October and December, just before the election code of conduct takes effect. Mann also said that the Budget session will be held between March 6 to 16, and the budget proposals will be presented on March 8, coinciding with International Women's Day. He also said that the state government will give full cooperation to Election Commission of India, for the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls. "But we will oppose any move to delete any voters," he said.



## India batter Rinku reaches Noida to attend to his ailing father



**Chennai, Feb 24:** India batter Rinku Singh has to leave the team, which currently is in Chennai ahead of co-hosts' all-important T20 World Cup match against Zimbabwe, and rush to Noida to be by his ailing father's side. Sources told this daily Khanchand, the southpaw's father, has been battling liver ailment for more than a year and was admitted in a Noida hospital after his condition deteriorated. "It was detected around a year ago following which he stopped delivering LPG cylinders on insistence from Rinku. Since

then, he has been undergoing treatment under the guidance of doctors from the same Noida hospital. They were also administering him expensive injections since then," a source in the know of things told this daily.

The 28-year-old batter hails from Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. He has played all the matches at the ongoing T20 World Cup so far scoring just 24 runs in five matches. Only once he managed to cross the two-figure mark scoring an unbeaten 11 against Pakistan in India's Group A match in Colombo on February 15. "The condition of his father deteriorated following which he was put on a ventilator. Rinku was informed about it," added the source.

Suryakumar Yadav and Co will take on Zimbabwe in their second Super Eights match at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Thursday. India, who suffered a big defeat against South Africa in their first Super Eights match a few days ago, have to win the match to keep their semifinal hopes alive.

## W100 Final: Vandewinkel Denies Vaishnavi Title

**Bengaluru, Feb 24:** Belgium's rising force Hanne Vandewinkel delivered a masterclass as the World No. 124 cruised past wildcard Vaishnavi Adkar 6-0, 6-1 to clinch the KPB Trust ITF Women's Open W100 in Bengaluru. Ranked No. 690, the 21-year-old, who has trained under former World No. 1 Rohan Bopanna, was playing the biggest match of her career. And it showed as she could not match Vandewinkel's poise, precision, and relentless consistency. With the strong hold at the baseline shots and clear return, the Belgian dictated the tempo throughout the game. Adkar showed glimpses of promise in the third game of the second set, striking a couple of winners to hold serve for the first time. She then earned three break points in the fourth game as Vandewinkel briefly faltered. However, the Belgian adjusted with sharp tactical awareness, mixing up her returns and cleverly changing angles to throw Adkar off balance. Vandewinkel's plan was to make Adkar work for every



point as she would admit later. "It was a bit of an unknown coming into the match, but I knew she beat some really good players, so I was very aware of that. I didn't want to make the mistake of not being fully there in the match and letting her come into the match, because I saw in the last few matches she could play some really good tennis. So I think I was just there from the beginning," Vandewinkel said after clinching the title.

Adkar, meanwhile, said it was a learning experience for her. "Learned a lot of things, and especially after a tough year last year, a week like this is really going to be helpful," she said.

## Venus Williams earns a wild card return to Indian Wells for singles and doubles



**Indian Wells, Feb 21:** Venus Williams is getting a wild card into the singles and doubles draws for the BNP Paribas Open next month in the Southern California desert. The 45-year-old will be making her first appearance in the tournament since 2024, when she lost in the first round as a wild card. She's a three-time semifinalist, most recently in 2018. She boycotted the event between 2002 and 2016 after a controversial incident in 2001. "It's an honor to award the first wild card of this year's event to Venus Williams," tournament director Tommy Haas said Friday. "Venus is a legend of the game, and one of the most accomplished players our sport has ever seen."

It will be Williams' 10th career appearance in the tournament, which runs March 4-15. A year ago, she was given a wild card, but didn't accept it. "I'm so excited to be heading back to Indian Wells and can't wait to return home to play in California," Williams said. She most recently competed in the Australian Open, losing in the first round in singles and doubles. Williams is scheduled to compete in the ATX Open, a WTA 250 event in Austin, Texas, that starts Saturday and runs through March 1.

## Farhan Stars as Pakistan Post 164 Against England

**Pallekele, Feb 24:** Sahibzada Farhan continued his fine form with yet another half-century as Pakistan scored a competitive 164 for 9 on a sluggish surface against England in a must-win Super Eights game of the T20 World Cup here on Tuesday. Farhan scored 63 off 45 balls, and his knock was laced with seven fours and two sixes against the English spinners, who were on target for the better part of the Pakistan innings. Left-arm spinner Liam Dawson was the pick of the England bowlers with 3 for 24 including back-to-back breakthroughs in the 18th over.

Dawson first claimed Usman Khan, whose wild slog was gobbled up by Jamie Overton, while Mohammed Nawaz was caught plumb in front off the very next ball. He bowled wicket to wicket, got the deliveries to grip, and had as many as 12 dot balls to his credit. The Pakistan innings lost a bit of momentum after Farhan and comeback man Fakhar Zaman (25 off 16 balls) departed in quick succession following a brisk fourth-wicket stand of 49 in 4.5 overs. Farhan swept well

against the slow bowlers and smashed off-spinner Will Jacks deep into the cow corner embankment.

While Zaman, after a few lusty blows, failed to read Adil Rashid's googly as Overton ran backwards to take a well-judged catch. But Overton's (2/26 in 4 overs) most significant contribution during the innings was a pin-point yorker to Farhan, who was late in reacting and the ball hit the base of the middle stump. Earlier, Saim Ayub's technique was once again exposed by Jofra Archer (2/32 in 4 overs) as a fast and short ball saw him mistime a pull and was holed out deep behind square. Skipper Salman Ali Agha's woe-tournament continued as Overton took a smart catch to give Dawson his first breakthrough of the game.

While Farhan had to curb his natural instincts during the front-10, Babar Azam (25 off 24 balls) once again struggled to force the pace, adding 46 off just 7.2 overs. Having been stopped on his tracks and not able to get the big hits going, he tried an indiscreet hoick off Overton and was bowled in the process.



## Points Split in Bengaluru: BFC 1-1 NEUFC After Lalbiaknia Heroics

**BFC opened brightly at home, seeking to build on their 2-0 win over SC Delhi**



**Bengaluru, Feb 24:** In a fiercely contested encounter at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium, Bengaluru FC

(BFC) and NorthEast United FC (NEUFC) shared the spoils in a 1-1 draw, marking a competitive start to

their campaigns this season. After coming off a convincing 2-0 win over Sporting Club Delhi in their opener, BFC started brightly in front of their fortress. The Blues took the lead in the 20th minute through a clinical finish from Braian Sánchez. The Argentine midfielder latched onto a well-constructed move, slotting home with composure to give his side the advantage. BFC's Ryan Williams was a standout performer, showcasing his versatility by excelling across the pitch — from shoring up the defensive line to driving the attack as a midfielder. His powerful effort crashed against the crossbar, denying the hosts a dramatic finish.

The away team, NEUFC, Juan Pedro Benali's boys, showed resilience throughout the match. Despite trailing, the Highlanders grew into the game, particularly after halftime. It was because of 'the wall of BFC' that Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, who was called into action, notably denied a header from Asheer. The equaliser arrived in the 68th minute when substitute Lalrinzuala Lalbiaknia produced a moment of brilliance. His composed, high-quality strike levelled the scores. It marked Lalbiaknia's first ISL goal, injecting belief into the visitors and capping a strong fightback. "We knew BFC's backline gets shaky when the ball comes into the box —

they hesitate and lose clarity on their man marking. That's exactly what we targeted: putting balls into those areas and pressing for fouls and set pieces. We spotted it in the first half and tweaked the plan in the dressing room at the break," Benali said.

However, in the absence of Rahul Bheke, due to his knee injury, BFC was clearly struggling at the back, with their defensive line looking unsettled for large parts of the game.

Players like Sunil Chhetri, Ryan Williams and BFC head coach Nedy Singh were visibly animated on the sidelines throughout the match. The coach said calmly, "I'm happy with the team's performance."

