

PM to Retiring RS MPs: 'In Politics, There Is No Full Stop' PM Hails 'Lifelong Service' of Retiring Stalwarts

New Delhi, Mar 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday paid tributes to 59 members retiring from the Rajya Sabha between April and July, calling Parliament "an open university" and urging outgoing legislators to continue contributing to national life. Addressing the Upper House on the occasion of the biennial farewell, Modi said such moments naturally dissolve partisan divides. "A shared sentiment emerges within us all -- the realisation that our colleagues are now moving forward to undertake other endeavours," he said.

To members who do not plan to return, the Prime Minister offered reassurance: "In politics, there is no such thing as a full stop. The future awaits you as well, and your experience will forever remain an enduring part of our national life." Modi reserved special praise for three senior leaders -- former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, Leader of



Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, and NCP chief Sharad Pawar -- calling them stalwarts who have spent more than half their lives in parliamentary proceedings. "The manner in which they continue to attend the House with such dedication is truly exemplary -- a spirit from which all new parliamentarians ought to learn," he said.

The Prime Minister also paid tribute to outgoing Deputy Chairman Harivansh, describing him as "gentle and soft-spoken" yet a "man of rigorous action". He noted that Harivansh had continued to travel across the country during recess periods, engaging with the youth on issues of national importance. In a lighter vein, Modi singled

out Union Minister Ramdas Athawale. "Our Athawale-ji is truly evergreen," he said, drawing laughter in the House. "He is departing, yet I am confident no one will feel a void -- he will continue to serve tirelessly." Reflecting on the bicameral structure of Parliament, the Prime Minister likened the passage of legislation between the two Houses to seeking a "second opinion" -- a practice, he said, that strengthens democratic decision-making. "A decision taken in one House goes to the other for a second opinion. This gives new direction to the entire debate and the decision-making process," he said.

Modi also noted that some outgoing members had the rare distinction of having served in both old and new Parliament buildings. He described a six-year Rajya Sabha term as "an invaluable opportunity to shape one's life", offering legislators deep insight into the nuances of national affairs.

EC Appoints 5 IPS Officers as DIGs in Bengal



Kolkata, Mar 18: The Election Commission on Wednesday ordered the transfer and posting of five IPS officers as deputy inspectors general (DIGs) in West Bengal after reviewing poll preparedness for the upcoming assembly elections, an official communication said. In a letter to the chief secretary, the commission directed that Rathod Amitkumar Bharat be posted as DIG, Raiganj Range, while Ajeet Singh Yadav has been appointed as DIG, Murshidabad.

Shrihari Pandey has been posted as DIG, Bardhaman, and Kankar Prosad Barui as DIG, Presidency Range, it said. Anjali Singh will take charge as DIG, Jalpaiguri, according to the order issued on Wednesday. The commission said the directions are to be implemented with immediate effect, and a compliance report regarding the joining of the officers must be submitted by 11 am on March 19. After the poll dates were announced on Sunday, the EC transferred Chief Secretary Nandini Chakravorty and Home Secretary Jagdish Prasad Meena. It subsequently removed DGP Peeyush Pandey and Kolkata CP Supratim Sarkar. The elections to the 294-member West Bengal assembly will be held in two phases, on April 23 and 29. Votes will be counted on May 4.

Congress MP Bordoloi Joins BJP



Guwahati, Mar 18: In a significant political shift ahead of the Assam Assembly elections, Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi resigned from the party and joined the BJP on Wednesday in the presence of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and state BJP president Dilip Saikia. Bordoloi accused Congress leadership of sidelining him, citing "multiple issues" beyond ticket denial for the polls. "For me, getting a ticket was not a question of life and death. What was important was to hold my head high," he told media after confirming his BJP switch. In his second Lok Sabha term with three years left, he chose to leave rather than endure what he called humiliation.

Navajyoti Talukdar, who quit as APCC vice-president on Tuesday, predicted the move and praised Sarma as a "dynamic leader." Congress has fielded Bordoloi's son from Margherita constituency in response. The resignation follows former Assam Congress chief Bhupen Kumar Borah's defection to BJP a month ago after three decades in the party. Assam goes to polls on April 9 for all 126 seats, with results on May 4.

JNU Flags 'Bail Violations' to Police Amid Student Unrest

New Delhi, Mar 18: Jawaharlal Nehru University has reportedly written to the Station House Officer of Vasant Kunj, alleging that 14 students currently out on bail have repeatedly violated conditions imposed by the court. In a letter dated March 9, the university stated that a key bail condition explicitly barred the students from participating in, organising, or leading any protest or assembly within or outside the campus. However, JNU authorities claimed that the students have continued to remain on campus in defiance of an "out-of-bounds" order and have actively taken part in protest activities.

According to the letter, the students were involved in a



late-night protest between March 8 and 9, during which they allegedly set up a makeshift encampment at the lawns of the School of Language (SL) and the School of International Studies (SIS). The administration noted that while university security had earlier removed tents, blankets and mattresses from the site, the structure was

reinstalled soon after.

The university termed these actions a "clear violation" of both bail conditions and its lawful directives, and urged the police to take appropriate steps to ensure compliance. The ongoing standoff is part of a broader unrest that has gripped the campus since early February. Tensions began after disciplinary

action was taken against office bearers of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU), including the suspension of four members and a former president over alleged vandalism during a protest last year. Subsequent demonstrations led to the detention of at least 14 students in late February. They were lodged in Tihar Jail and later released on bail by March 1. Responding to the university's claims, JNUSU dismissed the allegations as baseless. The union, however, criticised the administration for citing a peaceful march held on International Working Women's Day as an example of bail violation, calling it an attempt to criminalise legitimate student protest.

LPG crisis | 18 nabbed, cases lodged against 23 for Maha black marketing

Mumbai, Mar 18: The Maharashtra Police have arrested 18 people and registered cases against 23 people for black marketing the LPG cylinders in the state. Civil Supply Minister Chhagan Bhujbal said that the state government and its constituted committees at the district level are closely monitoring the development and ensuring the smooth supply of cooking gas cylinders in the state.

He said that there are reports of a black market in the cylinders. "We have started the help line where people can register their complaints against the black marketing of the cylinders. The rapid action forces are also constituted, and in the raid, the state police

registered cases against the 23 people, while 18 were arrested for black marketing the LPG cylinders," Bhujbal said. He also said the state government has asked the oil companies like BPCL, HPCL and IOCL to optimise their daily production of cooking gas from 9,000 tonnes to 11,000 tonnes so that domestic consumers will not face LPG shortage.

He said their priority is to provide the gas cylinders to the domestic consumer, educational institutions, hospitals and old-age homes. He said the state government has decided to provide kerosene and coal as an alternate fuel to the consumers. Hosp, edu institution Maharashtra government said



that its top priority is to provide LPG cylinders to the domestic consumer, educational institutions, hospitals and old-age homes.



Tripura CM Outlines Healthcare Overhaul After AIIMS Visit



Agartala, Mar 17: A series of healthcare reforms and institutional developments were raised in the Tripura Legislative Assembly by the Congress MLA Sudip Roy Barman regarding the visit of an expert team from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and subsequent actions taken by the state government. Online Newspaper Subscription Responding to the unstarred question, Chief Minister Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha, who also holds the Health portfolio, confirmed that a specialized AIIMS team had visited the state to assess healthcare infrastructure and services. "Yes, the team visited and submitted its report to the government," he informed the House.

The Chief Minister further stated that based on the recommendations, several steps have already been initiated under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between AIIMS, New Delhi and the Government of Tripura. Among the key developments, Dr. Saha highlighted the proposal for setting up a Health University in Tripura to strengthen medical, dental, nursing,

and paramedical education. He also informed that administrative integration of medical colleges and hospitals under a unified structure is being pursued through the Directorate of Medical Education. "Telemedicine services with AIIMS have already commenced, and steps are being taken to enhance hospital administration by appointing experts," the Chief Minister said.

He added that efforts are underway to upgrade healthcare facilities, including the introduction of departments such as Emergency Medicine and Trauma Surgery, implementation of a "one bed-one patient" policy, and establishment of specialized units like Maternal Newborn Care Units (MNCU) and Pediatric Cardiac Surgery units. Breaking Headlines Updates

Addressing manpower shortages, Dr. Saha stated that measures such as mandatory senior residency for postgraduate doctors, recruitment of MBBS doctors, and maintaining proper nurse-patient ratios as per Indian Nursing Council norms have been proposed.

Further, the government is working towards modernizing procurement systems through centralized procurement, e-procurement, and IT-enabled supply chain management. Digital health initiatives such as E-Hospital systems, LIS, RIS, and grievance redressal platforms similar to AIIMS' "Santushti" portal are also in the pipeline. "The remaining recommendations mentioned in the MoU are being implemented in a phased manner," the Chief Minister assured.

The discussion highlighted the state government's roadmap to strengthen healthcare delivery by aligning with AIIMS standards, following the concerns raised by the opposition.

Arunachal Governor Calls For Citizen-Friendly Administration



Itanagar, Mar 17: Arunachal Pradesh Governor KT Parnaik on Tuesday urged making the state's administration more efficient, transparent, and citizen-friendly through sweeping reforms. Online Newspaper Subscription In a meeting with Arunachal Pradesh Administrative Reforms Commission (APARC) Chairman Pramod Jain, the Governor discussed measures to accelerate development and bolster governance. He advised the Commission to prioritize institutional and procedural changes that advance digital transformation and e-governance, an official report stated.

Parnaik advocated shifting to 100% online government payments, e-Office systems, and paperless transactions to hasten service delivery, enhance transparency, and combat corruption. He also emphasized merit-based personnel management, calling for transparent processes in transfers, postings, and recruitment, with merit, integrity, and competence as core principles for public service. Earlier, Jain assured the Governor that APARC would recommend broader technology adoption, simplified procedures, and robust grievance-redressal mechanisms to strengthen governance in the frontier state.

Assam Polls: BJP Candidate Meet Today



Guwahati, Mar 17: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is scheduled to hold a key meeting of its Parliamentary Board in New Delhi on March 17 to finalise candidates for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections.

Party sources said the high-level meeting will focus on approving the list of nominees for all 126 Assembly constituencies in the state. Senior leaders are expected to participate in the meeting, including Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, and Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia.

According to reports, the party is likely to release the final list of candidates on Wednesday, March 18, covering all Assembly seats across Assam. The upcoming Assembly elections are being closely watched, with the BJP seeking to consolidate its position, while opposition parties prepare to mount a significant challenge.

Sikkim CM Hands Out Disaster Mitigation Aid



Sikkim, Mar 17: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Tuesday distributed sanctioned intimations and work orders for mitigation initiatives under the Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department to beneficiaries at Samman Bhawan.

The initiatives aim to strengthen disaster preparedness and resilience, providing support to vulnerable communities across the state. During the programme, CM Tamang encouraged beneficiaries to carry out the sanctioned works with sincerity and dedication, emphasizing transparency and timely execution.

The move forms part of the state government's ongoing efforts to enhance safety measures and ensure that assistance reaches those in need efficiently.

Mizoram Assembly Passes 10 Bills In 28-Day Session, Including Polygamy Ban And Women's Rights Reforms

Aizawl, Mar 17: The Mizoram Legislative Assembly concluded its 28-day Budget session on Monday, passing 10 government Bills, including legislation banning polygamy and strengthening women's property rights. The session, which began on February 17, also saw the approval of the state's 2026-27 Budget of Rs 17,469.91 crore and supplementary grants of Rs 3,724.25 crore for 2025-26. Key legislation passed in-

cluded The Mizo Marriage and Inheritance of Property (Amendment) Bill, 2026, aimed at prohibiting polygamy and enhancing women's inheritance rights; The Mizoram (Prevention of Public Land Encroachment) Bill, 2026; and The Mizoram State University (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which relocates the proposed university from Aizawl to Lunglei.

During the session, the House ad-

mitted 1,248 starred questions (1,231 admitted, 27 rejected, seven withdrawn, 300 listed) and 396 unstarred questions (376 admitted, 17 rejected, three withdrawn). Lawmakers also unanimously adopted a resolution urging the inclusion of the Mizo language in the Constitution's Eighth Schedule. Speaker Lalbiakzama noted the cordial atmosphere and decorum maintained throughout the proceedings and an-



nounced the sine die adjournment of the session.

Assam Polls: AJP Hits the Ground Running with First 8 Candidates



Guwahati, Mar 17: The Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), a partner in the Congress-led opposition alliance, on

Tuesday released its first list of eight candidates for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections. Online News-

paper Subscription The list includes party president Lurinjoyti Gogoi, who will contest from Khowang, and working president Rajen Gohain, who has been fielded from Barhampur. Addressing a press conference, Gogoi said the party would contest 10 seats as part of the opposition alliance. Candidates for Guwahati Central and Sadiya constituencies are yet to be announced. He stated that discussions with alliance partners are ongoing and indicated the possibility of friendly contests in a few seats.

The other candidates announced are Bani Das (Morigaon), Pankaj Lochan Goswami (Palasbari), Jibon Chutia (Sarupathar), Dilip Baruah (Bajali),

Rejaul Karim Choudhury (Bindakan-di), and Mounak Patra (Dibrugarh).

Polling for the Assam Assembly elections is scheduled to be held in a single phase on April 9, with counting of votes set for May 4. Gogoi also raised concerns over the election schedule, stating that its duration is short. He said the timing coincides with the upcoming Bohag Bihu festivities. He further referred to the death of singer Zubeen Garg in September last year, noting that authorities in Singapore had reported drowning as the cause of death, while the Assam government described the case as murder and arrested several individuals.



Renault bets big on SUV comeback with new Duster launch; prices from Rs 10.49 lakh, hybrid demand surges

Guwahati: Renault India on Tuesday launched the all-new Duster, marking a strategic push to reclaim share in India's competitive mid-size SUV segment. Priced from ₹10.49 lakh (ex-showroom), the model is available at an introductory ₹10.29 lakh under the R-Pass programme until March 31, 2026, with nationwide dispatches now underway.

Built on the Renault Group Modular Platform (RGMP), the SUV targets performance-driven buyers with its Turbo TCe 160 engine delivering 163 PS and 280 Nm torque, paired with manual and DCT options. Renault said the turbo variant accounts for over 90% of petrol bookings, underlining a shift towards higher-performance offerings.

The Duster is offered in five trims; Authentic, Evolution,



Techno, Techno+ and Iconic featuring full LED lighting, Google-integrated OpenR Link infotainment, panoramic sunroof, ventilated seats, 360-degree camera and 17 ADAS features. The company is also rolling out flexible subscription plans and a 7-year 'Renault Forever' warranty to strengthen ownership value.

Notably, Renault's E-Tech strong hybrid combining a 1.8-litre engine with a 1.4 kWh battery has seen robust traction,

with nearly 40% uptake in metro markets. The company confirmed its entire 2026 hybrid allocation is already sold out.

In Guwahati, the launch is expected to boost demand in the Northeast's SUV-heavy market, where buyers prioritise ground clearance and durability. Dealers report rising interest in turbo variants, while hybrid options are gaining attention among urban consumers amid fuel cost concerns.

Rasna bets on Nutri+ launch and 'Prankies' revival to drive 15–20% growth

Guwahati: India's iconic beverage concentrate brand Rasna has unveiled Rasna Nutri+, a nutrition-enriched powder concentrate, as part of its strategy to redefine the summer beverage segment and capture rising demand for healthier drinks. Developed by Rasna's R&D division, the new product blends the brand's signature taste with added vitamins and minerals aimed at modern Indian families seeking both refreshment and wellness.

The launch comes as India's health drinks market, valued at USD 9 billion in 2024, is projected to grow at 11–12% CAGR over the coming decade, creating strong opportunities for functional beverages fortified with nutrients.

As part of the 2026 summer campaign, Rasna has revived its popular collectible toy characters called "Prankies", including snakes, lizards and rats, placed inside Rasna Nutri+ 32-glass packs and Rasna Insta Nutri+ 500g packs. The brand has also launched a digital challenge encouraging users to upload prank videos on social media for prizes and recognition on Rasna's official platforms.

The campaign features Bollywood actor Rakul Preet Singh as brand ambassador, alongside the

debut of seven-year-old Areez Khambatta, son of Rasna Group Chairman Piruz Khambatta, as the new Rasna Boy. Rasna will also run a major media blitz across digital platforms, influencer networks, television and live broadcasts of the Indian Premier League to maximise nationwide reach.

Piruz Khambatta said Rasna Nutri+ bridges the gap between taste and nutrition while supporting local agriculture. "We source fruits from farmers across India and export our products to more than 60 countries, staying true to the 'Make in India' vision," he said. Rakul Preet Singh added that Rasna Nutri+ combines childhood nostalgia with the nutritional needs of today's families.

In Guwahati, strong seasonal demand is expected for Rasna Nutri+ during the upcoming summer months, especially among households and small retailers. With Rasna already enjoying strong brand recall in Assam, traders say the combination of added nutrition, aggressive marketing and the revival of collectible Prankies could further strengthen the brand's presence in Guwahati's fast-growing packaged beverage market.

Truecaller launches 'Family Protection' in India to shield households from rising digital scams

Guwahati: Global communications platform Truecaller has launched Family Protection in India, introducing a new household-focused safety feature aimed at protecting users from the growing threat of digital scams such as digital arrests, impersonation fraud and AI voice cloning. The rollout marks a shift in the company's strategy from basic caller identification to proactive protection for families.

The feature creates a "Safety Circle" for up to five people and is powered by the collective intelligence of more than 450 million users worldwide. The launch in India follows successful deployments in several international markets including Sweden, Chile, Malaysia and Kenya.

Family Protection allows a digitally aware family member—referred to as the household's "CTO" (chief technology officer)—to manage the digital safety of relatives. The system provides real-time fraud alerts and a remote call hang-up feature that enables suspicious calls to be ended instantly for any group member. It also includes shared block lists, customiz-

able security levels and a dashboard to monitor device safety settings across both Android and iOS devices. The service is free to use, while users opting for the Premium Family Plan gain access to a broader suite of advanced safety features.

"Just knowing who is calling is no longer enough. Today, the real question is whether the call is safe to answer," said Rishit Jhunjhuna. He added that the new feature empowers digitally aware family members to act as safety anchors for their households as scams become increasingly sophisticated and emotionally manipulative.

In Guwahati, the launch is expected to find strong relevance as smartphone penetration and digital transactions continue to rise across Assam and the wider Northeast. Tech retailers and mobile service providers in the Guwahati market note that increasing cases of online fraud have heightened consumer awareness about mobile security tools, making family-focused digital protection solutions increasingly relevant for urban households.

Godrej Consumer Products ranked World's No.1 sustainable FMCG firm on Dow Jones Best-in-Class Index 2025

Guwahati: Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL) has been ranked No.1 globally in the FMCG category on the Dow Jones Best-in-Class Sustainability Index 2025, marking the first time the company has secured the top position on the globally recognised benchmark.

The emerging markets FMCG major scored 89 out of 100 in the Personal Products category in S&P Global's Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA), which evaluated more than 3,500 companies worldwide. The assessment measures companies across environmental, social and governance (ESG) parameters including emission reduction, raw material sourcing, packaging management, water stewardship, labour practices and product disposal.

The recognition also marks a milestone for GCPL as the

company completed 10 consecutive years of participation in the S&P Global CSA, highlighting its decade-long focus on transparency, measurable sustainability action and integrating ESG priorities into core business strategy. Commenting on the achievement, Sudhir Sitapati, Managing Director & CEO, GCPL, said the ranking represents a defining milestone for the company. "Sustainability is deeply embedded in our purpose of bringing the goodness of health and beauty to consumers in emerging markets. Our progress in greener products, water positivity, climate action and energy efficiency reflects this commitment," he said.

Pakzan Dastoor, Head – Sustainability & CSR, Godrej Industries Group, said the recognition reflects years of consistent efforts under the Godrej Group's Good &

Green philosophy, integrating emission reduction, sustainable sourcing and waste management into daily operations.

In Guwahati, sustainability-led FMCG brands are gradually gaining traction in Assam's urban retail landscape. Traders in the city say consumers are showing greater preference for environmentally responsible personal care and household products, indicating growing awareness of sustainable consumption patterns in the Northeast.

Acknowledging the milestone, Robert Dornau, Senior Director and Head of Corporate Solutions & Engagements at S&P Global Sustainable, said completing a decade of participation in the CSA demonstrates GCPL's long-standing commitment to meaningful sustainability action.

Nissan partners with KPKB, announces exclusive Magnite benefits for police and paramilitary personnel

Guwahati: Nissan Motor India Pvt. Ltd. (NMIPL) has partnered with Kendriya Police KalyanBhandar (KPKB), a welfare initiative under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), to offer exclusive mobility benefits to serving and retired police and paramilitary personnel and their families across India. The move aims to improve access to personal mobility through a trusted institutional partnership.

Under the collaboration, KPKB beneficiaries will be

eligible for special benefits on the New Nissan Magnite, over and above existing customer offers, across all Nissan dealerships nationwide. Customers will also be able to avail an attractive finance option at 5.55% interest, making ownership more affordable. As an added benefit, Nissan is offering a complimentary three-year prepaid maintenance programme for KPKB beneficiaries.

Commenting on the initiative, Nissan Motor India Managing Director Saurabh

Vatsa said the company holds "utmost respect for the men and women who serve and protect our nation," adding that the partnership reflects Nissan's commitment to providing safe, reliable and high-quality mobility solutions while delivering tangible value to KPKB beneficiaries and their families.

The continued success of the Nissan Magnite has strengthened the company's growth momentum, while the launch of the all-new Nissan Gravite marks another mile-

stone in Nissan's expanding product portfolio. With a strengthened exchange ecosystem and renewed product strategy, the company said it remains focused on accelerating its growth and delivering greater value to customers.

In Guwahati, the partnership could generate fresh demand among police and paramilitary personnel posted across Assam and the Northeast. With several CAPF units operating in the region, the special benefits and low-interest finance scheme



are expected to increase interest in compact SUVs like

the Magnite in the Guwahati automobile market.



GCPL's CSR project turns Palashbari into model waste-managed town, diverts 3,200 tonnes of waste

Guwahati: Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL) has transformed waste management systems in Palashbari, one of Assam's oldest towns, through a three-year community-led initiative that has diverted over 3,200 tonnes of waste and remediated 1,550 tonnes of legacy waste while achieving 98.5% source segregation across households, institutions and markets.

The initiative, implemented under GCPL's CSR programme in partnership with the Palashbari Municipal Board and Feedback Foundation Charitable Trust, introduced a decentralised and scalable waste management model for smaller urban centres. Earlier, Palashbari gen-



erated nearly two tonnes of mixed waste daily that was dumped at open sites, causing environmental degradation and health risks along the Kalbhug River.

“Stronger communities build

a stronger future, and our programme in Palashbari shows what is possible when citizens, local authorities and partners work with shared ownership,” said Pakzan Dastoor, Head – Sustainability & CSR, Godrej

Industries Group, GCPL.

In Guwahati, the Palashbari model is drawing attention as a scalable waste management solution for fast-growing urban centres. With increasing waste generation in Guwahati due to expanding residential clusters, markets and commercial activity, experts believe decentralised waste processing systems such as MRFs and composting centres could help reduce landfill dependency and improve waste segregation practices in the city. The success of the Palashbari project has already inspired other urban local bodies, including the North Guwahati Municipal Board, to consider similar community-driven waste management systems.

Indus Towers expands CSR footprint in Meghalaya, builds girls' washrooms in 11 schools

Shillong: Indus Towers Ltd., one of India's largest telecom infrastructure providers, has strengthened school sanitation infrastructure in Meghalaya by inaugurating girls' washroom facilities across 11 government schools in Ri-Bhoi district under its flagship CSR initiative Pragati. The facilities were formally inaugurated at Nehru Memorial Higher Secondary School, with Andrew L. Myrthong, BDO of Umsning C&RD Block and in-charge Assistant Commissioner of Ri-Bhoi, attending the ceremony. The event was also live-cast to six other schools where the new facilities have been developed. Addressing the gath-

ering, Myrthong said providing proper sanitation infrastructure in schools is critical for ensuring a safe and comfortable learning environment for students, particularly girls. “Initiatives like these strengthen the basic infrastructure of our education system and support the overall wellbeing of students. We appreciate the contribution made by Indus Towers and its partners in supporting schools in the region,” he said.

Rajender Gurung, Circle CEO – NES, Indus Towers Ltd., said access to safe and hygienic sanitation facilities is essential for the dignity, health and confidence of young girls. He noted that the Pragati

initiative reflects the company's commitment to addressing infrastructure gaps that affect girls' education and wellbeing in underserved regions.

In Shillong, corporate social responsibility investments by large telecom infrastructure firms are increasingly contributing to community development in Meghalaya. Stakeholders note that initiatives like these not only strengthen educational infrastructure but also reinforce the presence and social engagement of major companies in the Shillong market, reflecting a broader trend of private sector participation in regional development.

MSDE, GATI Foundation partner to boost global skill mobility and overseas jobs for Indian workforce



Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the GATI Foundation, a project under the SFI Impact Foundation, to strengthen institutional mechanisms supporting overseas employment and global

mobility for skilled Indian workers.

The partnership aims to establish a strategic framework that advances India's position as a global hub of skilled talent while enabling Indian youth to access international employment opportunities in a structured and sustainable manner. As part of the col-

laboration, both organisations will develop a comprehensive, data-driven roadmap for overseas skilling and mobility, identifying high-demand international job roles, priority destination countries and sectoral opportunities for Indian workers.

MSDE Secretary Debashree Mukherjee said India's demographic dividend can translate into global economic strength when the workforce is equipped with internationally recognised skills. She noted that the partnership will help build a structured ecosystem for global skill mobility by preparing youth with the right skills, language capabilities and cultural readiness.

Arnab Bhattacharya, Chief Executive Officer of GATI Foundation, said the initiative

would strengthen coordination between the Centre and states while aligning skilling efforts and implementation across India's workforce ecosystem.

Under the agreement, the GATI Foundation will establish a Project Management Unit at Kaushal Bhawan in New Delhi to support research, international partnerships and monitoring frameworks. The collaboration will also strengthen Skill India International Centres, expand partnerships with ITIs and polytechnics and facilitate global employer engagement.

The MoU will remain valid for three years, with both organisations bearing their own operational costs, supporting the broader vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

TVS Motor launches Orbiter V1 electric scooter with BaaS model, price starts at Rs 49,999

Guwahati: TVS Motor Company on Thursday expanded its electric vehicle portfolio with the launch of the TVS Orbiter V1, powered by a 1.8 kWh battery, positioning it as the most accessible electric scooter in its lineup. The company also introduced Battery-As-A-Service (BaaS) across its EV portfolio, offering customers a flexible ownership model aimed at lowering the upfront cost of electric mobility.

With the launch, TVS Motor's EV scooter range now starts at ₹49,999 (ex-showroom Delhi, inclusive of PM e-Drive subsidy) under the BaaS model, while customers who prefer to buy the scooter without BaaS can purchase the Orbiter V1 at ₹84,500 (ex-showroom Delhi). The BaaS model separates the vehicle cost from the battery cost, allowing users to subscribe to battery usage with flexible payment plans starting from ₹862 per month, including extended warranty coverage of up to five years or 70,000 km and unlimited monthly usage.

Commenting on the launch, Gaurav Gupta, President – India 2W Business, said the Orbiter V1 strengthens the company's EV lineup while the BaaS model represents a shift in EV ownership by giving customers clarity on upfront and running costs. Aniruddha Haldar, Senior Vice President – Head Commuter & EV Business, added that expanding the Orbiter range with flexible ownership options will help accelerate electric mobility adoption in India.

In Guwahati, the launch of an entry-level electric scooter with subscription-based battery plans could attract young commuters and first-time EV buyers in Assam. With rising fuel costs and increasing awareness of sustainable mobility, affordable electric scooters are gradually gaining traction in the region. Industry observers believe pricing under ₹50,000 through the BaaS model could strengthen EV adoption in Guwahati's urban mobility segment, particularly for daily commuting and last-mile travel.



Ambuja Cements, Adani Foundation strengthen rural connectivity in Assam's Umrangso

Umrangso: Ambuja Cements, the world's ninth largest building materials solutions provider and part of the diversified Adani Portfolio, along with the Adani Foundation, has improved rural connectivity in Umrangso in Assam's Dima Hasao district by restoring a key connecting road between Tharvelangso and Borolokhindong villages.

The initiative involved the restoration of a 2.5-km stretch that had severely deteriorated over the years, making travel difficult and affecting mobility, safety and livelihoods of local residents. The poor condition of the road had posed challenges for daily commuting, access to essential services and the transportation of agricultural produce.

Responding to the needs of the community, the Adani Foundation undertook critical patchwork restoration of the road to improve accessibility and ensure smoother movement for villagers.

With the improved infrastructure, residents are now experiencing safer and more reliable all-weather travel. Schoolchildren can commute more comfortably, villagers are able to access nearby services more efficiently and farmers can transport their produce to markets with greater ease. Around 157 villagers are currently benefiting from the improved connectivity, which has also strengthened access to essential services and market linkages.



Walmart opens registration for India Growth Summit 2026 to boost MSME exports

Guwahati: Global retail major Walmart has opened registrations for the India Growth Summit 2026, an initiative aimed at helping Indian businesses expand domestically and tap global markets through eCommerce and international supply chains. The summit will be held on May 7, 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, bringing together micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), digital-first brands, direct-to-consumer (D2C) sellers, and innovative supply chain companies.

Registrations will remain open until April 23, 2026 for Indian businesses interested in joining the Walmart Marketplace and expanding their international eCommerce presence. The event aligns with the Make in India initiative and will focus on boosting exports across key categories including home textiles, consumables, health and wellness, food, general merchandise, jewelry, apparel, footwear, toys, and stationery.

The summit will feature an executive session with Walmart leaders, followed by curated learning sessions designed to help businesses scale operations, gain retail insights, and connect to global markets through cross-border eCommerce. Attendees will also have the opportunity to register on Walmart Marketplace. A dedicated Resource Center will provide one-

on-one advisory support on platform onboarding, regulatory requirements, and cross-border trade with guidance from Walmart's category teams and subject experts.

"At Walmart, we are passionate about helping businesses thrive on the global stage," said Manish Joneja, Senior Vice President, Walmart Marketplace. He said the India Growth Summit 2026 reflects Walmart's commitment to innovation and supporting sellers and suppliers in expanding to global markets.

Since its launch in 2019, Walmart's Vriddhi Supplier Development program has trained more than 70,000 MSMEs in India, with plans to train an additional 100,000 businesses by 2028. With over 1.4 million sellers on Flipkart, the summit will also provide entrepreneurs with insights into international business opportunities and help create pathways for eligible MSMEs to enter global markets.

In Guwahati, the initiative could create new opportunities for entrepreneurs and MSMEs in Assam and the Northeast. Businesses involved in textiles, handicrafts, food processing, and wellness products in the Guwahati market may benefit from exposure to Walmart's global marketplace and export channels, enabling local producers to reach international customers through digital trade platforms.

SBI Raises ₹6,051 Crore via Bonds at 7.05%

Mumbai: The nation's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has raised Rs 6,051 crore from Basel III-compliant tier 2 bond issuance, at a coupon rate of 7.05%. The 10-year bonds, second tranche of the tier 2 issuance done earlier in October when it mopped up Rs 7,500 crore at a coupon of 6.93%, have a call option after five years and each anniversary date thereafter and are rated AAA with stable outlook. The higher rate indicates the risk aversion build-up since the Iran war began two weeks ago. The issue that was closed Tuesday attracted an excellent response from investors with bids of around 2x against the base issue size of Rs 5,000 crore, the bank said in a statement. The issuer got bids from 47 qualified institutional investors from across provident funds, pension funds, mutual funds, banks etc. "Based on the response, the bank has decided to accept Rs 6,051 crore at a coupon rate of 7.05% payable annually for 10 years with a call option after 5 years and each anniversary date thereafter," the statement said.

Chairman CS Setty said wider participation and heterogeneity of bids demonstrated the trust investors place in the country's largest bank. In September last year, the bank had raised \$500 million in five-year dollar debt sale at 4.5% coupon rate as part of its \$10 billion medium term note programme.

In July last year, the bank had raised Rs 25,000 crore in a QIP issue, making it the single largest fund raising through this mode.

Malabar Group Chairman M.P. Ahammad receives Business Bhushan at Lokmat Awards

Mumbai: Malabar Group Chairman M.P. Ahammad has been honoured with the Business Bhushan Award at the Lokmat Maharashtra of the Year Awards 2026, recognising his leadership in shaping the global jewellery retail industry and strengthening organised jewellery retail markets.

The award was presented at a ceremony held at the Gateway of India in Mumbai in the presence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, along with Lokmat Chairman Vijay Darda and other industry leaders, policymakers and prominent personalities.

Presented by the Lokmat Media Group, the awards recognise individuals whose leadership and achievements have significantly influenced industries and society. Ahammad's recognition highlights his role in building Malabar Gold & Diamonds into the world's fifth-largest jewellery retailer and the largest

jewellery retailer of Indian origin.

Maharashtra remains a key market for the brand, with Malabar Gold & Diamonds currently operating 34 showrooms across major cities including Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur and Nashik. The company said the strong demand from the state has helped expand the organised jewellery retail ecosystem while generating employment and improving access to premium jewellery designs and services. The group plans to further scale its footprint to 64 stores in Maharashtra by 2029.

Founded in 1993, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has grown into a global jewellery retail network with more than 425 showrooms across 14 countries and an annual turnover of \$7.36 billion. The company also allocates 5% of its profits to ESG-driven initiatives focusing on education, healthcare, housing, hunger eradication, environmental sustainability and women's empowerment.

Air India, Air India Express to begin operations from Guwahati airport's New Terminal 2 from March 16

Guwahati: Air India and Air India Express will begin operating all their flights from the newly inaugurated Terminal 2 (T2) of Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati starting March 16, 2026, marking a significant operational shift aimed at improving passenger handling and connectivity in the region.

According to an official release issued from Gurugram on March 14, the airlines will move their operations from Terminal 1 (T1) to the new facility with effect from March 16. Together, Air India and

Air India Express will operate a total of 38 daily flights to and from Terminal 2 at the Guwahati airport.

The first Air India flight to arrive at the new terminal will be AI879 from Delhi, while the return flight AI880 to Delhi will be the airline's first departure from T2 in Guwahati. Air India Express flight IX1517 from Kolkata will be the airline's first flight to land at the new terminal, and its onward journey to Imphal will mark the first Air India Express departure from T2.

At present, Air India operates two daily return flights

between Delhi and Guwahati. Air India Express connects Guwahati with 17 daily flights to Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Dibrugarh, Dimapur, Hyderabad, Imphal, Jaipur, and Kolkata.

In Guwahati, the shift to the modern Terminal 2 will strengthen the city's growing aviation and travel sector. Improved infrastructure and increased airline activity are expected to support tourism, business travel, and trade flows across the Northeast, further positioning Guwahati as a key gateway for regional connectivity.

75.8% Indians now active dairy consumers, multi-product dairy basket driving household nutrition: Godrej Jersey Report

Guwahati: A new Lactography Report released by Godrej Jersey has revealed that 75.8% of Indians are now active dairy consumers, indicating that milk and dairy products have become deeply embedded in everyday household nutrition across the country. The report highlights that Indian households increasingly consume multiple dairy products alongside milk, including curd, paneer, ghee, butter, lassi, yogurt and cheese.

According to the findings, Indian homes are gradually building what the report calls a "dairy basket", where several dairy products are consumed regularly rather than relying solely on milk. Among active dairy consumers, curd leads with 80% preference, followed by paneer (76%), butter (74%) and ghee (71%). Other widely consumed items include lassi (63%), cheese (58%), yogurt (57%) and traditional milk-based sweets (55%), reflecting dairy's role across cooking, snacks and festive dishes.

Commenting on the findings, Shantanu Raj, Head of Marketing at Godrej Jersey, said India has moved beyond the idea of "just a glass of milk," with dairy evolving into a value-added nutrition category spanning traditional staples and modern high-protein beverages. He added that the company is focusing on delivering products that combine taste, protein and convenience for modern consumers.

The trend is also visible in Guwahati, where demand for paneer, curd, yogurt and packaged dairy beverages has grown steadily in recent years. Retailers report increasing consumer preference for ready-to-consume dairy products, protein drinks and flavored milk, particularly among young urban consumers and fitness-focused buyers. The city's expanding supermarket and café culture has further boosted dairy consumption beyond traditional household use, aligning Guwahati with the broader national shift toward a diversified dairy basket.

133 Schools in Namsai Onboarded on Hamara Vidyalay App with Support from Sterlite EdIndia Foundation



Itanagar: Sterlite EdIndia Foundation hosted an event at the Multipurpose Cultural Hall to promote the Hamara Vidyalay App, which enables real-time monitoring of teacher attendance and student performance in Namsai's 133 schools.

Attended by key education officials, including Deputy Commissioner Shri C.R. Khampa, the event aimed to enhance data-driven decision-making for improved classroom outcomes. The app currently supports 763 teachers and over 9,360 students, facilitating better academic management.

The occasion recognized outstanding schools with cash awards and certificates for their commitment to academic excellence and digital adoption. Notable recognitions included the Digital Champion Award and the Committed Classroom Award for schools that excelled in data management and teacher presence.

Shri Pokdey Yomgam and Shri Keshab Sharma emphasized the importance of discipline and technology in education, reiterating that effective data management can significantly enhance learning experiences. The initiative underscores Sterlite EdIndia Foundation's ongoing support in strengthening the region's educational ecosystem.



Protein-Rich Sattu Recipes to Keep Gut and Blood Glucose Healthy



It goes without saying that monsoons make us hungrier. The grey skies, the rhythmic sound of raindrops, and the cool breeze instantly make us long for something comforting to eat. And what better than a plate of spicy, crunchy snacks fresh out of the kadhai to go with that weather? Of course, you can always order your favourites from a food delivery app for instant comfort without any hassle. But if you are in the mood to cook and spend some time in the kitchen while enjoying the drizzle outside, homemade treats hit differently. Since it is the peak of monsoon season, here are some spicy



snacks you can whip up at home to make your monsoons memorable.

1. Mirchi Bhaji Recipe Nothing screams monsoon like big, fat chillies stuffed with a flavourful mashed potato filling. Mirchi bhaji is made by dipping it in besan and frying it until it is golden in colour. That fiery flavour, followed by a crunchy outing, is basically the snack version of a warm hug. Pair it with mint chutney, and you are good to go.

2. Samosa Recipe Crispy outside, spicy potato-pea filling inside, samosas are literally designed for rainy days. Break one open from

the middle and let the steam escape. Then dunk it into tangy tamarind chutney. Bonus points if you pair it with a cutting chai while listening to the rain.

3. Pakora Recipe Be it onion, potato, or paneer pakoras, these bite-sized fritters are a monsoon favourite for a reason. The crunch, the spice, and the coriander chutney on the side make it a full-on sensory experience for your tongue. They taste ten times better when it is raining outside.

4. Masala Corn Recipe If you are looking for something light yet spicy, masala corn is the way to go. Sweet corn kernels mixed with



chilli powder, lemon juice, and chaat masala create a warm, comforting snack that does not need deep-frying. It is a convenient way to enjoy bhutta without spoiling your hands. 5. Chilli Garlic Momos Recipe Rain and momos are a combination loved by many. This fiery chilli garlic momo recipe has garlic sauce coating every dumpling, making each bite steamy and spicy at once. You can try making this recipe at your home or if you don't want hassle, you can order it from your favourite food delivery app and get it delivered to your doorstep.

Eggs in any form, whether boiled or omeletted, are nutritious



Because of their protein, vitamins, and good fats, eggs are frequently referred to as "superfoods." However, a lot of people question whether making an omelette or eating a plain boiled egg for breakfast is better. Your cooking style, lifestyle, and health objectives will all influence the response. The easiest way to consume this nutrient-dense superfood is with a boiled egg. Because there isn't any additional oil or butter, each

egg has only roughly 70 calories. Protein, vitamin D, vitamin B12, and minerals like selenium are all abundant in it. Boiling lowers fat content because it eliminates the need for frying, which makes it a fantastic option for people controlling their cholesterol or weight. An omelette, on the other hand, can be as healthy or indulgent as you make it. A plain omelette made with minimal oil carries similar nutrition to

a boiled egg but may contain extra fat depending on the cooking medium. However, omelettes provide versatility: adding spinach, onions, tomatoes, or mushrooms boosts fibre and micronutrients. If you want a low-calorie, high-protein option with no added fat, boiled eggs are the clear winner. But if you prefer a more filling, flavorful meal, an omelette with veggies cooked in minimal oil can be equally healthy. The healthiest approach? Mix it up. Enjoy boiled eggs on busy mornings, and treat yourself to a veggie-loaded omelette when you have more time. Both boiled eggs and omelettes have their place in a balanced diet. The key lies in preparation: boiled eggs work best for calorie-conscious eaters, while omelettes shine when paired with nutrient-rich vegetables and cooked with minimal fat. Either way, you're fueling your body with one of nature's most complete proteins.

Indian Chicken Manchurian Isn't Chinese

Given the name, you might assume that the dish Chicken Manchurian originated in China. The reality, however, is much more startling, and it all starts with a cricket club in India. Despite its unique moniker, neither China nor the Manchurian region of Northeast Asia is where Manchurian originated. Nelson Wang, a Chinese-Indian chef from Kolkata, West Bengal, founded it in Mumbai in 1975. He had relocated to Mumbai and was working at the Cricket Club of India when a demand for something novel led to its creation. This is where Indo Chinese cuisine truly began. Faced with an eager crowd, Nelson Wang combined Indian kitchen staples, garlic, ginger and green chillies, with Chinese sauces like soy sauce and cornflour coating. He deep fried small pieces of boneless chicken in this spicy mix, creating an umami-rich dish that paired well with Indian taste preferences. The result? A brand-new fusion dish, Chicken Manchurian, that felt both familiar and exotic. Nelson Wang's family roots lay in Kolkata's Chinatown, once home to over 20,000 Chinese-Indians. Their ancestors arrived in the late 1700s with a sailor named Achi from Guangdong

province. He set up a sugarcane plantation near Calcutta, leading to the settlement of many Chinese workers in what became the Tangra neighbourhood. This vibrant Chinese-Indian community ran tanneries, dental clinics, and restaurants, until the 1962 India-China war triggered anti-Chinese sentiment. Many left or were deported, and today only about 4,000 remain, yet the culinary legacy remains vibrant. Nelson Wang later founded the iconic China Garden in Mumbai, introducing a new culinary style that mixed Chinese ingredients with Indian cooking techniques. It played a pivotal role in popularising Indo-Chinese dishes like Gobi Manchurian and Paneer Manchurian. His son, Eddie Wang, later expanded the chain to cities including Goa, Delhi, Bangalore, Pune, Hyderabad, and Kathmandu, spreading this East-meets-West cuisine to a global audience. Chicken Manchurian is now a staple in Indian restaurants worldwide, from the UK and Canada to Australia and the Middle East. Yet in China, it remains largely unheard of, its bold, spicy flavours contrasting with the more muted tastes favoured in traditional Chinese cuisine. However, Manchurian is still served in Chinese cities like Beijing and Shanghai, presumably in Indian eateries.



NDA Sweeps Bihar Rajya Sabha Polls: Wins All 5 Seats

Patna, Mar 16: Ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on Monday swept the Rajya Sabha election in Bihar by winning all five seats with chief minister and JD (U) supremo Nitish Kumar and BJP national president Nitin Nabin being elected to the Upper House of parliament in a keenly contested poll. Other NDA candidates who won the RS polls in Bihar are Union Minister for Agriculture and farmers welfare Ram Nath Thakur from JD (U), Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) president and former Union Minister Upendra Kushwaha and former MLA Shivesh Kumar from BJP. While three MLAs from Congress – Surendra Prasad Kushwaha (Valmiki Nagar), Manoj Biswas (Forbesganj), Manohar Prasad Singh (Mani-



hari) did not cast their votes in the RS polls, RJD MLA from Dhaka Faisal Rahman also abstained from the voting, dashing Mahagathbandhan candidate and prominent businessman, Amarendra Dhari Singh's all hopes of romping to victory, despite numbers heavily stacked against him.

All the 202 MLAs of NDA cast their votes. On the contrary, only 37 out of 41 leg-

islators of Opposition parties turned up to cast their votes. The three legislators from Congress and one from RJD remained incommunicado during the voting for the five seats. The term of all five sitting MPs will expire on April 9. Ahead of the elections, Mahagathbandhan had kept all its MLAs at a posh hotel in Patna to prevent poaching attempts in the elections.

BJP Fields Suwendu Against Mamata: A Bid to Pin Her to Bhabanipur?



Kolkata, Mar 16: The BJP's announcement that Suwendu Adhikari, Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly and MLA from Nandigram, will take on Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee from south Kolkata's Bhabanipur in the upcoming assembly polls does not come as a huge surprise. Suwendu was eager to fight against Mamata from Bhabanipur and had expressed his desire in this regard during several meetings with the party's central leadership in Delhi.

Besides Bhabanipur, Suwendu will also simultaneously contest from Nandigram where he had defeated Mamata by a narrow margin of hardly 2,000 votes in the last assembly polls in the state in 2021. The BJP's central leadership in Delhi on Monday released a list of candidates for 144 assembly constituencies in Bengal. The move to field Suwendu from here could also force Mamata to spend more time in Bhabanipur and prevent her from moving out for election campaigns in other constituencies. The outcome in Bhabanipur this time could be influenced by the deletion of about 48,000 absent, shifted, dead and duplicate (ASDD) voters following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state. Apart from these, another 14,000 voters in the constituency have been branded as 'under adjudication' and awaiting clearance from judicial officers to retain

their voting rights.

The BJP leadership in Bengal feels it may be difficult for Mamata to retain the Bhabanipur seat against the backdrop of the exclusion of such a huge number of voters besides those 14,000 whose fates are in limbo as per the Supreme Court order. There are several other factors that seem advantageous for the saffron camp this time. For instance, the Trinamool Congress trailed behind the BJP in the number of votes in around three municipal wards in Bhabanipur as per the results of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

In the 2021 bypolls in Bhabanipur, Mamata had won against the BJP candidate Priyanka Tিব্রল by a margin of more than 50,000 votes, which is around the same as the number of deleted voters following the SIR exercise. She was fielded by the party here after suffering a defeat against Suwendu in Nandigram. Although Mamata had recently claimed that she will win again from Bhabanipur even if only one voter is left, she is gearing up for a tough fight. The Trinamool Congress supremo held several meetings with her booth level agents and senior leaders to take stock of the situation well before the poll dates in Bengal were announced by the Election Commission on Sunday. The polls are scheduled in two phases on April 23 and 29 in the state.

Uproar in Chhattisgarh Assembly Over Bijapur Hostel Pregnancy Row

Pregnancy Reports Spark Serious Safety Concerns

Raipur, Mar 16: A shocking incident has emerged from a government-run Porta Cabin hostel in Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh, where three girls, including two minors, were found to be pregnant. The revelation has sparked concern within the district administration and the state education department, raising serious questions about the safety and supervision of students in government-run residential facilities. However, the Government of Chhattisgarh has maintained that the facts are being misrepresented. State Education Minister Gajendra Yadav said the girls mentioned were not currently residents of the hostel.

According to preliminary reports, the pregnancies are estimated to be four to five months along. The girls were reportedly residing in the hostel while pursuing their studies when the matter came to light, triggering questions over how such a lapse in security and welfare could occur in a state-monitored institution. After receiving information about the case, district authorities took serious note of the matter. A team of investigators is now examining the timeline of events and whether there was any negligence on the part of the hostel staff. The issue also triggered uproar in the Chhattisgarh Legislative Assembly on Monday, as opposition Indian National Congress MLAs confronted the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party government over the reports.

The matter was raised during Zero Hour by Vikram Mandavi, MLA from Bijapur, along with Leader of the Opposition Charan Das Mahant and former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. Opposition members accused the state

government of attempting to suppress a sensitive issue involving tribal minors. According to Congress legislators, two of the girls are studying in Class 12 and one in Class 11, with two of them being minors. They alleged that soon after the pregnancies were discovered, the girls were hurriedly sent back to their homes to avoid public scrutiny.

Responding to the allegations, the Education



Minister informed the House that two of the students were not residents of the Porta Cabin facility, while the third had gone home for the Diwali holidays and had not returned to the hostel since then. His response, however, failed to satisfy the opposition, which claimed that the administration was using technicalities regarding residency to downplay the incident. Dissatisfied with the government's explanation, opposition members staged a walkout from the House. Congress MLAs have demanded a high-level and transparent inquiry into the safety and security of students in state-run residential schools, and called for strict legal action against those responsible for any alleged negligence.

BJP MP Laxman demands inclusion of state OBC castes into Central list

New Delhi, Mar 17: The Rajya Sabha on Monday witnessed a demand for the inclusion of state OBC castes in the central OBC list by BJP OBC Morcha national president and Rajya Sabha member Dr K Laxman.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Dr Laxman, who is also a member of the BJP's Central Election Committee (CEC), informed the House that several OBC communities in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra are recognised in their respective state OBC lists but have not yet been included in the Central list of OBC castes. "That too, despite recommendations made by the National Commission for Backward Classes," he said in the House. Laxman



stated that the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) has already recommended the inclusion of 27 castes from Telangana and five from Andhra Pradesh in the central list of OBC castes. "I urged the government to take necessary steps to include these communities in the central list of OBC lists so that they can receive the benefits and opportunities they

rightfully deserve. This will ensure greater social justice and empowerment for backward communities across the country," he said. Raising the issue in the Upper House, Laxman further said that there has been a long-standing demand to include several OBC communities from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra in the Central OBC list.

Sunil Gavaskar condemns Indian-owned franchise for signing Pakistan bowler

Diplomatic Barriers to Pakistani Players

New Delhi, Mar 17: India cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar has alleged that the signing of Pakistan spinner Abrar Ahmed by an Indian-owned Hundred franchise in England "indirectly contributes to the deaths of Indian soldiers and civilians". Players from Pakistan have not featured in the Indian Premier League (IPL) since 2009 because of deep-seated diplomatic tensions between the two nations.

There was speculation that Pakistan players involved at the inaugural Hundred auction in London would be subject to a "shadow ban", with IPL-affiliated teams refusing to bid for them. That did not come to pass, but Sunrisers Leeds -- from the same group that controls IPL team Sunrisers Hyderabad -- faced a fierce social media backlash after last week clinching a deal for Abrar, paying £190,000 (\$252,000) for his services.



Former India captain Gavaskar, 76, launched a blistering attack in a weekend column for the Indian newspaper Mid-Day. "The fees that they pay to a Pakistani player, who then pays income tax to his government, which buys

arms and weapons, indirectly contributes to the deaths of Indian soldiers and civilians," he wrote. "Whether it is an Indian entity or an overseas subsidiary of the entity that is making the payment, if the owner is Indian then he or she is contributing to the Indian casualties."

Three other Hundred franchises -- MI London, Manchester Super Giants and Southern Brave -- are at least part-owned by companies that control IPL teams. Usman Tariq, the only other Pakistani player bought in auction, was picked up by American-backed Birmingham Phoenix. The England and Wales Cricket Board last month issued a statement saying all eight franchises in the 100-ball-a-side competition were committed to selection based solely on performances.

India and Pakistan, who were engaged in a deadly conflict in May last year, have not played a bilateral series in more than a decade and meet only in global or regional tournaments. "There's still time to undo the wrong and hopefully wiser counsels will prevail," added Gavaskar, the first batsman to score 10,000 runs in Test cricket.

KKR Injury Blow: Harshit Rana Out



Kolkata, Mar 17: Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Harshit Rana is likely to miss a significant part of the upcoming IPL as he continues to recover from a knee surgery he underwent last month. According to a report by 'ESPNCricinfo', the BCCI is yet to fix a timeline for his return. Rana, who sustained a ligament strain in his right knee injury during India's T20 World Cup warm-up match against South Africa, is currently undergoing rehabilitation, with "no firm date of return earmarked by the BCCI medical team yet".

The pacer had pulled up after delivering just one over in that game and was subsequently ruled out of the T20 World Cup following surgery. He was replaced by Mohammed Siraj, who played one match (against the USA) during India's title-winning campaign. Rana was on Sunday awarded the Best International Debutant award at the BCCI Naman Awards. His

absence would come as a major setback for three-time IPL champions KKR, who are already grappling with multiple fitness concerns. Sri Lanka pacer Matheesha Pathirana has been nursing a calf strain sustained during the T20 World Cup, which had initially not been expected to affect his IPL availability. KKR are also without left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman after the BCCI instructed it to release the Bangladeshi player amid strained geopolitical relations between India and Bangladesh earlier this year.

The franchise has since signed Zimbabwe quick Blessing Muzarabani as a replacement. He opted out of his Pakistan Super League stint with Islamabad United as he is set to join the squad here Tuesday. The KKR will begin their pre-season training here from Wednesday.

KKR's other pace options include Vaibhav Arora, Akash Deep, Umran Malik, Kartik Tyagi, and all-rounders Cameron Green and Ramandeep Singh. KKR will begin their campaign against Mumbai Indians in an away fixture on March 29, before hosting Sunrisers Hyderabad, Punjab Kings and Lucknow Super Giants in the opening phase of the tournament.

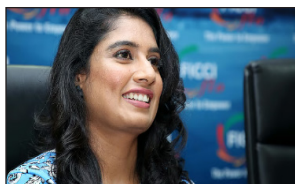
Mithali Raj: Indian Cricket's Dominance Has Come

New Delhi, Mar 17: The news regarding Mithali Raj and the surge of Indian cricket is a testament to the nation's rising dominance across all formats. This past Sunday, March 15, 2026, the BCCI Naman Awards in New Delhi celebrated this "golden era" by honoring the veterans and the history-makers of the current generation. Here is a summary of the key highlights and recent achievements mentioned by Mithali Raj:

Lifetime Achievement Honors The ceremony's highest honor, the Col. CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award, was bestowed upon three legends who have shaped Indian cricket in different capacities:

Mithali Raj: Recognized for her 20-year career and role in elevating the women's game.

Rahul Dravid: Honored for his legendary batting career and his tenure as the coach who ended India's title drought.



LA28 Football to Kick Off Early Across 7 Cities

Los Angeles, Mar 17: The 2028 Los Angeles Olympics football tournament will kick off on July 10, four days before the Opening Ceremony. Spanning seven U.S. cities, the IOC-approved schedule prioritizes athlete welfare by incorporating two extra rest days compared to previous Games. This extended timeline allows for travel and recovery as teams progress across the country.

The group stages and initial quarterfinals will be hosted in New York, Columbus, Nashville, and St. Louis. The competition then shifts to California for the decisive rounds, with San Jose and San Diego hosting high-stakes knockout matches. The tournament reaches its climax at the historic Rose Bowl in Pasadena, which will host the gold-medal matches on July 28 and 29. This legendary venue is no stranger to football history, having previously hosted the 1984 Olympic final and two World Cup finals.

Would you like me to find out which other sports are also scheduled to begin before the official Opening Ceremony on July 14?

Former tennis world number 39 banned for doping



Sydney, Mar 17: Australian tennis player turned coach Marinko Matosevic was slapped with a four-year ban on Tuesday for breaching anti-doping rules between 2018 and 2020. The former world number 39, who most recently helped coach current Australian players Chris O'Connell and Jordan Thompson, initially denied all charges. But he admitted to blood doping in comments shortly before the hearing was scheduled to take place, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) said.

An independent tribunal found he committed five anti-doping rule violations. They included "use of a prohibited method through blood doping and facilitating another player to blood dope". He also "pro-

vided advice to others on how to avoid positive tests, and use and possession of the prohibited substance clenbuterol".

Clenbuterol, a medication prescribed for treating asthma and other breathing difficulties, is sometimes misused by bodybuilders and athletes as an off-label performance enhancer. Matosevic, who played at all four Grand Slams, is banned from any tennis event or activity authorised or sanctioned by the ITIA, such as ATP, WTA or Tennis Australia tournaments, until 2030.

The 40-year-old is likewise prohibited from coaching or working with any players. There is no suggestion that O'Connell or Thompson have breached any rules.

West Asia conflict: Renowned squash coach misses Indian Open due to cancelled flight

Chennai, Mar 17: Former World Number 1 and squash coach David Palmer has said that he missed out on flying to India via Dubai because his flight got cancelled owing to the war between US-Israel and Iran.

He was supposed to travel from New York to Mumbai as his wards — Ramit Tandon and Veer Chotrani are slated to take part in the JSW Indian Open in Mumbai beginning on Wednesday. "Unfortunately, my trip got cancelled. I was supposed to be there, but my flight was through Dubai. And then to get another flight and ticket across wasn't possible. Everything is going pretty crazy with the prices. So, I was hoping to be there. I should have already been there. So, I'm obviously disappointed," he told this daily in a virtual interview.

Presently, operations at the Dubai International Airport is temporarily suspended due to a suspected drone attack near a fuel tank in the premises of the airport. The nine-time Commonwealth Games gold medallist, who is based in Cornell University in New York, said that he will remain in touch with both of his players. "I will be at home (in New York) watching the matches online on PSA squash TV. I'll be in close contact with Veer and Ramit before and after each match as well," he said.

The on-court coach for both of them in Mumbai, however, is yet to be decided. Fourth-seeded Chotrani will face the winner of Yannik Omor and Yash Fadte in Round two. Third seeded Ramit, meanwhile will learn his opponent after



the match between Ravindu Laksiri and Duncan Lee. "I will talk about that with the guys. We'll see who's there. Sometimes they help each other a little bit as well. At the end of the day, it would be nice to be there. But obviously, before every tournament, when I'm not there at different tournaments, we talk the day before, we talk the hour before the match. Obviously, I'm looking at their opponents, studying them, giving tactics. So, we're in close contact. So, I'm not too worried that they'll be fine for this week," he said.

