

## PM Unveils ₹20,000Cr Development Blueprint for Gujarat



**Ahmedabad, Mar 31:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi placed infrastructure at the centre of his Gujarat visit, unveiling projects worth nearly Rs 20,000 crore across roads, railways, and energy in the Vav-Tharad district. PM Modi said, "Development works worth nearly Rs 20,000 crore will accelerate progress across energy, railway and road sectors, injecting fresh momentum into people's lives and strengthening the foundation of a modern Gujarat." One of the major projects was the 109-km Ahmedabad-Dholera Greenfield Expressway, built at a cost exceeding Rs 5,100 crore, to boost high-speed connectivity. The PM further said, "Today, Gujarat stands as the country's leading state in solar energy, a journey that

began in 2010 with the establishment of a pioneering solar park, laying the groundwork for India's renewable future." Modi also took a dig at past governance and said, "The Deesa Airbase, crucial for border security, remained stuck in files for years due to the previous government's neglect. After we assumed responsibility, we fast-tracked the project to safeguard the western border." He further said, "There was a time when people of North Gujarat had to travel miles for water, a crisis ignored earlier. Our government has worked relentlessly to deliver a permanent solution." Driving home the development pitch, he added, "Every village in Gujarat is now connected with quality roads, while high-speed trains

like Vande Bharat have transformed connectivity. With people's trust, this superfast express of development will only accelerate." He added, "Despite war-like situations and a global energy crisis, India has remained stable due to strong foreign policy and national unity. Fuel prices rose sharply in major countries, but India has kept the situation under control." "At such a critical time, Congress continues to weaken the nation through divisive politics and misinformation," he claimed. To conclude his speech, Modi tied cultural identity to global ambition, stating, "From 'Jad Se Judna' in Gandhinagar to 'Jagat Se Judna' in Sanand, Gujarat is showing how India connects its roots with the world."

## Fadnavis Credits BJP, Slams Assam Opposition

**Jorhat, Mar 31:** Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis, campaigning for BJP's Jorhat candidate Hitendra Nath Goswami, highlighted Assam's rapid development under the BJP-led government. He emphasized a strategic focus on infrastructure and cultural preservation, contrasting it with what he termed as decades of Congress neglect toward the Northeast.

Fadnavis asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has prioritized the region, leading to enhanced security, reduced infiltration, and the mainstreaming of former militant groups. He pointed to the upcoming Tata Group semiconductor plant in Jagiroad as a landmark for industrial growth.

Criticizing Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi and the opposition's historical track record, Fadnavis claimed the BJP has successfully replaced stagnation with economic progress. The remarks underscore the party's central campaign theme of "development versus past neglect" ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.



## Rajnath Singh: Unforgivable Congress "Squandered" Assam Youths' Potential

**Tezpur, Mar 31:** Rajnath Singh on Tuesday lashed out at the Congress at a poll rally in Assam, accusing it of squandering the talent and potential of the state's youth and urging people not to forgive the party. Alleging that the Congress focused only on Bangladeshi infiltrators, he claimed the grand old party treated Assam in a "step-motherly" manner during its rule. Addressing an election rally here in support of sitting MLA and ally AGP's Tezpur candidate Prithiraj Rava, the senior BJP leader said, "The Congress has always abused the Assamese youths, their talent and capabilities. They should not be forgiven." "The only concern of the Congress is Bangladeshi infiltrators for its vote bank. Politics should not be done only for government formation; politics should be done for nation-building," Singh said.

He claimed that due to illegal immigration from Bangladesh, the population balance in a few districts of Assam has been distorted. "During Congress rule, Delhi kept Assam at a distance. Since Independence, Congress has abused Assam's rights," Singh alleged. "Insurgency, poverty and starvation dominated the news in Assam under the Congress government. But it

changed after the BJP came to power," he asserted. "Assam is at the centre of development, and it is the northeast's development engine. India's development gains pace if Assam progresses," Singh added.

He claimed that more than 7,500 extremists have laid down their arms in Assam to



join the mainstream under the BJP's rule. "The BJP eliminated corruption and did justice to tea garden workers by giving land rights. Nobody can stop NDA from getting two-thirds majority in Assam," the defence minister said. He said that the Congress used to call border villages 'last village of India', while the BJP has termed those the country's first villages, showing a difference in the outlook. "Earlier, India was not taken seriously on the global stage, but now everyone listens when India speaks. Only the BJP can keep India's head high," Singh asserted.

## Smoke detected mid-air: Air India Express makes emergency landing

### Emergency landing at Lucknow Terminal 3: Aircraft grounded after arrival

**Lucknow, Mar 31:** An Air India Express flight made an emergency landing at Lucknow's Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport, where a full-scale emergency was declared on Monday evening after a Mayday call by the pilot. Flight IX 1523 was travelling from Bagdogra in West Bengal to Delhi. It was flying above the Ghaghara river in Ambedkar Nagar district at around 4.58 pm when the pilots claimed to have detected what they believed to be smoke emanating from the aircraft's avionics panels in the cabin and immediately informed air traffic control. Upon detecting smoke, the pilot made a 'Mayday' call to

Lucknow Air Traffic Control. After the Mayday call, oxygen masks were provided to the passengers. After receiving permission for an emergency landing in Lucknow, the aircraft landed safely at 5.17 pm. Since then, the flight has been parked at Lucknow's Terminal 3. The flight had 148 passengers and crew members on board, and all were safe. Many passengers were sent to Delhi on other flights, while some were accommodated in hotels in Lucknow. Security and technical teams are investigating the aircraft. Initial investigation has not revealed any clear cause of the alleged smoke or fire.

Several passengers later said the sudden drop of oxygen masks, combined with the Mayday announcement, led to moments of fear and confusion inside the aircraft. Some passengers reported that anxiety spread quickly as cabin crew rushed to reassure travellers and calmly guided them on how to use the masks while the aircraft prepared for diversion. Officials said no injuries were reported. A thorough inspection of the aircraft was carried out by the airport fire department and technical teams, but no visible signs of smoke or fire were found. Despite the absence of any immediate findings, the air-



craft was grounded as a safety measure and will return to service only after a comprehensive technical evaluation and formal certification of

airworthiness. Airport officials reiterated that the emergency procedures followed during the incident ensured passenger

safety, noting that precautionary diversions and grounding of aircraft are standard practice when potential technical issues are reported mid-flight.



## Tripura Panchayats Win National Awards; CM Saha Hails Success



**Agartala, Mar 31:** Chief Minister Prof. Dr. Manik Saha on Tuesday said Tripura has earned national recognition in grassroots governance as three panchayat bodies from the state secured top honours in the Deen Dayal Upadhyay and Nanaji Deshmukh Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar 2025 instituted by Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Expressing happiness over the achievement, the Chief Minister said the awards reflect Tripura's steady progress in strengthening rural administration and inclusive development. "Thrilled to announce that Tripura shines bright as three of our panchayats have won the prestigious Deen Dayal Upadhyay and Nanaji Deshmukh Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar 2025 by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India," Saha said.

According to him, Sepahijala district secured Rank 1 in the Best District Panchayat category, while Kanchabari Gram Panchayat achieved Rank 1 in the Healthy Panchayat category. Baikunthapur Gram Panchayat was awarded Rank 3 in the Women-Friendly Panchayat category. The Chief Minister said the award-winning institutions will also receive financial incentives, with Sepahijala district getting ₹5 crore, Kanchabari Gram Panchayat ₹1 crore, and Baikunthapur Gram Panchayat ₹50 lakh.

Congratulating the elected representatives, officials and local residents associated with the achievement, Saha said the recognition is a matter of pride for Tripura and highlights the success of grassroots governance initiatives being implemented across the state. "Proud of our grassroots governance," he added, noting that such recognition would further motivate local bodies to work for sustainable rural development and people-centric administration.

## Meghalaya gets LPG relief as Centre raises LPG allocation to 70%: Official

**Shillong, Mar 30:** The Centre's recent decision to increase commercial LPG allocation to 70% of the previous levels in all states will help Meghalaya cope with the cooking gas crisis, a state government said, on Monday. Director of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Saloni Verma said the enhanced allocation follows ongoing discussions with the Government of India and a review of the situation across states. "Commercial LPG supply has now been increased to 70% of the previous allocation level for all states, including Meghalaya. This will significantly ease the situation for tourism operators, dhabas, restaurants and hotels," she said.

Verma also asserted that domestic LPG distribution remains unaffected, though queues of consumers were reported before gas agency offices in various parts of the

state. The Centre had imposed a 20% cut in commercial LPG supply from March 11 due to disruptions in imports linked to the situation in the Middle East, which had affected availability across several states.

Meghalaya requires around 1,000 commercial LPG cylinders per day, but following the reduction, supply had then dropped sharply, affecting services in hotels, dhabas and restaurants. Officials said that the situation is improving gradually and, in the last three days, around 400 cylinders have been supplied daily following the revised allocation.

Verma said essential services such as hospitals and educational institutions have continued to receive full LPG supply during the period. On domestic cooking gas, she maintained that there has been no disruption in supply. Prior to the shortage, the state distributed around 6,000-7,000 cylinders



per day, and even after March 11, supply has remained in the range of 5,000-7,000 cylinders daily. Addressing concerns over long queues at LPG distribution points, Verma said these were primarily due to the ongoing e-KYC process required for obtaining de-duplication certificates for new connections. "The verification process has been introduced by oil companies to prevent hoarding and duplication.

The queues are largely due to this exercise and not because of any shortage of domestic LPG," she said. Between March 25 and 27, the state distributed 22,094 domestic LPG cylinders, the official added. "We have constituted District LPG Monitoring Committees as well as a State Level LPG Monitoring Committee, which are closely monitoring the situation to ensure smooth supply," she said.

## Modi: Morung Heritage Guides Learning

**Guwahati, Mar 30:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Sunday, lauded the traditional Morung learning system of Nagaland, and said that through this custom, interest in subjects like Mathematics and Science can be instilled in children. In his monthly radio broadcast, Mann Ki Baat, Modi said the Naga community is making an effort to preserve the past and prepare for the future through education. The people of this community deeply respect their tribal traditions, while also maintaining a modern approach, he said. The Prime Minister said the Naga tribes had a traditional system of Morung learning, in which elders would share traditional knowledge, history, and life skills with the youth through their experiences.

"Over time, this system has evolved into the Morung concept of education. Through this system, interest in children in subjects like mathematics and science is instilled," he said. The Morung system in Nagaland is a traditional community-based education model, often called a bachelor's dormitory, acting as a centre for social, cultural, and life-skills learning. Modi said that through this system, elders in the community teach them life skills through stories, folk songs and traditional games. "In this way, our Nagaland is advancing children's education while preserving its cultural heritage. If you learn about such efforts in your area, please share them with me," he added. Modi also shared a very inspiring effort

that has come forth from the Chizami village in Nagaland. He said the women of the village are collectively preserving more than 150 varieties of traditional seeds, and these seeds are being preserved in a community seed bank, run by the village women themselves. These include rice, millet, maize, pulses, vegetables, and a variety of herbs, and this is an effort that preserves knowledge, keeps traditions alive, and lays a strong foundation for future generations, Modi said. "Today, when the world is facing challenges like climate change, such efforts show us that solutions are not always far away. Sometimes, our own traditional knowledge and community efforts offer us the strongest path forward," he said.

## Assam CM Targets Gogoi Over Alleged Global Property Portfolio

**Guwahati, Mar 31:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday challenged state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi to divulge details of his property in Pakistan and the UK. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the BJP's manifesto release programme here, Sarma asked the Jorhat Lok Sabha MP to give the list of his properties outside the country to the Election Commission. "Gogoi has not given the details of his wife's income from Pakistan, nor has he mentioned her bank account in the neighbouring country," he said.

The chief minister asserted that he is making a clear alle-

gation against Gogoi that he has properties both in Pakistan as well as in London while Rajgor Dal president Akhil Gogoi has alleged that he even has property in America. "This is not my allegation but I want him to give details of his transactions in Pakistan in his affidavit to the Election Commission," he said. Sarma said that he was making these allegations, "with responsibility and from the chief minister's office that Gogoi has properties in his wife's name in both Pakistan and London which he has not shown in the affidavit submitted to the Election Commission". The CM said that if there is no property, then he



should submit the transactions of his wife's bank account in Pakistan, even if it is an old one, before four neutral persons, mentioning the names of four journalists. "These four persons should examine the bank accounts and tell the peo-

ple whether it is correct or I am telling a lie", he added.

There are many "serious allegations" against Gogoi, which "I do not want to bring out now to spoil the election atmosphere, but after the polls, I will bring forward more se-

rious information on this issue which has come to my notice," Sarma said. He claimed that there was a debate on Pakistan TV recently where it was mentioned that Gogoi had visited that country as a part of an NGO. "Now a question is raised, Gogoi was saying all this time that he had gone there privately, but Pakistan TV is claiming that he came as part of an NGO. It is evident from the debate how sympathetic people of Pakistan are towards him", he added. The chief minister has been attacking Gogoi and his British wife, Elizabeth Clare Gogoi, alleging that they have a connection with Pakistani intelligence agency ISI

and had also set up a SIT to probe the matter.

Regarding the recent joining of senior Congress leaders in the BJP, Sarma said that he can bring "anybody into BJP they are Assamese and I have the right to bring them". Nobody is a Congress member by birth and there is no restriction preventing me from bringing them to our party, he added. "Go and ask Congress why they cannot keep their members with love and respect. "What magic does Himanta have that they come to us and not stay with them? This is a question that should be posed to the Congress and not to us," Sarma asserted.



## Manipal Hospitals expands North East footprint with 'Anveshana' initiative, target shealth awareness and referral growth

**Itanagar:** Manipal Hospitals EM Bypass strengthened its outreach in the North East by hosting 'Anveshana – Medical Education for Media' at the Arunachal Press Club, positioning the initiative as a strategic step to bridge healthcare awareness gaps and expand access to specialised care. The programme brought together leading doctors and media professionals to promote early diagnosis, accurate health communication, and emergency preparedness.

The event featured the launch of a Media Privilege Card and a hands-on CPR

training session, reinforcing the role of timely intervention in critical care. Specialists including Dr. Kinshuk Chatterjee (Surgical Oncology), Dr. Kaustav Debnath (Orthopaedics), Dr. Raja Majumder (Emergency Medicine), and Dr. Chirasree Sanyal (Clinical Haematology) highlighted rising health concerns such as high cancer incidence, widespread anaemia, trauma-related injuries, and low CPR awareness. Doctors stressed that delayed diagnosis—especially with 60–70% of cancer cases detected late—continues to impact survival rates in



the region. Manipal Hospitals is leveraging Kolkata as a hub for

advanced treatment, reducing patient outflow to distant metros. The group, which operates 49 hospitals across 24 cities with over 12,600 beds and serves 8 million patients annually, is focusing on strengthening referral networks from underserved regions like Arunachal Pradesh.

In Itanagar, the initiative is likely to drive demand for diagnostics, preventive screenings, and specialised consultations, while improving patient referral pipelines to tertiary care centres, creating new opportunities in the regional healthcare ecosystem.

## Axis Max Life, YES BANK mark 21 years; eye digital-first insurance push

**Guwahati:** Axis Max Life Insurance Limited and YES BANK Limited on Sunday celebrated 21 years of their bancassurance partnership, reaffirming a joint focus on digital-first delivery and hyper-personalised protection solutions. Over two decades, the alliance has evolved into a strong distribution ecosystem, leveraging YES BANK's network of over 1,300 branches to serve around 18.03 lakh policyholders with a cumulative sum assured exceeding ₹1.50 lakh crore. The partnership has integrated new-age technologies to simplify insurance access, offering solutions across child education, retirement planning, wealth creation and term protection. Key innovations include video-based consultations and agile underwriting systems aimed at faster onboarding and enhanced customer experience.

Axis Max Life MD & CEO Sumit Madan said the collaboration reflects a shared commitment to customer-first growth, adding that over 18 lakh families have been protected through the combined strengths of both institutions. YES BANK MD & CEO Prashant Kumar highlighted the role of digital infrastructure in seamlessly integrating insurance into banking journeys, with a focus on expanding reach in underserved markets. In Guwahati, the partnership is expected to gain traction as demand for structured financial protection rises among urban middle-class families and small businesses. Industry observers note that increasing digital adoption and awareness around term insurance and retirement planning are driving growth in the region, with banks playing a key role in last-mile access.

## Bajaj Finserv Dhuniverse finale on March 31 to crown 'Voice of the Nation'

**Mumbai:** Bajaj Finserv will unveil the winner of its digital-first music talent platform, Bajaj Dhuniverse, on March 31 in Mumbai, marking the culmination of one of India's largest nationwide music discovery initiatives. The winner will be named the 'Voice of the Nation' and collaborate with composer trio Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy to co-create the brand's sonic identity.

Launched as a technology-led platform, Bajaj Dhuniverse attracted over 60,000 aspirants from across India, enabling participation through audio and video submissions without physical auditions. The initiative aimed to break geographic barriers and create opportunities for talent from small towns and remote regions. Following a multi-stage evaluation, 10 finalists and one wild-card entrant, shortlisted and mentored by Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, will perform live at the grand finale, which will also be streamed nationwide. The winner will record an independent album with Zee Music Company and collaborate on a Spotify release.

Manav Mianwal, President – Digital Platforms at Bajaj Finserv, said the platform reflects the company's commitment to nurturing aspirations and building role models. Members of Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy highlighted the inclusivity and depth of talent discovered through the digital format.

Bajaj Dhuniverse, launched in November 2025, positions itself as an inclusive and scalable platform to identify and promote emerging musical talent across India.

## ICICI Prudential Life unveils Smallcap 250 Index Fund to drive long-term wealth creation

**Imphal:** ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched the ICICI Prudential Life Smallcap 250 Index Fund under its Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPs), enabling investors to participate in India's emerging growth stories through a disciplined, index-based approach. The fund tracks the Smallcap 250 Index, comprising companies ranked 251st to 500th within the Nifty 500 universe, offering exposure to 250 emerging firms across sectors.

The fund adopts a passive, rule-based strategy, mirroring the index to ensure transparency and consistency. It provides diversified exposure across sectors such as financial services, healthcare and capital goods, allowing investors to par-

ticipate in multiple growth opportunities through a single fund. However, due to regulatory constraints, the fund may not always replicate index weights fully, potentially resulting in tracking errors.

Commenting on the launch, CIO Manish Kumar said the fund offers a "simple and transparent" route for long-term investors seeking structured exposure to emerging companies, while maintaining diversification and alignment with benchmark performance.

As of February 27, 2026, the Nifty Smallcap 250 TRI delivered 15.36% one-year returns, with a five-year annualised return of 19.04% and 15.45% since inception, reflecting strong long-term growth potential despite market-linked

risks. In Imphal, financial planners note rising interest in ULIP-linked equity products, with the new fund expected to attract young investors and salaried individuals looking for disciplined, long-term wealth creation options.



## MSE completes market maker appointments, plans liquidity boost from April 1

**Mumbai:** Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India (MSE) on Wednesday announced the successful completion of the appointment of Market Makers for its Equity Segment, a move aimed at strengthening market depth and improving overall trading

efficiency. The exchange said the development will support efficient price discovery and enhance the trading experience for investors and participants.

The exchange further stated that it will initiate a fresh phase of liquidity enhance-

ment measures starting April 1, 2026. The step is part of MSE's broader strategy to deepen market participation and create a more vibrant trading ecosystem. The initiative reflects the exchange's continued focus on building a transparent, efficient, and

competitive marketplace for all stakeholders.

The presence of Market Makers will help ensure tighter bid-ask spreads and consistent liquidity, which could attract greater investor interest and boost trading volumes on the platform.

## Insurance riders gain traction as cost-effective tool to strengthen financial protection

**Guwahati:** Insurance riders are increasingly being seen as a crucial component in building comprehensive financial security, as consumers look beyond traditional life insurance coverage. While standard policies primarily address the risk of death, experts highlight that risks such as critical illness, accidents, disability, and loss of income can significantly impact financial stability during a person's lifetime.

Riders, or add-ons, allow policyholders to enhance base policies by covering specific risks without the

need for multiple standalone plans. These optional benefits are considered affordable and flexible, enabling individuals to customise coverage based on their lifestyle, profession, health history, and family responsibilities. Popular options include critical illness riders offering lump-sum payouts for diseases like cancer or heart attack, accidental death and disability riders with enhanced payouts, and income benefit riders ensuring steady financial support for families.

Experts note that riders also provide features like waiver of premium,

ensuring policy continuity during financial distress, and tax benefits under Sections 80C and 80D. Their convenience lies in consolidating multiple protections under a single policy, reducing administrative burden.

In Guwahati, rising medical costs and increasing financial awareness among young professionals and families are driving demand for rider-based policies. Local insurers report a growing preference for bundled protection solutions that offer wider coverage at lower costs.



## Renault Duster Turbo 160 delivers 18.45 km/l mileage, sets benchmark in segment

**Guwahati:** Renault India has announced ARAI-certified fuel efficiency figures for the new Renault Duster powered by the Turbo TCe 160 engine, reinforcing its focus on performance and efficiency. The SUV delivers 18.45 km/l with the DCT automatic transmission and 17.75 km/l with the 6-speed manual variant.

Dr V Vikraman, Chief of Renault Engineering, Renault Group India, said the certified figures reflect the company's technological strength and commitment to delivering superior value. He noted that the Turbo 160 engine uses advanced features such as low-friction coatings and high-pressure fuel injection to op-



timise combustion and efficiency, while the latest DCT transmission ensures seamless gear shifts and responsive performance.

Engineered for Indian driving conditions, the new Duster produces 163 PS of power and 280 Nm of torque, making it the most powerful offering in its seg-

ment. Renault said the model combines strong performance with best-in-class ride and handling, supported by an optimised powertrain design.

In Guwahati, the new Duster is expected to attract strong interest due to rising demand for powerful yet fuel-efficient SUVs suited to varied terrain and long-distance travel in the Northeast. Dealers anticipate that the balance of performance and mileage could position the model competitively in the region.

Renault India, a subsidiary of Renault S.A.S., manufactures vehicles at its Oragadam facility in Chennai and operates over 350 sales and 450 service touch-points nationwide.

## India bets on outcomes financing to scale skilling, Jayant Chaudhary showcases global partnerships at OFA Summit

**Guwahati:** India is sharpening its focus on outcomes-based financing to accelerate skill development and human capital growth, with Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and MoS Education Jayant Chaudhary highlighting the strategy at the Outcomes Finance Alliance (OFA) Summit 2026 in Cape Town.

At the global forum held from March 25-27, Chaudhary joined a high-level plenary on unlocking public-private funding alongside leaders from South Africa, Switzerland, and financial institutions. He stressed aligning public, private, and philanthropic capital to deliver measur-

able outcomes in skilling, education, and livelihoods. "The real challenge is ensuring investments translate into measurable outcomes," he said, underlining India's scalable approach amid rapid technological and demographic shifts.

The minister also held bilateral engagements with African leaders, including South Africa's Deputy Ministers and Nigeria's Lagos education board, focusing on workforce readiness and outcomes-based financing. India shared learnings from the Skill Impact Bond and the upcoming Skills Outcomes Fund, while drawing insights from South Africa's Jobs Boost initiative.

Further discussions with global partners such as the UK government, OECD, SECO Switzerland, and philanthropic institutions explored collaboration in innovative financing and skills development, including lessons from the UK's Better Futures Fund. The push for outcomes-based financing is likely to influence Guwahati, where demand for industry-linked skill training is rising. With Assam emerging as a key skilling hub in the Northeast, such global partnerships could drive private investment, strengthen training ecosystems, and improve employment outcomes, particularly for youth entering sectors like services, logistics, and digital industries.

## Xiaomi launches REDMI 15A 5G with focus on long battery, smooth performance at competitive pricing

**Guwahati:** Xiaomi India on Monday announced the launch of the REDMI 15A 5G, a new entrant in the budget 5G segment designed to deliver reliable day-to-day performance and long-lasting usability. The device is positioned to meet rising consumer demand for seamless multitasking, streaming and connectivity without complexity. At the core of the smartphone is an octa-core 5G processor paired with a 6300mAh battery, which is claimed to last up to two days under heavy usage. It supports 15W fast charging and 7.5W wired reverse charging. The REDMI 15A 5G features a 6.9-inch display with up to 120Hz refresh rate, 800 nits brightness and Wet Touch Technology 2.0, along with TÜV Rheinland certifications

for low blue light, flicker-free and circadian-friendly viewing.

On the camera front, it offers a 32MP AI dual rear setup and an 8MP front camera, while audio output is enhanced with up to 200% volume boost. Running on HyperOS 3.0 based on Android 16, the device comes with four years of Android updates and six years of security updates. Additional features include IP52 rating, fingerprint sensor, dual SIM and expandable storage up to 2TB.

The launch is expected to bolster Xiaomi's presence in Guwahati, where demand for affordable 5G smartphones is accelerating. With pricing starting at Rs 12,999, the device is likely to appeal to value-conscious consumers, including



students and young professionals, as competition intensifies across offline retail and e-commerce channels. The REDMI 15A 5G will be available from April 3 via Flipkart, mi.com and authorisedXiaomi retail stores, with variants priced at Rs 12,999 (4GB+64GB), Rs 14,499 (4GB+128GB) and Rs 16,499 (6GB+128GB).

## ₹200 crore CSR push: Piyush Goyal launches Malabar Gold & Diamonds' mega social initiative

**Guwahati:** Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday unveiled Malabar Gold & Diamonds' ₹200 crore CSR programme for FY 2026-27 at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, marking a major push towards education, healthcare and social welfare. The minister also inaugurated the distribution of scholarships to 33,000 girl students across India. Calling the initiative aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao vision, Goyal said the investment would strengthen inclusive growth, with a focus on empowering women and youth. He urged students to "dream big" and contribute to India's growth story.

Malabar Group Chairman M.P. Ahammad said human resource development re-

mains key to national progress, adding that the scholarship programme would enable students to achieve academic success and contribute to the economy.

The CSR plan will be implemented across 3,000 locations in 19 states, benefiting over 2 lakh people. Of the total outlay, ₹114 crore is earmarked for education, ₹30 crore for food distribution, ₹14.2 crore for healthcare, and ₹25 crore for housing projects such as 'Grandma Home'.

The company will also expand micro-learning centres for street children from 1,543 to 2,500 in partnership with Pratham Education Foundation. Since inception, Malabar's CSR initiatives have impacted over 1.8 million people globally.

## IndusInd Bank launches Capital Gains Account Scheme to boost tax-saving reinvestment



**Guwahati:** IndusInd Bank on Thursday announced the launch of its Capital Gains Account Scheme (CGAS), aimed at helping customers park long-term capital gains and claim tax exemptions under the provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

The scheme follows authorisation from the Central Board of Direct Taxes, allowing the bank to accept deposits under the Capital Gains Account Scheme, 1988. It enables customers to securely hold unutilised gains from the sale of assets such as residential properties, agricultural land, urban land, farmhouses and SEZ-linked land, until reinvestment within prescribed timelines.

IndusInd Bank will offer two account variants under the scheme. Type A, a savings account, provides flexibility with deposits and withdrawals and no minimum balance requirement. Type B, a term deposit account,

allows fixed tenure deposits starting at ₹10,000, offering higher returns aligned with reinvestment timelines. The scheme is available at authorised non-rural branches for resident individuals, Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs), non-individual entities and NRIs.

With over 31 years of operations, IndusInd Bank currently serves around 42 million customers through more than 3,100 branches and over 3,000 ATMs across India, supported by its 'Digital 2.0' strategy and platforms like 'INDIE'. In Guwahati, the scheme is expected to benefit property sellers and investors in Assam's growing urban centres, where real estate transactions are rising. Financial advisors say CGAS could encourage more structured reinvestment planning, especially among middle-class investors looking to optimise tax liabilities while reinvesting in housing and land assets.

## Chetak Screen Awards 2026: Where to watch, who's nominated — Dhurandhar tops with 24 nods

**New Delhi:** Viewers can expect a star-packed and widely accessible Chetak Screen Awards 2026, as the Indian Express Group's Screen Academy announced nominations ahead of the April 5 ceremony. Aditya Dhar's Dhurandhar leads with 24 nominations, followed by Saiyaara (17) and Homebound (15), making them the key titles to watch this season.

The awards cover 31 categories across both theatrical and OTT releases, offering audiences a mix of popular and critically acclaimed content. In major categories like Best Film and Best Di-

rector, contenders include Dhurandhar, Homebound, Saiyaara, Chhaava, and Superboys of Malegaon. Acting nominations feature well-known names such as Ranveer Singh, Vicky Kaushal, Triptii Dimri, and Radhika Apte, alongside OTT performers like Manoj Bajpayee, Abhishek Bachchan, and Sanya Malhotra.

For consumers, accessibility is a key highlight this year. For the first time in 20 years, the awards will be broadcast live, with free global streaming on YouTube, in addition to telecast on Sony Entertainment Television and Sony Liv.



## Honeymoon Suggestions: Countries with Visa Ease for Indian Couples



Organizing a honeymoon overseas has significantly simplified for Indian couples due to an expanding array of destinations that provide visa-free entry, visa-on-arrival, or streamlined e-visa procedures. These developments facilitate romantic escapes throughout Asia, Europe, and the Indian Ocean, allowing couples to concentrate more on their experiences rather than on administrative tasks. From idyllic tropical islands to vibrant urban centers, here are 9 destinations that merge romance with visa-friendly regulations. The Maldives remains one of the

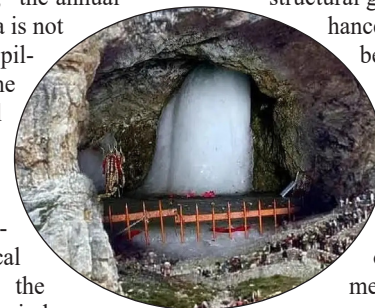
most popular choices, offering Indian travelers visa-free entry for up to 30 days. Its overwater villas, turquoise lagoons, and private island resorts make it the ultimate destination for couples seeking luxury and seclusion. Similarly, Mauritius allows visa-free stays of up to 90 days, with pristine beaches, coral reefs, and high-end resorts that cater to honeymooners looking for both relaxation and adventure. Closer to home, Bali in Indonesia is a perennial favorite. With visa-free entry for 30 days, couples can explore its beaches, temples, rice terraces, and vibrant nightlife.

Thailand has also become even more accessible, offering visa-free entry for up to 30 days. Whether it's the islands of Phuket and Krabi, the cultural charm of Chiang Mai, or the energy of Bangkok, Thailand offers a mix of affordability and variety that appeals to many newlyweds. For couples who prefer mountains and spirituality, Nepal provides visa-free entry and breathtaking Himalayan views. Trekking, cultural immersion, and serene retreats make it ideal for nature lovers. Sri Lanka, with its easy e-visa process, offers scenic train rides, tea plantations, and coastal escapes, blending culture and natural beauty in a compact setting. Oman, another visa-friendly option, is perfect for those seeking something offbeat, with desert landscapes, fjords, and Arabian charm. Urban explorers may find Singapore irresistible. Singapore's quick e-visa process opens the door to futuristic skylines, Sentosa Island, and a vibrant food culture. Dubai, with its straightforward e-visa, offers iconic skyscrapers, desert safaris, luxury shopping, and romantic dhow cruises along the creek. It combines modernity with unique cultural experiences, making Dubai ideal for couples who enjoy city life.

## Recognizing the Effects of the Amarnath Yatra on Tourism

The Amarnath Yatra unites dedication, perseverance, and a clear economic boom for Jammu & Kashmir each year. This revered journey to the Amarnath Cave, which is tucked away in the heart of the Himalayas, not only inspires pilgrims but also drives the tourism industry in a whole area. According to Mr. Ravi Gosain, President of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), "the annual Amarnath Yatra is not only a spiritual pilgrimage but the life-giving soul of the economy of Jammu & Kashmir." Pilgrims Powering Local Prosperity In the June-July window, more than three lakh pilgrims descended upon the valley, triggering a cascade of benefits across transport, hospitality, food services, and the local handicrafts market. "Hotels, guesthouses, and homestays were overflowing, while local vendors and artisans had a hefty business," Mr. Gosain shares. The towns of Pahalgam and Baltal came alive with the energy of visitors, creating an unusually extended high season for surrounding tourist hotspots. Beyond the Yatra: Exploring Kash-

mir's Scenic Circuit One of the indirect but deeply positive impacts of the Yatra is its contribution to extending tourism into nearby destinations. "Lots of pilgrims stay longer for sightseeing in scenic locations of Gulmarg, Sonmarg, and Srinagar, thus extending the tourist season," says Mr. Gosain. This blend of spiritual travel and leisure tourism has led to tangible infrastructural gains: improved roads, enhanced healthcare access, and better mobile connectivity, which benefit both locals and tourists year-round. Challenges on the Trail: Managing Security and Sustainability Yet, the pilgrimage isn't without its hurdles. Environmental degradation, waste management, and safety remain key concerns. "Security was the major concern, and therefore, to ensure safety, 50,000 security personnel were deployed after the terrifying recent events in Pahalgam," he notes. "It's not just an annual recurrence, but an occasion of the local community coming together with new hope, offering visitors the best holiday experience," adds Mr. Gosain. The Amarnath Yatra stands as a vivid example of how faith-fueled travel can shape a region's economy, cultural exchange, and community spirit.



## The Definitive Complimentary California Road Trip: Discover The Golden State Without Incurring Any Expenses

Many of California's finest treasures are available at no cost. With a wealth of unmatched natural beauty, distinctive landmarks, and unique attractions, you need not spend much (or anything at all!) to experience the highlights of the Golden State. Explore a selection of essential free or low-cost activities throughout the state that are budget-friendly.

### Adventures galore

Walk or rent bikes to cross the Sacramento River on the 700-foot architectural marvel of the Sundial Bridge, located at Turtle Bay Exploration Park in Redding. Nearby, you can also stroll through Paul Bunyan's Forest Camp or relax in the McConnell Arboretum & Botanical Gardens. A trip to the Shasta Cascade region wouldn't be complete without visiting some of the area's stunning waterfalls. With over 50 in the area, there is something for everyone ranging from easily accessible to more strenuous with spectacular payoff in Shasta, Siskiyou, Butte, Plumas, Tehama and Trinity County.

### North Coast

Drive the Avenue of Giants in Humboldt County Cruise this 31-mile stretch, which runs parallel to Highway 101 and is flanked by the enormous trees of Humboldt Redwoods State Park. But the exploration can go beyond the car: make a quick stop on the avenue to check-out the park's loop trails that have views of some of the world's tallest trees in the Rockefeller Forest.

### San Francisco Bay Area

#### Bike along the Napa Valley Vine Trail

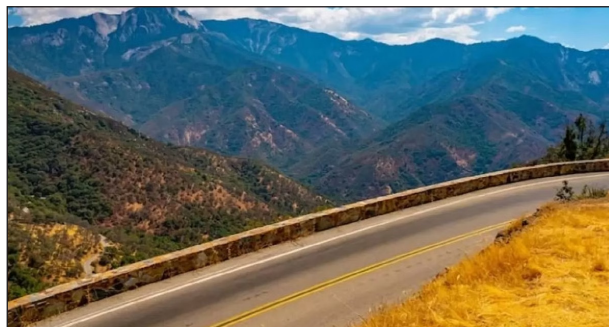
The Napa Valley Vine Trail runs from downtown Napa to Yountville, going straight through the heart of the valley. Open to both bikes and pedestrians, the trail is the perfect way to see wine country and the vines that put it on the map. Don't forget to stop for a photo op at one of the two famous "Welcome to Napa Valley" signs.

### Gold Country

Look at Past History in California's Capitol With its noble columns and stunning cupola, California's State Capitol building in Sacramento looks like a mini replica of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Take a free tour to learn about the 1869 building's architecture and history, or stroll through the adjacent 40-acre Capitol Park, where you can admire monuments and memorials that remind visitors of California's history and natural beauty.

### High Sierra

Swim in Tenaya Lake at Yosemite National Park Dive into clear blue waters on a hot summer day, or sim-



ply admire the beautiful mountains from the shore at Tenaya Lake. Because of its free admission, its prime spots for picnicking and calm waters for safe swimming and canoeing, this lake deserves a spot on visitors' next Yosemite trip.

### Central Valley See Endangered Species

Wind Wolves Preserve, just outside Bakersfield, offers over 30,000 acres of wild terrain and rare wildlife. Free to hike or camp, this nature conservancy site is home to the endangered

San Joaquin kit fox, California condors and sweeping wildflower fields in spring. Don't miss the El Camino Viejo Trail.

### Central Coast

#### Stroll through Solvang

Wandering this Danish-style village in the Santa Ynez Valley is an attraction in itself, immediately transporting visitors to the Old World. Solvang's flower-lined streets are packed with windmills, historic buildings and free-to-enter attractions like the Elverhøj Museum of History & Art. Don't forget to sample aebleskiver or peek into the old-style bakeries while you wander.

### Visit the Santa Monica Pier

The iconic Santa Monica Pier blends beachside fun with nostalgic charm. Walk the boardwalk, watch street performers or take in ocean views — all for free. Bonus: The pier also hosts a small aquarium beneath its carousel that offers free educational events throughout the year.

### Orange County

#### Hang Ten

A trip to Orange County wouldn't be complete without catching a wave and hanging ten, or at least watching the pros do it! The Huntington Beach Pier is a great viewing spot to watch some of the best, but also perfect for beginners. In Dana Point, Doheny State Beach is a locals' favorite, plus visitors can stop in the original Hobie Surf Shop.

### Inland Empire

#### Big Entertainment in Big Bear

Stop by the Big Bear Discovery Center, the largest visitor center in the Big Bear Valley, for free entertainment throughout the year. Enjoy events like outdoor concerts, theater productions and nighttime interpretive programs in the Amphitheater. Make sure to take a dip in the lake before you leave!



## Sabudana Paratha for Fasting That's Simple And Filling



If you're tired of the usual Sabudana Kichdi or Sabudana Tikki, try something new: Sabudana Paratha. It's not only delicious and satisfying but also ideal for fasting — light on the stomach and packed with energy. Serve it with curd or vrat-friendly chutney for an extra flavour boost. Wash the sabudana thoroughly 2–3 times. Then soak it in water for 4–5 hours, ensuring the water level is just above the sabudana. This helps soften the grains for easy mixing. In a large bowl, add the soaked sabudana. Mash in the boiled potatoes. Then mix in green chillies, coriander, cumin seeds, black pepper, rock salt, and lemon juice. Combine well until evenly mixed. The sabudana and potato mixture should resemble dough. If it feels too

sticky or loose, add a little rajgira (amaranth) flour or water chestnut flour to bind. Grease your hands with ghee. Take small portions of the dough and roll them into balls. Place each one between two greased plastic sheets or clingfilm and roll gently into a paratha shape. This prevents sticking and helps keep the paratha intact. Heat a pan and lightly grease with ghee or peanut oil. Cook the paratha on medium heat, flipping occasionally, until golden brown on both sides. Add a touch more ghee while cooking for crispiness. Air Sabudana Paratha with a bowl of curd mixed with rock salt and roasted cumin. You can also serve it with coriander-mint fasting chutney for a refreshing kick. Add extra roasted peanuts on top if you'd like more crunch.

## A delicious Indian Chana Masala recipe that everyone should learn

Indian cuisine is incredibly diverse. You'll find rich curries and breads throughout the Northern region, rice- and lentil-based dishes in the Southern — and plenty of sweets, street foods and drinks sprinkled throughout. From everyday dishes meant for weeknight cooking to ones reserved for special occasions like Diwali, you'll easily find many that you return to on a regular basis. And, if you're anything like us, you'll be inspired to keep a few essentials (like paneer, a jar of ghee and the spice blend, garam masala) on hand, too. You can't go wrong with any of the recipes in this roundup but Chana Masala is one of our favorites. Often called Amritsari Chole, this chickpea curry originates from Punjab but is popular all over India. There are many versions of this dish and every house has its own take on it. Ours features chickpeas smothered in a delicious thick, piquant and spiced gravy

Chana masala or chickpea curry, often called Amritsari Chole, originates from Punjab but is popular all over India. There are many versions of this dish and every house has its own take on it. This super authentic recipe from my mother-in-law's kitchen is my favorite, with the chickpeas smothered in a delicious thick, piquant and spiced gravy. First, they are cooked and infused with black tea and black cardamom, then simmered with a masala made with supremely aromatic roasted spices. This dish gets its tang from dried pomegranate seeds and raw mango powder.

Though it's a little bit of work, it is the real McCoy and once you've had this version, nothing else will live up to it!

Drain the chickpeas, then combine them in a large Dutch oven with the baking soda, bay leaves, black tea bag, black cardamom, 1 teaspoon salt and 3 cups of water. (To pressure cook the chickpeas, see Cook's Note.) Bring the mixture to



a boil in a large Dutch oven, then reduce to a simmer and cook, partially covered with a lid, until the chickpeas are tender, about 1 hour. If the liquid is evaporating too quickly before the chickpeas are tender, pour in an additional 1 cup of water and continue to cook. Discard the tea bag, bay leaves and cardamom. Drain the chickpeas and put them back in the pot. Meanwhile, heat the ghee and/or oil in

a large skillet or saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onions and 1/2 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring and scraping occasionally, until the onions are very soft and golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the ginger, garlic and green chiles and cook until the raw smell goes away, about 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes and 1/2 teaspoon salt and cook until well cooked and pasty, about 8 minutes. Add the Roasted Chana Masala Spice Blend along with 2 tablespoons of water and saute until well mixed and the flavors have melded, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the spice mixture to the chickpeas with 1 cup of water (see Cook's Note), mix well and bring to a simmer over medium heat; simmer until the curry thickens and coats and infuses the chickpeas, about 5 minutes. Adjust salt to taste. Garnish with fresh cilantro and serve with lime wedges or julienned ginger slaw, if desired. Combine the whole spices (coriander, cumin, black pepper, cinnamon and cardamom) in a small heavy skillet (preferably cast iron, if you have it) and roast over medium-high heat, shaking the pan often to ensure even roasting, until the spices start getting darker, 3 to 4 minutes. Lower the heat to low and add the powdered spices (pomegranate powder, mango powder, black salt, chile powder, turmeric and asafoetida) and cook, shaking or stirring constantly, until slightly darker, about 30 seconds. Be careful not to burn the spices. Immediately transfer the spices to a bowl and cool. Once cooled, grind the spices. You can double or triple this recipe and keep it in an airtight container for future use.

## 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.



## "No Legal Duty for Daughter-in-Law to Support In-Laws: HC"

**Lucknow, Mar 30:** The Allahabad High Court dismissed a petition filed by an elderly couple seeking maintenance from their daughter-in-law saying that parents-in-law had no legal right to claim financial support from their daughter-in-law. The court observed that under Section 125 of the erstwhile Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), as well as the corresponding provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, parents-in-law were not included among those entitled to get maintenance from the daughter-in-law.

The order was passed by a single judge bench of Justice Madan Pal Singh. The case arose from a criminal revision petition filed by Rakesh Kumar and his wife, both residents of Agra. The couple had sought maintenance from their daughter-in-law under Section 144 following the death of their son. However, the family court had rejected their plea on August 21, 2025, prompting them to approach the High Court. After hearing arguments, the High Court noted that there was no evidence to show that the daughter-in-law had secured her job on compassionate grounds in place of her husband. It further stated that while a moral obligation may exist, it cannot be enforced as a legal duty on the daughter-in-law to pay maintenance to the parents-in-law. Maintenance can



only be granted to those explicitly mentioned under the law. The petitioners' counsel argued that the couple were illiterate and financially dependent on their only son, Pravesh Kumar, who served as a constable in the Uttar Pradesh Police. He died on March 31, 2021. His wife, also a constable in the police force, used to get a stable income along with service and retirement benefits. The counsel contended that caring for parents-in-law should be treated as a legal responsibility. However, the court held that their claim under Section 144 was not legally sustainable, as the provision did not include parents-in-law among eligible dependents. It added that there was no error in the family court's order. Under Section 144 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, a magistrate may direct a person with sufficient means to provide maintenance to a wife, children, or parents who are unable to support themselves.

## West Asia conflict: Indian national killed in Iranian strikes in Kuwait

**Dubai, Mar 30:** An Indian national has been killed in Kuwait in Iranian strikes on a power and water desalination plant, the Indian Embassy said on Monday. The number of Indian nationals killed in the ongoing West Asia conflict has risen to eight, with the latest casualty reported from Kuwait. Expressing its "deepest condolences" at the tragic demise of the Indian national in the attack on Sunday, the embassy in a social media post said it was closely coordinating with the Kuwaiti authorities to render all possible support and assistance. Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy said a service building at one of its power and water distillation plants was damaged during the attack, according to the state-run KUNA news agency.

Officials described it as a "brutal attack". The plant where the attack occurred

wasn't identified. Ministry spokesperson Fatima Jawhar Hayat said the strike resulted in the death of a worker of Indian nationality, Gulf News reported. Technical and emergency response teams were immediately deployed to the site to contain the situation and

national efficiency across the electricity and water network in the country remains intact. Recently, an Indian national was among two killed in the UAE when debris of missiles intercepted by the country's air defence system fell on a street. The fatalities have been



manage the aftermath in line with the ministry's approved emergency plan, she added. Hayat said specialised teams are working to secure the damaged facilities while coordinating closely with security authorities and other relevant agencies.

The ministry said that oper-

reported across multiple locations, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and in maritime incidents involving commercial vessels. Iran's retaliation after the joint US and Israel strikes on Tehran on February 28 has escalated the war to the entire Gulf region.

## "Bihar CM Nitish Kumar Resigns as MLC"

**Patna, Mar 30:** Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar resigned from the membership of the State Legislative Council on Monday after being elected to the Rajya Sabha. Confirming Nitish's resignation as an MLC, Bihar Legislative Council Chairman Awadhesh Narayan Singh told reporters in Patna that Nitish conveyed his decision during a courtesy visit to the CM's official residence at 1, Anne Marg on Monday. He said the resignation had been accepted and the seat would be declared vacant after completing the necessary formalities. Singh turned emotional while speaking about Nitish's contribution to the state's development.



Later, JD(U) MLC Sanjay Gandhi reached the Legislative Council and formally handed over Nitish's resignation to the chairman. Senior JD(U) leader and Bihar Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary said Nitish resigned in accordance with constitu-

tional provisions. He also hinted that Nitish may step down as Chief Minister in the coming days.

Nitish has been a member of the Bihar Legislative Council since 2006. He was elected to the Upper House of the state legislature for a fourth consecutive term on May 7, 2024, with his tenure scheduled until May 6, 2030. However, his election to the Rajya Sabha on March 16 necessitated his resignation. Over his career, Nitish has been a member of both Houses of Parliament as well as both Houses of the state legislature. He was first elected to the state Assembly from Harnaut in 1985 and became a Lok Sabha member in 1989.

## 'Needs a Mental Doctor': Naveen Slams Dubey's CIA Barb

**Bhubaneswar, Mar 30:** Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president and Leader of Opposition in the Odisha Assembly, Naveen Patnaik, on Monday strongly condemned BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for his controversial remarks alleging links between former Odisha Chief Minister Biju Patnaik and the CIA. Reacting strongly, Naveen Patnaik dismissed the allegation as "outlandish" and historically unfounded. In a pointed rebuttal, he said, "I was just 13 years old at that time, and I clearly remember the circumstances. Such statements are completely baseless."

Taking a further swipe at Dubey, the BJD supremo remarked that the BJP MP "needs a mental doctor's attention" for making such claims against a leader of Biju Patnaik's stature.

Recalling historical context, Naveen emphasised his father's crucial role during the Sino-Indian War of 1962. He

noted that then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had entrusted Biju Patnaik with key responsibilities during the war, even setting up an office for him close to the Prime Minister's to assist in critical operations. The controversy stems from Dubey's remarks alleging that Biju Patnaik acted as a "link" between the US government, the CIA, and Nehru during the 1962 war, which sparked widespread outrage across Odisha. The BJD strongly rejected the allegations, calling them baseless and an insult to the legacy of a revered leader. Amid escalating tensions, BJD leaders also took symbolic protest measures. Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra resigned from a parliamentary committee chaired by Dubey, stating he could not continue under someone who had made "disrespectful" remarks about Biju Patnaik. Making a strong protest in Rajya Sabha on Monday, Patra condemned the comments as an insult to



Odisha's pride and identity, asserting that disrespecting Biju Babu amounts to insulting the entire state. They demanded an immediate apology from Dubey and the BJP, and later staged a walkout from the House. The BJD warned that the protest would intensify if an apology is not issued soon. The BJD said that Biju Patnaik's contributions to India's freedom struggle and nation-building are well-documented and cannot be distorted by what they termed as "irresponsible comments."

## Lok Sabha Clears IBC Amendment Bill

**New Delhi, Mar 30:** The Lok Sabha on Monday approved the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, aimed at speeding up insolvency proceedings to resolve cases related to defaulting companies. The Bill introduces a mandatory 14-day timeline for admitting insolvency applications once a company's default has been established. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the government has proposed a set of 12 amendments to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code to further strengthen the resolution ecosystem. Sitharaman said the primary reason for IBC resolution delays is extensive litigation, and the IBC Bill proposes penalties to prevent abuse of process.

The Lok Sabha took up the Bill moved by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for discussion on March 27. The Bill, which was initially referred to a Select Committee, has been introduced to address the delays in resolving cases related to the insolvency and bankruptcy of a company or individual.

FM Sitharaman said in the Lower House that the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has played a key role in improving the health of the

banking sector, while underlining that the law was never intended to function as a debt recovery mechanism. Speaking in the Lok Sabha while piloting the Bill, the finance minister said the IBC has contributed to better credit discipline and improved the credit profile of companies. The minister said companies have been doing well and their corporate governance practices have also improved after coming out of the insolvency resolution process. She made the remarks while replying to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2025, as reported by the Select Committee. "The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, which came into force in 2016, has been a main factor in improving the overall health of the Indian banking sector," Sitharaman said, adding that the framework has also helped companies achieve better credit ratings over time. At the same time, she said the objective of the law is the resolution of stressed assets and not merely the recovery of dues. "IBC is a framework for rescuing viable businesses and resolving financial stress while preserving the enterprise value. IBC was never intended to be a debt recovery tool," she explained.



## Pragg beats Giri on opening night of Candidates

Playing with white pieces, Indian Grandmaster overcomes Dutch rival

Chennai, Mar 30: R Pragnanandhaa, in the words of Viswanathan Anand, produced a 'masterpiece', to take down Anish Giri in the first round of the Candidates at Cyprus on Sunday. Playing with the white pieces, the Indian ace, featuring in his second Candidates, pushed right out of the gates with the lesser-spotted 1. e4, 2 Nc3 opening. The Dutch GM responded with 1. c5, 2 d6 and the gauntlet was immediately laid out. Both of them got out of the opening without giving the other an inch but there was a shift of momentum towards the Indian in the middle game. The evaluation bar was level after 29 moves but Giri had spent a lot of the



opening two hours in the tank as Pragnanandhaa's opening had caught him by surprise.

Even if Giri got out unscathed, he was chasing the game for a long time because of the lack of time in his clock. And he was forced to play a number of precise moves to even stand still. And the

20-year-old pressed home the advantage in the endgame with a decisive move to capture Giri's knight on the 42nd move. The other option — to move his outside pawn to h7 — was tempting but it would have been a big error. A few moves later, Giri resigned to hand his younger opponent a big win on

the opening night of the tournament. You cannot win the Candidates with a good start but you can very easily lose it with a couple of losses. That's why it was important for the Indian to seize home the initiative. He will face Wei Yi with the black pieces on Monday.

Results (Rd 1): Open: Andrey Esipenko lost to Javokhir Sindarov, Wei Yi drew with Matthias Bluebaum, R Pragnanandhaa beat Anish Giri, Hikaru Nakamura lost to Fabiano Caruana. Women: Divya Deshmukh drew Anna Muzychuk, Bibisara Assaubayeva drew with Vaishali, Kateryna Lagno drew with Aleksandra Goryachkina, Tan Zhongyi drew with Zhu Jiner.

## From Goals to Gambits: Football's Top Stars Fuel a Global Chess Boom



London, Mar 31: Premier League superstars Erling Haaland and Mohamed Salah are spearheading a "chess revolution," sparking a massive surge in the game's popularity among younger generations. Haaland, fascinated by the game's tactical depth, has even invested in a groundbreaking new chess tour to capitalize on this growing celebrity crossover.

From Liverpool's Salah, who admits to a daily "blitz" chess addiction, to England's Trent Alexander-Arnold—who once faced grandmaster Magnus Carlsen—football's elite are increasingly trading physical aggression for mental strategy. The trend spans Europe, with stars like Christian Pulisic, Martin Ødegaard, and Eberechi Eze (a 2025 amateur tournament winner) embracing the board.

Haaland notes that the two sports share a core DNA: "You have to think quickly, trust your instincts, and think several moves ahead." This blend of cerebral precision and athletic fame is officially making chess the coolest game in the locker room.

## 'Excited' Buttler rejuvenated for IPL after horror T20 World Cup

New Delhi, Mar 30: England's Jos Buttler insists he still has the hunger for runs, saying a complete break from cricket in the Alps has rejuvenated him for the Indian Premier League after a horror T20 World Cup. The wicketkeeper cut a downcast figure opening the England batting in the global showpiece, scoring just 87 runs in eight matches up to the semi-final defeat to eventual champions India this month. "It's great to have a nice break," Buttler, whose Gujarat Titans team will begin their campaign against Punjab Kings in New Chandigarh on Tuesday, told AFP. "I actually went to the Alps, so I couldn't have been further away from cricket which was really nice. "Had some time away and I'm really excited now, looking forward to another IPL season," added the former England white-ball captain.

Opener Buttler, who has scored 4,037 T20 runs for England since his 2011 debut, was a shadow of his usually destructive self in the T20



World Cup in India and Sri Lanka. Buttler's top score was a less-than-fluent 26 against Nepal in England's opening match. He hit a scratchy 21 against the West Indies in the next group game then had a run of five single-digit scores before scoring 25 in the semi-final defeat.

Buttler's slump in form has left a question mark over his future in Harry Brook's England side, but the 35-year-old said he retained his motivation for the game.

## Pant's Crucible: DC Face LSG in Tense 2026 Opener

Pant to Top Order, Pooran at Four for LSG Opener

Lucknow, Mar 31: Lucknow Super Giants captain Rishabh Pant will have little room for error in a critical year as his side begins its IPL 2026 campaign against a well-rounded Delhi Capitals here on Wednesday. Pant could not deliver as a leader and frontline batter in his first year at LSG. Injuries to key players, especially fast bowlers, made his job a lot tougher. This season, he has a fully fit squad at his disposal that has been bolstered by the addition of old warhorse Mohammed Shami and Anrich Nortje. Injury prone pace sensation Mayank Yadav has worked hard on his fitness over the past 12 months

and LSG would be hoping that he repays the strong faith that franchise had reposed in him.

Pacer Mohsin Khan too is making a comeback from injury while Prince Yadav has also impressed with his medium pace in the nets thus far. Mystery spinner Digvesh Singh Rathi made a name for himself in his debut season and would be looking to build on the massive gains that he made 12 months ago.

Compared to the bowling department, the batting has a more settled look with Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram forming one of the most lethal opening pairings in the IPL. Pant, who could not make

an impact at number four for majority of last season before slamming a hundred at number three, is set to bat in the top-order with Nicholas Pooran to follow at number four. LSG take on a side that should have made the play-offs last year after a promising beginning. Delhi Capitals tried as many as seven opening combinations last year and this season they are confident of more stability in the top-order. KL Rahul is certain to open the innings but there is not enough clarity on his partner. The options are Prithvi Shaw, Abhishek Porel and Pathum Nissanka. They have brought in David Miller to add more muscle to the mid-



## Sheetal Devi: Para Archer of the Year

New Delhi, Mar 30: As India's Sheetal Devi continues her remarkable ascent in para archery, she expressed heartfelt gratitude after being named the 'Para Archer of the Year' by World Archery. The global governing body recognised her 'breakthrough season' by celebrating her outstanding performances and contributions to the sport over the past year. Devi's award caps off a historic season in which she claimed her first world title at the World Archery Para Championships in Gwangju. She became the first woman without arms to win a para archery world championship, defeating Paralympic champion Ozgur Cure Girdi in the compound women's individual final.

In addition, she earned silver in the women's team event and bronze in the mixed team competition. "Nominated alongside the best para archers in the world... and now named the best para archer by world archery - this one feels deeply personal. A heart filled with gratitude, with emotion, with everything this journey has

held. Thank you," Devi wrote on X. Born with phocomelia, Devi competes using a distinctive technique without arms, a method that has captured global attention for its ingenuity and precision. Her medal haul spans multiple major tournaments, including the Asian Championships, Asian Para Games, World Championships, and Paralympic Games, highlighting her growing stature on the international stage.

In 2025, she became the first Indian archer to win the BBC Emerging Athlete of the Year award, following her mixed team bronze with Rakesh Kumar at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. Devi has also been recognised as the World Archery Para Woman of the Year and the Asian Paralympic Committee Best Youth Athlete in 2023. In 2024, she received the Arjuna Award. Adding yet another milestone to her career, Devi made history in December by being selected for India's able-bodied compound archery team for the Asia Cup in Jeddah, further underlining her extraordinary skill and versatility.



dle order comprising another South African Tristan Stubbs. Delhi Capitals have a potent bowling attack despite the unavailability of Mitchell Starc for the opening game due to an injury. In captain Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav, they have two match winning spinners.

The addition of a wily Lungu Ngidi strengthens the pace attack. Ngidi was in top form in the T20 World Cup, foxing the batters with his deceptive change of pace. Left-arm pacer T Natarajan is fully fit after spending last year on the sidelines due to an injury.