



Thousands Gather for Asha Tai's Final Journey

Mumbai, Apr 14: People lined the streets, crowded rooftops and windows, as hundreds walked alongside the cortege winding slowly from Lower Parel to Shivaji Park, where Asha Bhosle, India's singer nonpareil and Mumbai's own Asha Tai, was given her final farewell. A giant photograph of Bhosle, radiant in a red sari with her trademark bindi and an ornate nose ring, was placed on the flower bedecked bier. Chants of "Asha Tai amar rahe" went up in the crowds gathered for a last glimpse of the music legend who ruled our playlists, and perhaps our hearts, for eight decades.

The funeral procession of arguably one of India's most popular singers started from her residence in Lower Parel to Shivaji Park in Dadar, about 5 km away. Bhosle, one half of the legendary Mangeshkar sisters, passed away on Sunday morning due to multi-organ failure at the age of 92 at Breach Candy Hospital. She was 92. Shivaji Park is also where the last rites of Lata Mangeshkar were held. She passed away in February 2022, also at the age of 92.

Earlier in the day, Bhosle's body, in a glass casket and draped in the Tricolour, was kept at her home for mourners to pay their last respects. Her

timeless tracks across the decades, Aao Huzoor Tumko, Aaiye Meherban, Jhumka Gira Re, Dil Cheez Kya Hai, O Saathi Re and Yai Re Yai Re, played softly in the background. A reminder as it was that the singer may be gone but her songs will live on forever. Bhosle's son Anand and granddaughter Zanai were among the family members present. Sister Usha Mangeshkar, also a singer, and brother Hridaynath Mangeshkar were there too. While hundreds of fans gathered outside, politicians, film industry colleagues and sports stars and scores of others offered tributes to the incredibly versatile singer who made both classical and cabaret her own. Veteran actors Asha Parekh and Helen, Ranveer Singh, Tabu, composer AR Rahman, cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar and political leaders Uddhav Thackeray, Praful Patel and Supriya Sule were among those who gathered at the . With a career spanning over eight decades, Bhosle was known for her versatility, having sung memorable melodies ranging from romantic numbers and ghazals to peppy chartbusters. Bhosle, who sang over 12,000 songs, was a recipient of the Padma Vibhushan, Dadasaheb Phalke Award and the Maharashtra Bhushan.

TMC paving the way for BJP to win Bengal: Rahul

Kolkata, Apr 14: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday launched fierce attacks on the ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal and the opposition BJP, accusing them of destroying industries in the state. The Congress leader on Tuesday kicked off his first election campaign in poll-bound state, targeting both parties at election rallies in Raiganj, North Dinajpur, and Malda districts, once a stronghold of his party in the state. After 2006, Congress contested assembly elections for the first time alone without aligning with any anti-BJP party. Previously, Congress had contested both Lok Sabha and assembly elections in alliance with either TMC or

the Left. Gandhi alleged that the ruling party in Bengal is paving the way for the saffron camp to strengthen its organisational network in the state despite the BJP-led Centre withholding funds for different schemes.

"The BJP government did not give '2 lakh crore to Bengal and slashed funds allotted for MGNREGA. It has also not given any projects for the state in the Central budget," he said.

"Trinamool is paving the way for BJP in Bengal, though the latter unleashes politics of violence and hatred in the state and the country. The BJP would have been hardly visible in Bengal if the ruling party did its work



like generating jobs and preventing violence."

Harassed online, candidate's mother in Assam moves NCW

Guwahati, Apr 14: Sujata Gurung Chowdhury, mother of Kunki Chowdhury—the Assam Jatiya Parishad candidate from Guwahati Central—has sought intervention of the National Commission for Women (NCW) over "false, defamatory, and misleading statements" allegedly made by CM Himanta Biswa Sarma during the campaign, and the subsequent online harassment. Sujata wrote to the chairperson saying, "I am a private individual with no active involvement in electoral politics," adding that she was drawn into public discourse because her daughter was in the fray.

She said Sarma had alleged during the campaign that her social media activity "hurt the sentiments of Sanatani people," that she harbours sympathies for Pakistan, supports "anti-national" individuals, and publicly consumes beef. Calling the allegations "false, baseless, and malicious," she said they appeared intended to defame her and politically target her daughter. Sarma had earlier shown journalists a photograph allegedly depicting Sujata consuming beef. She clarified that the image was taken at The International Church of Cannabis in Denver, Colorado, USA. "The object in the image is an artistic prop shaped



like a conical cylinder, not any form of food. The allegation that I was 'eating beef' is factually incorrect and deliberately misleading. Such claims are deeply offensive and damaging to my reputation," she wrote.

A purported supporting letter from Elevation Ministries, Inc states: "The item that she is putting up to her lips is a pillow, not any type of meat. This is a pillow designed for visitors of our museum to take pictures with at the entrance." Sujata said that following the allegations, her personal photographs—including those with her minor son—were widely circulated on social media without consent, subjecting her to harassment. She urged the NCW to direct authorities to investigate the alleged online harassment, ensure removal of the content, and recommend appropriate legal action against Sarma.

2,926 Candidates Finalized for Bengal Polls

Kolkata, Apr 14: Following the completion of the nomination withdrawal process on Tuesday, the Election Commission (EC) announced that 2,926 candidates remain in the fray for the upcoming West Bengal assembly elections. The electoral battle is split across two major phases: 1,478 candidates will contest 152 constituencies in the first phase, while 1,448 candidates are set to compete for 142 seats in the second.

With the final list set, polling machinery is now fully operational. To enhance transparency, the EC is encouraging voters to use the ECINet mobile app to track candidate assets, education, and criminal records. Furthermore, ballot units will feature coloured photographs of candidates alongside larger fonts for names and symbols to improve accessibility.

The scrutiny and withdrawal periods concluded on April 13, paving the way for the polls scheduled for April 23 and 29. Authorities remain focused on maintaining a smooth, secure voting environment across the state.



Bihar's first BJP CM Samrat Choudhary takes oath after Nitish exit

Patna, Apr 15: BJP leader Samrat Choudhary was sworn in as the chief minister of Bihar on Wednesday, the first from the saffron party to hold the post. Governor Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain (ret'd) administered the oath of office and secrecy to Choudhary. Top leaders of the ruling NDA in Bihar, which comprises the BJP, JD(U) and three other parties, attended the ceremony. They included Union Ministers J P Nadda and Chirag Paswan, Nitish Kumar, and all NDA MLAs. Nitish Kumar, who is now a Rajya Sabha MP, relinquished the chief minister's post on Tuesday, dissolving his cabinet in which Choudhary was a deputy chief minister and held the crucial home portfolio.

Along with Samrat Choudhary, two Deputy Chief



Ministers from the Janata Dal (United) quota -- Vijay Kumar Choudhary and Bijendra Prasad Yadav

-- are also expected to take oath. Choudhary, who joined the BJP in 2017, was named the legislative party leader on Tuesday in the presence of top functionaries like BJP chief Nitin Nabin and Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, whom the parliamentary board had named as "central observer" for the transition.

Over the years, he has held several key portfolios, including Urban Development, Housing, and Panchayati Raj, before rising to the position of Deputy Chief Minister in 2024. With Nitish Kumar stepping down after 20 years in power, Bihar is witnessing a major leadership transition. Samrat Choudhary's swearing-in is expected to formally usher in a new political chapter in the state.



Meghalaya CM Reviews State Transport and Urban Projects



Meghalaya, Apr 14: Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma chaired a high-level review meeting with the Transport and Urban Affairs Departments on Tuesday to evaluate progress on critical infrastructure initiatives aimed at boosting connectivity and urban development across Meghalaya. The discussions focused on the proposed Shillong Business-cum-Tourism and Cultural Centre, alongside the redevelopment of Meghalaya Transport Corporation land in Tura, development of Transport Department land and bus depot at Nongpoh, and plans for operationalizing key urban facilities.

Officials briefed the CM on timelines, challenges, and next steps, emphasizing the projects' role in enhancing transport networks and economic hubs in the state.

Tripura Celebrates Final Day of Year

Agartala, Apr 14: Tripura bid farewell to the Bengali calendar year with colourful observances of Chaitra Sankranti, a festival that brings together spirituality, folk traditions, and collective celebration. Marking the final day of the month of Chaitra, people across the state upheld long-standing customs and organised fairs that showcased the region's rich cultural heritage. In places like Kalyanpur, Mohorchhara, Ratiya, and Dwarikapur Kalibari, the Charak festival drew devotees who climbed ceremonial Charak trees as an act of devotion, accompanied by the rhythmic beats of traditional drums. The Gajan festival, dedicated to deities such as Shiva and Dharma, featured folk music and ritual performances rooted in agrarian life, seeking divine blessings for rainfall and respite from the intense summer heat.

Fairs held during Chaitra Sankranti witnessed large gatherings, with stalls offering bamboo, cane, clay, and metal crafts, along with toys and seasonal fruits. While attractions like circuses and puppet shows have largely disappeared over time, the fairs continue to thrive in simpler forms. Historians suggest that these gatherings may have once served as tax collection points during the zamindari era before gradually transforming into cultural festivities. Among tribal communities in Tripura, the year-end was marked with traditional observances as well. In the hill regions, indigenous groups celebrated the Biju festival by preparing special dishes, honouring elders through ritual bathing, and participating in music and dance. The occasion also signals the beginning of preparations for jhum cultivation ahead of the monsoon season. More than just a festival, Chaitra Sankranti in Tripura represents a symbolic passage from one year to the next—an occasion filled with devotion, cultural expression, and shared joy. From Charak rituals to Biju celebrations, it reflects a harmonious blend of tradition and agricultural life that defines the spirit of the state.



Mizoram Governor Releases Former CM Zoramthanga's Memoir

Aizawl, Apr 14: Mizoram Governor, General (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh, PVSM, AVSM, YSM (Retd), Today formally released the memoir of former Chief Minister Zoramthanga titled "From Guerrilla Fighter to Chief Minister", at the Aijal Club in Aizawl. Speaking at the launch event, the Governor described the book as far more than a mere personal narrative. He lauded it as a significant and reliable historical document that provides valuable insights into important phases of Mizoram's political history. "The book chronicles the author's remarkable journey from insurgency to responsible democratic governance and statesmanship," he said. The Governor noted that the memoir serves as a powerful reminder that dialogue, understanding, and perseverance can overcome even the most difficult challenges. He praised Pu Zoramthanga's dedication and lifelong desire to learn, saying these qualities reflect exceptional political acumen and true statesmanship. "It shows that

if there is a will, there is a way," he remarked.

General (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh highlighted that Mizoram's history is unique – a journey from struggle and conflict, through recon-

believes the book will prove to be a valuable resource for students, scholars, policy-makers, and citizens alike.

Author and former Chief Minister Zoramthanga described the release of the book



ciliation, to lasting peace and progress. He commended the author for documenting history based on his own lived experiences and expressed hope that the memoir would help the younger generation better understand the complexities of conflict while appreciating the true value of peace and the strength of democratic institutions. The Governor

as a deeply significant milestone in his life. He revealed that he had meticulously maintained personal diaries for 50 years, which served as key references while writing the memoir. He emphasised that most of the events described in the book were personally witnessed or experienced by him. Zoramthanga expressed sincere gratitude to

all those who assisted in the preparation and publication of the book. He hoped that the memoir would not only benefit the Mizo people but also enable readers from other communities to gain a clearer and deeper understanding of Mizo history. Former Chief Minister also shared a memorable personal anecdote, recalling that he had first met the Governor decades earlier during the 1971 East Pakistan War, when General (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh was serving as a young Lieutenant in the Indian Army. Zoramthanga remarked that it was a remarkable and unexpected coincidence that the same officer is now releasing his book as the Governor of Mizoram. During the event, Dr Lalnunkimi Colney delivered an insightful book preview.

The memoir From Guerrilla Fighter to Chief Minister is published by Penguin Random House. Spanning 430 pages and priced at Rs 400, the book is now available for purchase at bookstores and can also be ordered online via Amazon.

Sikkim Ramps Up Prep for PM Modi's Visit

Gangtok, Apr 14: An inspection was conducted at Paljor Stadium under the supervision of Chief Secretary R. Telang as part of preparatory arrangements for the proposed visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Sikkim. The inspection was carried out as a pre-visit exercise to review the overall preparedness of the venue and ensure timely completion of arrangements. Officials assessed key aspects including seating arrangements, accessibility, safety measures, and essential facilities required for the event. Emphasis was placed on ensuring coordination among departments for smooth execution of all arrangements. Heads of Departments (HODs) and senior officials from various departments participated in the inspection. They reviewed infrastructure readiness, security arrangements, logistical planning, and overall event management at the venue.

Manipur CM reviews Imphal Railway Station, Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal project

Imphal, Apr 14: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh conducted a detailed inspection of the under-construction Imphal Railway Station at Yurembam in Imphal West district and reviewed the progress of the 111-km-long Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal railway project, on Tuesday. During the visit, officials from the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) briefed Singh and his delegation on the current status of construction, key challenges, and future milestones of the project. The Chief Minister reviewed the infrastructural layout and highlighted the importance of timely execution, noting the project's potential to boost connectivity and economic prospects for Manipur. "While the overall advancement is satisfactory, clear instructions have been issued to further intensify the pace of execution to ensure adherence to the stipulated timeline," he later posted on social media.

Officials said the Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal railway project is targeted for completion by December 2028. Once operational, the rail link is expected to connect the state capital directly to the national railway network, transforming transportation in the region.

The Chief Minister later visited Tunnel No. 12 at Sangaitel, a critical engineering component of the project, where he assessed the pace and quality of construction and interacted with engineers and officials to understand the progress of tunnelling work. Highlighting the strategic importance of the project, Singh



stressed the need to maintain construction standards while adhering to deadlines. "All concerned agencies have been directed to maintain strict quality standards and ensure seamless coordination for timely completion. The Government remains committed to closely monitoring this vital infrastructure project, which will significantly enhance connectivity and accelerate the socio-economic growth of Manipur," he added. Singh was accompanied by MLAs Dr. Sapam Ranjan (Konhoujam AC) and Sorokhaibam Rajen (Lamsang AC), along with Chief Secretary Dr. Puneet Kumar Goel, Additional Chief Secretary (Transport) Anurag Bajpai, Commissioner to the Chief Minister N. Ashok Kumar, Director of Transport Kh. Diana, and other senior officials.



Organic India pushes natural sweeteners, taps festive demand during regional new year

Guwahati: Amid ongoing regional New Year celebrations across India, Organic India, part of Tata Consumer Products, has rolled out a festive recipe campaign aimed at promoting natural sweeteners such as jaggery and khand-sari sugar, positioning them as healthier alternatives to refined sugar.

The company has curated a range of traditional recipes to drive consumer engagement and boost demand for its sweetener portfolio. These include Vermicelli Payasam made with Organic India jaggery powder, where roasted vermicelli is simmered in milk, blended with jaggery, cardamom, and topped with ghee-fried cashews and raisins. Another key offering is Sakkarai Pongal prepared using Organic India khand-sari sugar, rice, and chana dal, cooked to a soft consistency and enriched with saffron, cardamom, cashews, and raisins.

In addition, Organic India has introduced Sooji Halwa Pockets, a value-added festive snack where semolina halwa sweetened with jaggery is stuffed into samosa wrappers and deep-fried, targeting modern consumers seeking fusion-style traditional treats.

The move reflects a broader strategy to align



with rising consumer preference for clean-label, natural ingredients. By blending tradition with wellness, the brand aims to strengthen its positioning in the growing health-focused foods segment while capitalising on seasonal festive demand across Indian households.

Tanishq bets on natural gemstones with 'Hues' launch, targets festive demand surge

Guwahati: Tanishq has entered the natural gemstone jewellery segment with the launch of its 'Hues' collection, positioning itself to tap rising consumer interest ahead of AkshayaTritiya. The move reflects a broader shift in India's jewellery market, where demand is increasingly driven by design, individuality and everyday wearability rather than purely investment-led purchases.

The 'Hues' collection, craft-

ed in 18kt gold, features 100% natural gemstones including emeralds, amethysts, citrines, tourmalines and tanzanites, sourced globally and selected for colour and clarity. Inspired by the vibrance of an Indian summer, the range incorporates sculptural silhouettes, layered colour compositions and diverse cuts such as marquise, tabiz and cabochon. Techniques like bunching and slicing add depth and movement, aligning with evolving

consumer preferences for bold yet refined aesthetics.

Backed by transparent pricing, lifetime maintenance and 100% exchange value, the collection aims to build trust in the emerging gemstone category. Actor Triptii Dimri fronts the campaign, reinforcing the theme of self-expression and modern femininity. Executives at Titan Company Limited said the initiative marks a design-led expansion in response to changing buying behaviour.

Godrej boosts India's nuclear ambitions with key PFBR components, strengthens energy self-reliance

Guwahati: mIndia's civil nuclear programme has reached a major milestone with the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam achieving criticality, advancing the country's three-stage energy roadmap focused on long-term security and efficient fuel use. The development also marks India becoming only the second country globally to establish commercial fast breeder reactor capability.

The Precision Engineering division of Godrej Enterprises Group played a crucial role by manufacturing and supplying critical components, including the Large Rotating Plug (LRP), Small Rotating Plug (SRP), and a 10-metre-long Sodium Pump Shaft to Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited. These high-precision components, some measuring up to 8 metres in diameter and weighing nearly 120 tonnes, were developed indigenously without prior domestic reference.

The systems required advanced engineering

solutions, including specialised bearings, friction control treatments, and gear systems capable of operating under stringent and seismic conditions. The sodium pump shaft operates at over 500 RPM in a liquid sodium environment, demanding high reliability and material integrity.

The PFBR project, completed after 22 years, supports a closed fuel cycle by using plutonium from PHWRs and enabling thorium utilisation. With India holding around 846,000 tonnes of thorium reserves and 19 operational PHWRs, alongside 10 more sanctioned units, the project is key to scaling low-carbon, self-sustaining energy and advancing net-zero goals. In Guwahati, the milestone highlights growing opportunities in precision engineering and heavy fabrication sectors. As India expands nuclear infrastructure, ancillary industries and skilled workforce demand may rise, creating indirect growth prospects for suppliers and engineering firms in the Northeast region.

Ai+ targets budget segment with Nova 2 launch, sales begin April 14 on Flipkart

Siliguri: Ai+ Smartphone has announced the commercial rollout of its latest Nova 2 device under the newly launched Nova Series, with sales set to begin on April 14 at 12 noon via Flipkart and select retail outlets. The move is seen as part of the company's strategy to strengthen its presence in India's highly competitive budget smartphone segment.

The Nova 2 is priced at ₹8,999 for the 4GB+64GB variant and ₹10,999 for the 6GB+128GB model, positioning it as an affordable offering for first-time smartphone users and upgraders.

MadhavSheth, CEO of Ai+ Smartphone and Founder of NxtQuantum Shift Technologies, said the Nova Series reflects the company's focus on delivering "accessible, reliable technology built for real everyday use," adding that the brand aims to expand its user base through value-driven products.

On the specifications front, the device is powered by a 6000mAh battery designed for



all-day usage and runs on Android 16 with NxtQuantum OS for a smooth and optimised experience. It features a 6.745-inch HD+ display with a 120Hz adaptive refresh rate and HBM support.

The Nova 2 also offers a 50MP rear camera, an 8MP front camera, IP64 resistance, and a side-mounted fingerprint sensor. It will be available in five colour options—Purple, Green, Pink, Blue, and Black—targeting style-conscious consumers in the entry-level segment.

BIBA bets on festive demand with Rongali Bihu edit, expands gifting portfolio across key markets

Guwahati: BIBA has launched its summer festive edit to mark Rongali Bihu, aiming to tap seasonal demand with a curated collection aligned to the spirit of new beginnings. Timed with the Bohag celebrations in Assam, the edit blends cultural aesthetics with contemporary fashion, reinforcing the brand's positioning in the ethnic wear segment.

The collection features vibrant kurta sets in lightweight cotton and mul fabrics suited for the Assamese summer, alongside printed suit sets in earthy tones and bold florals. Sharara sets and fluid A-line silhouettes cater to both day



and evening occasions. The range is complemented by versatile separates such as kurtis, tops, and bottoms, while BIBA's signature Anarkali sets continue as core offerings. The BIBA Girls line extends the

collection to children aged 2 to 15 years.

In a parallel push, the company has introduced a dedicated gifting collection, including kurta sets, dupattas, jewellery, fragrances, and ready-to-stitch

suit sets. The offering is positioned to capture festive gifting demand, drawing inspiration from traditional gestures like the gamosa.

Guwahati remains a strategic market for BIBA in the Northeast, supported by strong retail presence and sustained festive consumption. With established stores in Guwahati, Dibrugarh, and Jorhat, the brand benefits from high seasonal footfall during Rongali Bihu. Retail trends indicate increased demand for lightweight festive wear and gifting products, driven by family purchases and cultural celebrations, reinforcing Guwahati's role as a key growth hub for the brand.

Digital payments: More safety, a little less speed

Mumbai: India's digital payments ecosystem has grown at a very fast pace, but the sharp rise in online frauds is forcing a rethink on how instant payments should be. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed a set of measures that introduce calibrated friction into high-risk transactions—aimed at giving users more control and time to prevent fraud. For consumers, these measures could mean a slight shift in how digital payments are experienced. High-value transactions may no longer be instantaneous, and additional checks could come into play in certain situations. However,

these measures also provide greater control, more time to act, and stronger protection against fraud. However, these measures also provide greater control, more time to act, and



stronger protection against fraud.

At the heart of the proposals is a simple idea -- slow down suspicious or high-value transactions just enough to stop scams, without disrupting everyday payments.



Defence theme gains investor traction as Axis MF rolls out new Index Fund

Guwahati: India's capital markets are seeing rising interest in defence-focused investment themes, as Axis Mutual Fund launched the Axis Nifty India Defence Index Fund, tracking the Nifty India Defence Total Return Index (TRI). The New Fund Offer (NFO) will open from April 10 to April 24, 2026, offering investors exposure to a sector witnessing strong structural tailwinds.

The launch comes at a time when global defence spending has surged past USD 2.7 trillion in 2024, supported by geopolitical uncertainties and a shift towards a multipolar global order. Reflecting this trend, Indian defence stocks have remained in focus, backed by robust policy support and rising domestic demand.

India's defence budget has expanded nearly 2.7 times

since FY14 to around ₹6.8 lakh crore in FY26, while domestic production has nearly doubled in five years. Export momentum has also strengthened significantly, rising from under ₹2,000 crore in FY17 to over ₹23,000 crore in FY25, signalling increasing global competitiveness.

The index fund will replicate a basket of defence-oriented companies across aerospace, shipbuilding and allied sectors, with semi-annual rebalancing ensuring alignment with market dynamics.

According to B. Gopkumar, the offering provides a cost-efficient, rules-based exposure to India's defence growth story. Managed by Nandik Mallik and Rohit Gautam, the fund adopts a passive strategy, though investors should factor in potential volatility in the near term.

Honda clocks 10 millionsales in East, bets on growthacross emerging markets

Guwahati: Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) has announced it has crossed 10 million cumulative sales in India's East region, marking a key business milestone and reinforcing the region's role as a major growth driver. The company's footprint spans West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand and the North-East, with strong traction seen across both urban and semi-urban markets.

The growth has been led by sustained demand in cities such as Kolkata, Patna, Ranchi, Bhubaneswar and Guwahati, alongside expanding rural penetration. HMSI's portfolio, including Honda Activa and Honda Dio scooters, and motorcycles like Honda SP125 and Honda Shine 125, has driven volumes. The company currently operates over 1,200 sales and service touchpoints across the region, ensuring accessibility and after-sales



support. "The 10 million sales milestone reflects growing customer confidence and the strength of our network across metros and emerging towns," said Mutsuo Usui, Director – Sales & Marketing, HMSI, adding that the company will focus on expanding access

and improving customer experience. In Guwahati, the two-wheeler market is witnessing steady expansion, driven by rising urban mobility needs and a shift towards personal transport. Scooters such as Activa continue to see strong uptake among daily

commuters, while 125cc motorcycles are gaining traction among young buyers. HMSI's wide dealership presence and service reach have helped it stay competitive, as demand grows in tandem with infrastructure development and aspirational purchasing trends.

Govt unveils 'Skills Outcomes Fund' to drive job-linked skilling, attract private capital

Guwahati: Jayant Chaudhary has launched a campaign to establish a Skills Outcomes Fund, a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at linking skilling investments directly to verified employment outcomes while unlocking livelihood opportunities for youth from low-income backgrounds.

The proposed fund, to be anchored by the National Skill Development Corporation under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, will mobilise blended finance by combining government support with private and philanthropic capital. The initiative is positioned to become the world's largest outcomes-based financing (OBF) pro-

gramme in skilling, building on India's leadership highlighted at the Outcomes Finance Alliance Summit 2026.

Chairing a funder roundtable hosted by the British Asian Trust, Chaudhary said the fund will ensure that skills translate into "real opportunities" through measurable outcomes such as job placement, retention, and career progression. Officials, including MSDE adviser Manisha Sensarma and NSDC CEO Arunkumar Pillai, emphasised that the model strengthens accountability and aligns incentives across stakeholders.

The fund builds on the ₹130 crore Skill Impact Bond, which has trained over 34,000 youth across 21 states with strong

certification, placement, and retention rates, surpassing national benchmarks. It will focus on high-growth sectors such as IT-ITeS, BFSI, healthcare, logistics, automotive, green jobs, and electronics, supported by a wide network of corporate and philanthropic partners.

In Guwahati, the outcomes-based model could strengthen workforce readiness in emerging sectors like logistics, retail, and healthcare. With rising urban demand and expanding service industries, the fund is expected to help align training with employer needs, improve job placements, and enhance income opportunities, contributing to sustained growth in Assam's largest commercial hub.

Nissan accelerates India growth with 54 new touchpoints, eyes 400 network milestone by FY27

Guwahati: Nissan Motor India Pvt. Ltd. (NMIPL) has expanded its retail and service network with the addition of 54 new customer touchpoints across India in Q1 CY2026, marking a major step in its ongoing expansion strategy. The newly launched outlets—comprising 3S (Sales, Service and Spare Parts), 2S and 1S facilities—are spread across cities including New Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Pune, Jaipur, Patna, Bhubaneswar and others, strengthening Nissan's nationwide footprint.

The expansion is aligned with Nissan's product offensive strategy, anchored by the launch of the All-New Nissan GRAVITE and upcoming models such as the Nissan TEKTON and a C-segment 7-seater SUV, alongside the continued success of the Nissan MAGNITE. Managing Director Saurabh Vatsa said the company aims to scale up to 400 touchpoints by FY27, underlining its focus on improving accessibility, customer reach and brand experience. The network push comes amid strong business momentum. In March 2026, Nissan recorded cumulative sales of 10,388 units, including domestic wholesales of 4,408 units—its highest in five years—reflecting a robust 98 per cent growth. Exports stood at 5,980 units, reinforcing India's role as a key global hub.

In Guwahati, the expansion is expected to boost Nissan's reach in the Northeast, where demand for compact SUVs is steadily rising. Enhanced sales and service infrastructure is likely to improve customer confidence and drive higher adoption of models like the MAGNITE and GRAVITE in Assam and nearby markets.



Stonelam strengthens market position at AAA Conclave 2026, showcases façade innovation

Guwahati: Stonelam participated in AAA Conclave 2026, held in Shillong from April 3 to 5, reinforcing its focus on design excellence and innovation in the premium façade solutions segment.

The second edition of the conclave, themed "Regionalism in Architecture – A New Paradigm," brought together architects, designers, and industry stakeholders from the Northeast and across India. The platform featured curated exhibitions, discussions,

and collaborative exchanges focused on integrating regional identity into contemporary architectural practices.

At the event, Stonelam engaged closely with the architectural and design fraternity, highlighting its comprehensive façade solutions that combine technical expertise, application support, and customised offerings. The company emphasised its commitment to delivering solutions that balance aesthetics with

functionality while supporting context-driven design.

CEO Sandeep Bagade said the conclave provided valuable insights into evolving architectural trends and enabled meaningful industry interactions aligned with the company's vision.

Stonelam's participation further strengthened its presence within the architectural ecosystem and underscored its leadership in the premium porcelain surface segment, while contributing to discus-

sions on material innovation and regional design narratives.

In Guwahati, rising urbanisation and infrastructure growth are fuelling demand for advanced façade materials. Industry stakeholders note that increased awareness of design-led construction and exposure to platforms like AAA Conclave are expected to drive adoption of high-performance surface solutions in the city and across Assam.



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 medi-

um-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 chilies 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.

Cucumber Raita Vs Boondi Raita: Which Is Lighter On The Stomach?

For many of us, raita is a daily staple that complements Indian meals perfectly. It's a great way to balance the spiciness and richness of curries, biryanis and parathas. The best part? There are several different varieties of raita to choose from. Among the many options, cucumber raita and boondi raita are two popular choices. Whether you make them at home or order them via an online food delivery app, they're a great addition to meals. Both have unique flavours and textures, but when it comes to being gentle on the stomach, there are differences worth noting.

Is Cucumber Raita Good For Health?

Cucumber raita is a simple and healthy side dish that combines the freshness of cucumber with the creaminess of curd. Here's why it's good for you: **High Water Content:** According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), cucumbers comprise approximately 96% water, making them one of the most hydrating fruits. This high water

content helps keep the body hydrated and supports overall health.

Low In Calories: Cucumber raita is naturally low in calories and fat, making it a lighter choice for those looking to manage their weight. **Aids Digestion:** Additionally, cucumbers are rich in fibre, which aids in smooth digestion and prevents bloating. The cooling effect of cucumber raita on the stomach makes it an ideal side dish, especially after spicy or heavy meals.

Is Boondi Raita Good For Health?

Boondi raita, made by adding fried boondi to yoghurt, has a completely different texture and taste. Here's a look at its nutritional benefits and considerations:

Higher Calorie Content: Boondi raita is higher in calories due to the deep-fried boondi, which adds extra oil and fat to the dish.

Protein-Rich: Boondi provides a good amount of protein from gram flour, which can be beneficial for overall health. How-

ever, the deep-frying process may reduce some of the nutritional benefits. To make healthier boondi, consider baking or air-frying instead of deep-frying them.

Potential Digestive Issues: The combination of fried boondi and yoghurt can cause slight indigestion or bloating in sensitive stomachs. While yoghurt helps balance some of the heaviness, boondi raita may not be as easy to digest as other raita options.

Cucumber Raita Or Boondi Raita? Which Is Lighter On The Stomach?

From the info above, it's clear that between the two, cucumber raita is definitely lighter and easier to digest. Its high-water content, low calorie profile and cooling nature make it ideal for meals or for people with sensitive digestion. Boondi raita, while delicious, is comparatively heavier due to the fried boondis, making it better suited for occasional indulgence rather than daily consumption. So, if you're looking for a guilt-free side dish, cucumber raita is the way to go! Ultimately, whether you choose cucumber raita or boondi raita, the key is to enjoy these delicious side dishes in a way that suits your taste preferences and dietary needs.

Breakfast Recipes That Make It Easy To Rise and Shine

Start your day right with delicious options like waffles, omelets, granola and more. Maybe it's just us, but the thought of syrup-drenched pancakes (and some bacon and eggs on the side!) make it so much easier to spring out of bed and tackle the day. So, it's no wonder that we've got more than a few great ideas for your morning meal. You'll find something for everyone in this roundup, from healthy breakfasts that'll keep you full and fueled to ones that you can make on the fly and enjoy as you're running out the door. With easy recipes for muffins, French toast, breakfast casseroles and more there's no reason you should ever have to skip breakfast again. Wondering where to start? Try a chaffle. A chaffle is a low-carb, cheese-and-egg-based waffle that's taken the world by storm. One look at its fluffy texture and crispy edges and it's easy to see why. Preheat a waffle iron to medium-high. Whisk the eggs in a large bowl until well beaten and smooth. Whisk in the Cheddar, scallions, parsley, 1/4 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper. Coat the waffle iron with nonstick

cooking spray, then ladle a heaping 1/4 cup of batter into each section. Close the lid and cook until well browned and fluffy, 4 to 5 minutes. Use a small offset spatula or tongs to transfer the chaffles to a serving plate. Repeat with the remaining batter. Top each chaffle with a pat of butter and drizzle with maple syrup. **Blueberry Coffee Cake Muffins** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Place 16 paper liners in muffin pans. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. With the mixer on low speed, add the eggs 1 at a time, then add the vanilla, sour cream, and milk. In a separate bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. With the mixer on low speed add the flour mixture to the batter and beat until just mixed. Fold in the blueberries with a spatula and be sure the batter is completely mixed. Scoop the batter into the prepared muffin pans, filling each cup just over the top, and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, until the muffins are lightly browned on top and a cake tester comes out clean.



The Impact of Digital Overload on Myopia in Children and Actions Parents Can Take

In the era of digital education and extended gaming sessions, screens have become an integral part of childhood. However, beneath this radiant convenience exists a quiet epidemic – childhood myopia, also known as nearsightedness. Globally, children are experiencing vision issues at an unprecedented rate, primarily due to heightened screen usage and diminished exposure to natural light. What was previously a concern for teenagers has now infiltrated the primary school age, raising significant alarms regarding eye health. Experts warn that unchecked myopia isn't just about needing glasses. It's a public health issue with lifelong consequences if left undiagnosed or untreated. Understanding Myopia In Kids According to Dr. Amod Nayak, Head of Clinical Services, Dr. Agarwals Eye Hospital, Bangalore, "Myopia has emerged as one of the most alarming paediatric ophthalmic conditions worldwide, and the increase in screen exposure is a major

contributing factor." He explains that prolonged near work on devices demands sustained focus and convergence, and since digital screens are often held closer than books, they strain the visual system further. Dr. Nayak adds, "Extended screen time replaces outdoor activity, which is vital because

exposure to natural light plays a protective role in preventing myopia. Early diagnosis allows timely interventions like corrective lenses, orthokeratology, or pharmaceutical treatments that can slow its progression." The Digital Disconnect: How Screens Are



Changing Young Eyes The shape of the human eye is changing, quite literally. Dr. Shweta Ravichandran, Associate Consultant, Ophthalmology, MGM Healthcare, Chennai, explains, "Myopia occurs when the eye's shape causes light to focus in front of the retina instead of directly on it, leading to blurry distant vision."

She notes that too much screen time promotes eye elongation, which worsens the condition. "Children who spend less time outdoors are more at risk. Natural daylight stimulates dopamine release in the retina, which supports healthy eye growth," she says.

Dr. Ravichandran points out early warning signs that parents should never ignore: "If your child is squinting, sitting too close to screens, complaining of headaches, or struggling to see the board in class, it's time for an eye exam." Modern Treatments, Smarter Prevention While myopia cannot be reversed, several innovations can control its progression. "Low-dose atropine drops, orthokeratology lenses, and speciality glasses are now proven to slow eye growth," says Dr. Ravichandran. Dr. Nayak adds that behavioural modifications are equally critical: "Encourage the 20-20-20 rule – every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds – and ensure at least two hours of outdoor play daily." Childhood myopia is no longer rare, and the pandemic has only accelerated its spread. With the World Health Organisation predicting that half the global population will be myopic by 2050, the urgency for early eye screening cannot be overstated.

Few health benefits of eating nutmeg you probably never knew

Most of us think of nutmeg only when we see desserts or winter drinks. A sprinkle in custard, a pinch in warm milk, maybe a little in holiday cakes. But this tiny brown seed has been part of home remedies for hundreds of years. People in India, China, and the Middle East didn't just use it for taste; they used it as medicine. Even today, if you ask older family members, you'll hear how nutmeg was given for stomach problems, sleepless nights, or even skin issues. The truth is, nutmeg carries a lot of hidden benefits that most people don't really know about. Here are few of them, explained in a simple way. Helps with digestion After heavy meals, people sometimes feel bloated or uneasy. Nutmeg helps settle the stomach. Just a small pinch in food or milk can reduce gas and ease digestion. In old households, mothers used to add nutmeg to children's meals when they complained of stomach pain. It's gentle, unlike strong medicines, and works slowly but surely. A natural sleep aid Insomnia is common these days, but nutmeg has been a natural sleep remedy for generations. Mixing a tiny pinch of nutmeg powder in warm milk before bed is still a practice

in many homes. It calms the nerves and relaxes the body, helping sleep come naturally. Many people swear they sleep deeper and wake fresher after this simple routine. Keeps the mouth clean Nutmeg fights bacteria in the mouth. That's why some herbal toothpaste brands add it as an ingredient. It helps with bad breath, cavities, and even gum problems. In the past, nutmeg oil was dabbed on toothaches to ease pain. Chewing a very small piece occasionally keeps the mouth fresh and clean without needing artificial mints. Eases pain and swelling Nutmeg contains oils that act against inflammation. If someone has sore muscles, stiff joints, or arthritis, nutmeg taken in food or applied as oil can bring relief. Even today, nutmeg paste is rubbed on children's foreheads to ease colds and mild pains.

Good for the brain Long ago, nutmeg was called a "brain food." Healers believed it sharpened memory and improved focus. Modern studies suggest it does protect brain cells and helps fight fatigue. Students and working professionals can benefit from adding a pinch to their diet; it keeps the mind alert without the crash of caffeine.

The Importance of Yoga for Adults in Contemporary Times

You are not imagining it – the sound of your knees creaking during a morning stretch or that persistent ache after prolonged sitting at your desk. More and more individuals in their twenties are encountering joint pain, stiffness, and mobility challenges that were previously believed to be concerns solely for older adults. The reasons behind this trend are rooted in contemporary lifestyle habits: extended periods spent hunched over laptops, insufficient physical activity, irregular sleep patterns, and elevated stress levels. The outcome? Joints that seem to be decades older than their actual age.

What's Behind the Early-Onset Joint Pain "Joint pain is not only an ageing issue. Young adults are dealing with stiffness, aches, and limited ability to move. The majority of which is because of hours spent sitting, poor postures, stress, and inability to regularly move and be active," explains Dr. Pankaj Dhabalia, HOD of Orthopaedic Department and Senior Consultant, Ramkrishna CARE Hospitals, Raipur. According to Dr. Rohit Deshpande, Internal Medicine Specialist at Lilavati Hospital, Mumbai, "Prolonged hours spent in front of screens and lack of exercise decrease synovial fluid production – the body's natural joint lubricant – resulting in stiffness, premature cartilage wear, and inflammation." Deficiencies in vitamin D and calcium, along with obesity and repetitive stress injuries, further accelerate degeneration once only seen after middle age. Dr. Yogirshi Vishvketu,

Founder of the Akhanda Yoga Institute, adds that the problem runs deeper than just posture. "Long hours of sitting, sensory overload, irregular breathing and sleep patterns, and unconstructive eating habits are accelerating the body's ageing process, leaving many feeling decades older," he says. Why Yoga Is the Antidote Your Joints Need Across disciplines, experts agree that



yoga offers one of the most effective, low-impact ways to reverse this premature joint ageing. "Yoga can control the pain and prevent chronic problems. It builds strength in the muscles around the joints, increases range of motion, and improves circulation," says Dr. Dhabalia. Poses such as Downward Dog, Cat-Cow, and Warrior sequences not only ease stiffness but also enhance alignment and body awareness.

Dr. Deshpande highlights the physiological benefits: "Asanas like Vrikshasana (Tree Pose), Trikonasana (Triangle Pose), and Setu Bandhasana (Bridge Pose) enhance flexibility and strengthen muscular support while activating circulation around the synovial membrane." He notes that regulated stretching encourages collagen alignment and reduces oxidative stress, which is key to joint preservation. For Dr. Vishvketu, yoga's restorative nature extends beyond movement. "Just 20 minutes daily can restore vitality and protect the joints," he says, recommending Surya Namaskar, gentle joint rotations, and restorative poses like Balakasana (Child's Pose) and Kapotasana (Pigeon Pose). He also advocates pairing movement with a sattvic, anti-inflammatory diet rich in turmeric, ghee, and greens, along with hydration and mindful posture habits. Beyond Flexibility: Building Longevity Through Awareness The body thrives on balance – movement and rest, strength and softness. Yoga helps rebuild that balance by training awareness as much as it does flexibility. Regular practice improves mobility, balance, and resilience, ensuring the body stays youthful and pain-free for years to come. Ignoring the early signs – stiffness after sitting, fatigue while climbing stairs, or minor aches – can pave the way for chronic conditions later. But integrating mindful movement, a nutrient-rich diet, and proper posture into your routine can keep your joints feeling strong and supple well into the future.



SC to hear Assam government's plea against transit bail to Pawan Khera

High Court mandates application within one week period

Guwahati, Apr 14: The Supreme Court is on Wednesday scheduled to hear a petition filed by the Assam government against the one-week transit anticipatory bail granted to Congress leader Pawan Khera by the Telangana High Court. The high court had on April 10 granted bail to Khera, giving him one week's time to file an application before the court concerned. "...the petitioner has made out a case for the grant of limited transit anticipatory bail, as his apprehension of arrest appears to be reasonable and supported by material on record," the high court order read. The Assam government filed its plea in the Supreme Court on Sunday through advocate Shuvodeep Roy. Addressing a press conference on April 5 when campaigning for



the April 9 Assam elections reached a crescendo, Khera had ruffled the BJP's feathers by claiming that Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife possesses passports of three countries, owns luxury properties in Dubai and has investments worth several lakh crore rupees in the United States. Sarma had dismissed the claims outright, and sniffed a Pakistani angle to it. He claimed that

the "fraud and fabricated" documents that the Congress leader had relied on while making the claims was "supplied from a Pakistani social media group." He expressed concerns that Pakistan was trying to influence the outcome of Assam polls. His wife had lodged an FIR with the Crime Branch Police Station in Guwahati against Khera and a case was registered. On April 7,

an Assam Police team, accompanied by Delhi Police personnel, went to Khera's residence in connection with the case but did not find him. The Assam Police had claimed about recovering "incriminating" material after a search at the residence. Sarma had then claimed that Khera fled to Hyderabad. "But the Assam Police are efficient enough to nab him even from the netherworld," the Chief Minister stated. Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita had also dismissed as "fake and fabricated" Khera's claims. "As the MoS for External Affairs, I want to say that we have come to know through our diplomatic channels and investigation that these are fake and fabricated documents," he had stated.

Mamata: Agencies Tasked to Arrest Workers



Kolkata, Apr 14: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has intensified her attack on central agencies, alleging that the ED and CBI have been "tasked" with arresting Trinamool Congress (TMC) workers and polling agents to disrupt the upcoming Assembly elections. Addressing rallies in Pingla and Jagatballavpur, she claimed "midnight raids" are being conducted to weaken the party's organizational strength before the two-phase polls on April 23 and 29. These allegations follow the recent arrest of Vinesh Chandel, director of political consultancy firm I-PAC, in a money laundering case. Banerjee suggested the move was specifically designed to prevent TMC agents from manning booths. However, she remained defiant, stating that the party is ready with "alternative arrangements," including deploying women at polling stations if necessary. The Chief Minister warned that any attempt to intimidate her workers would backfire, asserting that thousands would rise to replace any arrested member. The I-PAC office and premises of its co-founders have previously faced raids linked to coal scam investigations.

UP Alleges "Pakistan Link" in Violent Noida Worker Protests

Lucknow, Apr 14: Violent protests erupted in Noida on Monday as thousands of factory workers clashed with police, leading to widespread arson and vandalism. The unrest, centered around industrial clusters, stems from worker demands for a minimum monthly wage of Rs 20,000, highlighting a growing gap between stagnant incomes and the rising cost of living. Government Alleges Foreign Conspiracy The Uttar Pradesh government has characterized the violence as a "well-planned conspiracy" aimed at disrupting the state's investment climate. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath alleged that outsiders are attempting to derail growth, while Labour Minister Anil Rajbhar revealed a startling new angle to the investigation. Rajbhar stated that authorities are probing "links to handlers in Pakistan," citing the recent arrests of four suspected terrorists in Meerut and Noida. "The incident appears to have been carried out with the intention of disrupting development... the possibility of a conspiracy to create instability in the state gains strength," Rajbhar asserted.

Industrial Development Minister Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi further accused the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress of inciting "anarchic elements" and using rumor-mongering to instigate the workers. Opposition Backs Workers' Demands Opposition leaders have hit back, blaming the government's "poor handling" of economic distress. Rahul Gandhi described the violence as the "final cry" of exploited workers, noting that current monthly wages of Rs 12,000 are insufficient when rents consume nearly half that amount. SP Chief Akhilesh Yadav demanded the resignation of CM Yogi Adityanath, linking the unrest to broader issues of inflation and economic mismanagement. Meanwhile, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete criticized the state's labor conditions, comparing them to "bonded labor" despite the region's fast-paced economic growth. As agencies investigate the alleged conspiracy, the standoff continues to highlight the deep-seated tension between industrial expansion and labor welfare in the region.

Vedanta Power Plant Blast Kills Ten

Raipur, Apr 14: A massive boiler explosion at the Vedanta Limited power plant in Sakti district, Chhattisgarh, claimed at least ten lives and left over 25 workers injured on Tuesday. The blast occurred during peak hours at the Singhitarai facility, causing a structural collapse that trapped several personnel under debris. Emergency teams rushed the injured to hospitals in Bilaspur and Raipur, with many reported in critical condition. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai has ordered a high-level, impartial investigation into potential safety breaches, promising strict action against any negligence. While the plant's sub-contractor, NSGL, manages the unit, Vedanta confirmed a joint probe is underway. Preliminary suspicions point to a technical malfunction or pressure build-up. Rescue operations continue as authorities finalize compensation details for the victims' families.



CRPF Training for Honorary Promotions Without Pay or Pension



New Delhi, Apr 14: Even as questions continue to be raised within and outside the establishment over its necessity and cost, India's lead paramilitary force, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), has initiated a four-week training programme for personnel seeking honorary rank upgrades at the time of retirement. Notably, such honorary promotions typically last only a few hours and carry no financial or pension benefits. According to sources, the force has allocated slots across its multiple training institutions for what are being termed 'Special Promotional Courses' scheduled to begin in April. Participation in these courses will be based on willingness and eligibility, they added. The development

follows a policy decision taken by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in May 2025. Under this policy, personnel from the ranks of Constable to Sub-Inspector in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and the Assam Rifles are eligible to be granted an honorary rank one level higher on the day of their retirement. The policy document clearly specified that such honorary promotions will not entail any financial gain or enhancement in their pension benefits. The sources also indicated that a total of 801 personnel have been selected across five course categories, with each course spanning four weeks. This is despite the fact that the MHA policy does not mandate any training as a prerequisite for

the grant of honorary rank, they added. Experts have expressed concern over the rationale behind the move. They describe the decision as "inexplicable," pointing out that personnel nearing retirement are required to travel to training institutions, spend four weeks completing the course, and then return only to receive a rank that will be effective for a single day - their last in service. Critics argue that the exercise raises practical and financial questions, particularly when the honorary rank confers no tangible post-retirement benefits. They question whether it is justifiable to commit time and resources to such training when the personnel will not serve in the upgraded rank.



Army Women Boxers Shine at Mongolia Boxing Meet



Chandigarh, Apr 14: They are relatively new to don the olive green, but have made their mark. Recently inducted women boxers from the Indian Army have punched their way to top positions in the Asian Elite Boxing Championship – 2026, clinching two gold medals and a silver medal. They were among the four Indian women gold medallists at the meet. The lone Indian male gold medallist was also from the Army. The meet was held at Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia from March 28 to April 10, in which 230 boxers from 25 nations participated.

Overall, the 20-member Indian squad, which fielded both male and female boxers, including civilians, secured second place. The Army's women medallists were all from the Corps of Military Police (CMP) Center and School, Bengaluru. The CMP is the only arm in the Army to have inducted women personnel in the ranks and file, when recruitment began in 2022 under the Agnipath scheme. Naib Subedar Preeti Pawar and Havildar Arundhati Chaudhary won gold in the 54-Kg and 70-Kg weight categories, respectively, while Naib Subedar Jaismine Lamboria won the silver in the 57-Kg weight category. In fact, Naib Subedar Jaismine had made history at the World Boxing Championship -2025 by becoming the first female boxer in the Army to win a gold medal. She was awarded the Sena Medal in January 2026 for her performance. She hails from a family of

boxers and joined the Army in 2022. Naib Subedar Preeti, who hails from Bhiwani in Haryana and joined the Army last year, was the first woman athlete to be directly inducted as a Junior Commissioned Officer in the Indian Army and is a World Boxing Cup gold medalist. Hailing from Kota in Rajasthan, Havildar Arundhati had joined the Army in 2022 and is an international-level boxer, having become the Junior World Champion in 2021 and winning a gold medal in the AIBA Youth World Boxing Championships. In addition, the Army also has among its ranks other international women boxers such as Nupur Sheoran, a two-time gold medallist at the 2025 World Boxing Cup, and Sakshi Dhanda, who clinched a gold medal at the 8th Elite Women's National Boxing Championship in 2025. With the Army opening its ranks to women personnel and their strength expected to increase significantly in the coming years, greater attention is being given to women in sports, recruiting meritorious female athletes and establishing the Army Sports Girls Company in Pune for this purpose. Several disciplines such as shooting, archery, wrestling, rowing, fencing, and weightlifting have been identified for them. They are trained at the Army Sports Institute (ASI), Pune, a premier training establishment under the Army's Mission Olympics programme, which is run in collaboration with the Sports Authority of India.

Ayush Shetty Eyes Thomas Cup After Badminton Asia Championship Silver

Ningbo, Apr 14: Indian rising shuttler Ayush Shetty, who secured the silver medal at the Badminton Asia Championships held in China recently with some excellent big match performances, reflected on the "special feeling" to win the medal for his country, some high praise from senior, two-time Olympic medalist stalwart PV Sindhu and his upcoming Thomas Cup debut this year. Shetty went down to world number two Shi Yu Qi in the final, but scripted history by becoming only the second Indian to reach the men's singles summit clash after Dinesh Khanna, who had achieved the feat in 1965.

During the course of the tournament, the 20-year-old shuttler had some big battles, and with each passing match, the Karnataka-born shuttler proved that he is destined for greatness. His first big test was against the world number seven and Hong Kong Open 2025 champion Li Shi Feng of China, and he passed it in a matter of two straight games by 21-13, 21-16. Ayush booked his ticket to the semifinals, outclassing the Olympian, world number four and Thomas Cup winner Jonatan Christie of Indonesia 23-21, 21-17 in a remarkable display of calm under pressure, eking out a win in the first game after Christie had reached the match point with a two-point lead. The semifinals witnessed the biggest upset of them all as the world number one Kunlavut Vitidsarn, the 2024 Paris Olympics silver Medalist. The Indian shuttler showed tremendous resilience after losing the first game and did not bow down to the big-match pedigree standing on the other side of the court, securing a 21-19, 21-17 win that the rising star would cherish as much as his silver medal.

While the law of averages caught up with the youngster in the final, the world has been served a glimpse of India's badminton talent factory, which has been on a remarkable trajectory over the years since PV Sindhu's World Championship triumph in 2019 and Team India's historic Thomas Cup win in 2022. Speaking to ANI after the medal win, Ayush Said about His win, "I



think it is always a special feeling, you know, winning a medal for your country. I think, yeah, I think I'm really happy with the way I played throughout the tournament. Definitely, I wanted to win the gold, but yeah, proud of the way I played throughout the tournament. I think it is a great run." Ayush felt that he could not be his usual dominant self during the title clash against Shi Yu, who he said, "was playing really smart". "I think he completely did not let me dominate the net where I pulled through the other matches, you know, I used to try attacking, but he did not give me a chance. I think he also had his lengths Perfect, not giving me a good angle for the smashes," he added. Be it win or loss, the 20-year-old is enjoying facing the badminton royalty at such a young age and wants to prove that he belongs right up there with them, even when he is in the starting phases of his career. "I think I always enjoy myself whenever I'm playing the world's best. I think it is always a big challenge and a chance for me to prove that, you know, even I can beat them, and I am right there with the world's best players. challenge, and yeah, it is always fun playing them," he said. The rising shuttler has had the opportunity to pick the brains of some of India's Olympic champion.

Atletico advance to semifinals despite 1-2 second-leg loss against Barcelona

Madrid, Apr 14: Atletico Madrid reached the UEFA Champions League semi-finals for the first time in nine years after surviving a strong comeback attempt from Barcelona in the quarter-finals at the Riyadh Air Metropolitan on Wednesday.

Despite losing the second leg 1-2 to Barcelona, Diego Simeone's side progressed 3-2 on aggregate thanks to their first-leg advantage, according to the UEFA Champions League website. Barcelona started brilliantly and scored early through Lamine Yamal in the 4th minute. Ferran Torres then levelled the tie on aggregate in the 24th minute with a powerful strike, putting the visitors in control.

However, Atletico responded quickly as their forward, Ademola Lookman, scored in the 31st minute to restore their aggregate lead, giving the home side a crucial



advantage going into halftime. In the second half, Barcelona pushed hard for another goal, introducing attacking players like Robert Lewandowski and Marcus Rashford, but Atletico Madrid defended

strongly and held their shape. The match turned further in Atletico's favour when Eric Garcia was sent off after being shown the red card in the 79th minute for a last-man foul Barcelona contin website.

Sakib Hussain Debuts After Mother Sells Jewellery

New Delhi, Apr 14: A pair of spikes once felt like a luxury Sakib Hussain could not afford. Today, they are part of a story that has travelled from a small village in Bihar to the IPL spotlight, with a viral video from his Kolkata Knight Riders days bringing that journey back into focus after His Stunning debut for Sunrisers Hyderabad. For Sakib, the dream of fast bowling did not begin with perfect facilities or a steady income.

It began with a simple problem, a pair of shoes he could not afford. Shoes are very expensive. Proper bowling spikes cost around Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000. If we spend that much on shoes, then what will we eat?" he says in the now-vi-



ral video. That one line captures the reality of his journey. "He started crying, saying, 'Mummy, I don't have shoes, how will I play?' We didn't have that kind of money. I had to sell my jewellery to somehow get him those shoes," his mother recalls. In that moment, the dream was no longer just his. It became the family's. Before the IPL spotlight, Sakib was quietly building his way up. He began as a net bowler for Chennai Super Kings before being picked up by Kolkata Knight Riders Ahead of the 2024 season.