

Polling Concludes in 113-Haflong (ST) with 82.48% Voter Turnout; Fate of Candidates Sealed



Haflong, Apr 10: Polling for the 113-Haflong (ST) Assembly Constituency in Dima Hasao concluded peacefully at 5:00 P.M., recording an impressive voter turnout of approximately 82.48%, reflecting strong public participation. The final turnout

figure will be confirmed once complete data from all polling stations is compiled.

Voting commenced smoothly at 7:00 A.M. and witnessed enthusiastic participation across all sections of society. Long queues were seen throughout the day, with nota-

ble involvement of senior citizens. A brief delay occurred at Model Polling Station No. 70 due to a technical snag, which was later resolved, along with minor issues at a few other locations, including the Yoga Centre at Ramnagar, Haflong. Despite a few stray inci-

dents, polling remained largely peaceful across all 261 polling stations in the constituency.

With the close of voting, the fate of the three candidates—Rupali Langthasa (BJP), Nandita Gorlosa (Congress), and Daniel Langthasa (NPP)—has been sealed in the EVMs. The counting of votes and declaration of results are scheduled for May 4, 2026.

Meanwhile, sealed EVMs and polling materials have started arriving from remote areas under tight security. The District Administration, under the supervision of the District Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer, has ensured secure storage in designated strong rooms with round-the-clock security and CCTV surveillance until counting day.

Triangular Contest Set to Decide Fate in 113-Haflong (ST) Constituency on April 9

Haflong, Apr 08: The stage is set for a keenly watched triangular contest in the 113-Haflong (ST) Legislative Assembly Constituency, where voters will decide the political fate of three chief candidates — BJP's Rupali Langthasa, Congress candidate Nandita Gorlosa, and NPP's Daniel Langthasa — as polling takes place on April 9, 2026. The election campaign, which concluded yesterday evening, witnessed an extraordinary turnout and enthusiastic participation from people across all corners of the constituency. All three parties showcased significant strength during the campaign period, organizing large rallies and outreach programs, each expressing confidence in securing victory based on their respective agendas. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) appears to hold a slight edge in the contest, owing to its position in power within the autonomous council and its organizational penetration across the constituency. However, the contest remains wide open, as both the Congress(INC) and the National

People's Party (NPP) bring their own strengths and voter bases into the fray, making the outcome far from predictable. Political observers believe that a higher voter turnout — expected to be one of the highest in recent times — could play a decisive role in shaping the final result. A surge in polling percentage may sig-

rangements across all 261 polling stations in the district. For the effective management of the election process, 13 Zonal Officers and 68 Sector Officers have been deployed across the constituency. Additionally, a total of 1,252 civil officials, supported by around 520 police personnel, have been engaged to over-

nificantly alter the electoral dynamics, potentially leading to a narrow margin of victory in this closely contested seat. Meanwhile, the district administration has completed all necessary preparations to ensure a smooth and peaceful polling process. The District Election Officer has put in place stringent security ar-

rangements and maintain law and order during polling. With all arrangements in place, the electorate of Dima Hasao district now awaits polling day, when their mandate will ultimately determine the winner in this high-stakes triangular contest on the day of counting on 4 May, 2026

Dima Hasao Tops Assam HSLC 2026 with 88.23% Pass Rate

Haflong, Apr 10: The results of the Assam HSLC Examination 2026 were officially declared on April 10, recording an overall pass percentage of 65.62% across the state. Out of a total of 4,29,249 candidates who appeared for the examination, 2,81,701 students successfully passed. In a remarkable achievement, Dima Hasao district emerged as the best-performing district in the state, securing the top position with an impressive pass percentage of 88.23%, highlighting the district's consistent academic progress and dedication of both students and educators. The state topper title was secured by Jyotirmay Das of Sankardev Sishu Niketan, Patacharkuchi, bringing laurels to Bajali district. Among other key highlights, a total of 85,189 students achieved first division marks, reflecting strong academic



performance. In terms of gender-wise results, boys recorded a pass percentage of 67.78%, while girls achieved 63.96%. The results have been made available online through official portals, enabling students to access their scores conveniently. The outstanding performance of Dima Hasao stands as a proud moment for the district, reaffirming its growing prominence in the state's educational landscape.

Army, BRO Restore North Sikkim Connectivity



Gangtok, Apr 10: Senior officers of the Indian Army visited the landslide-affected Taramchu area in North Sikkim on Friday and reviewed ongoing restoration work on the Chungthang–Lachen road. Heavy rainfall and landslides on April 5 caused damage to the Tarum Chu bridge, disrupting road connectivity and leaving more than 1,300 tourists stranded in the region. A total of 1,321 tourists were evacuated from Lachen on April 9 through coordinated efforts by the Indian Army, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), district administration, and the Lachen Dzumsa.

Additional Director General of the Border Roads Organisation (East), Jitendra Prasad, inspected the affected site, reviewed the progress of repair work, and directed teams to expedite restoration of the route. The Chungthang–Lachen road is a key link for connectivity in North Sikkim, and repair efforts are currently underway by the Border Roads Organisation in coordination with the Indian Army and local authorities.

Manipur Blast: Probe and Searches Underway



Imphal, Apr 10: The probe into the fatal bomb blast in Tronglaobi village of Manipur's Bishnupur district is still in progress, while security forces continue search operations in the area, State Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam said on Saturday, April 11. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the 176th death anniversary event of Maharaja Nara Singh at Kangla Fort, the minister said that officials are following multiple leads, but he did not disclose further information as the inquiry is still active. When asked about the incident, Konhoujam said that security deployment has been stepped up in the affected region after the explosion, and efforts are ongoing to identify and apprehend those involved. On demands to replace central paramilitary forces with state police in border and sensitive locations, the Home Minister said the government is working on a gradual plan for redeployment. He added that some central forces may be shifted to hill areas, while state forces would take over certain positions, though immediate replacement is not possible due to limited manpower. The blast took place in the early hours of April 7 at a home in Tronglaobi, where two children lost their lives while they were asleep, and their mother sustained injuries. The incident, especially due to the presence of a nearby CRPF camp, has led to strong public anger.

In the aftermath, protests broke out in the area, with locals condemning the attack and demanding the withdrawal of central forces from the locality. Many locals have demanded an increased presence of state police forces, expressing worries about safety in the area and issues related to accountability. Security operations are still underway in the area, while the investigation is continuing without any conclusion so far.

PM Modi in Bengal: TMC Made State 'Infiltrator Factory' for Votes

Modi Pledges ₹45,000cr to Revive Durgapur–Asansol Industrial Belt

Kolkata, Apr 10: Escalating his campaign for the upcoming West Bengal assembly elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a scathing attack on the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) during rallies in Haldia, Asansol, and Suri. The Prime Minister accused the ruling party of turning the state into a "factory of infiltrators" to secure its vote bank, promising that illegal immigrants would be "pushed out" once the BJP assumes power. Addressing large crowds despite inclement weather, Modi alleged that the TMC prepares bogus documents for infiltrators and prioritizes them for jobs over the state's youth. He criticized the "cruel government" (nirnam sarkar) for pulling Bengal back while the rest of India progresses, highlighting issues of corruption, syndicate raj, and coal smuggling.

Key highlights of the Prime Minister's address included: The Nandigram Replay: Modi



predicted that the "Nandigram miracle"—where Suwendu Adhikari defeated Mamata Banerjee—would repeat in the Bhabanipur constituency. Economic Revival: He promised to revive the industrial belts of Durgapur and Haldia, claiming investment only flows in a "climate of trust" rather than fear. The "Modi Guarantees": The PM pledged to implement the 7th Pay Commission for state employees and ensure central schemes reach citizens without "name-changing" by the state government.

Chief Minister Mamata

Banerjee responded sharply, questioning the role of central agencies like the BSF and CISF in preventing border crossings. "Tell Amit Shah to resign for his failure to stop infiltration," she countered at a rally in Baguihati, further claiming that unemployment in Bengal has actually decreased by 40% under her tenure.

As both leaders exchange heavy fire, the battle for Bengal centers on the narrative of national security versus state autonomy, with the high-stakes Bhabanipur contest serving as the election's focal point.

Sarma Defends Police Action Against Congress's Pawan Khera

Guwahati, Apr 10: Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma defended the police action against Congress leader Pawan Khera, calling it a legal response to an FIR filed by his wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma. The case involves allegations that Sarma's wife holds multiple foreign passports. Sarma also attacked Congress's Gaurav Gogoi, questioning his family's nationality after Gogoi voted with his mother instead of his wife. Sarma alleged Gogoi couldn't make his own family "Indian" and suggested his wife, Elizabeth Colburn, had "suspicious" links to Pakistan. Sarma claimed this personal history makes Gogoi unfit to serve, labeling him and his allies as "anti-Assamese." In a sharp escalation of campaign rhetoric following the close of polling, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma targeted Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi's cultural and religious identity. Sarma questioned how someone of "Ahom lineage" could have a family that he claimed is neither "Assamese nor Indian," referencing Gogoi's wife and children's Christian faith. Sarma alleged that Gogoi's "frustration" over these personal

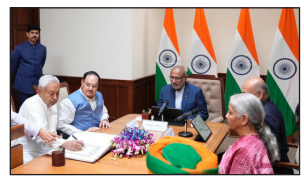
attacks led him to collaborate with Pawan Khera to create "false documents" against the CM's wife.

Turning to the state's cultural landscape, Sarma accused the Congress of "political opportunism" regarding the late music icon Zubeen Garg. He questioned if the party's frequent visits to the singer's cremation site were merely electoral theater that would vanish once the polls conclude. "100 Seats" and the End of the Opposition Sarma expressed supreme confidence in the BJP-led alliance, predicting a sweep of 96–100 seats in the 126-member house. He noted that if the BJP crosses the 100-seat mark, the formal role of the "Leader of the Opposition" would effectively cease to exist.

The CM didn't stop at political rivals; he issued a stark warning to sections of the local media, suggesting they would be "politically and intellectually finished" upon a BJP return. He also raised allegations against AJP candidate Kunki Chowdhury regarding land deals, positioning the BJP as the only party backing "new-generation" leadership untainted by the past.



Nitish Kumar Takes Rajya Sabha Oath



Bihar, Apr 10: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday took oath as a member of the Rajya Sabha in a brief ceremony held in the Chairman's chamber. The oath was administered by Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan. Kumar took the oath in Hindi in the presence of Union Minister and Leader of the House J P Nadda, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and Minister of State for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal. Among those present at the ceremony were JD(U) working president Sanjay Kumar Jha, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, and BJP MP and former Union minister Rajiv Pratap Rudy.

With Kumar assuming office in the Rajya Sabha, his tenure as Bihar Chief Minister comes to an end. The NDA is expected to elect a new chief minister of Bihar on April 14.

Haridwar Archery Coach Booked for Rape



Uttra, Apr 10: An archery coach of a school here has been booked for allegedly raping a 14-year-old student, police said. The case was registered against the coach, Pawan, a native of Haryana, on Thursday after the student's father filed a complaint alleging that he had raped his daughter and threatened to kill her if she told anyone about the incident, police said. The complaint states that the accused raped the girl in October last year and then continued to threaten her to remain silent.

After remaining silent for several months, the girl finally mustered the courage to share her ordeal with her family. Her father took her to the Kankhal police station and filed a complaint against the accused, police said. Kankhal Station House Officer Devendra Singh Rawat said the victim's statement has been recorded and her medical examination has also been done. He said police are investigating all aspects of the case and the accused will be arrested soon.

Judge Yashwant Varma Resigns

Lucknow, Apr 10: In a dramatic turn for the Indian judiciary, Justice Yashwant Varma of the Allahabad High Court resigned on Friday, sending his letter to President Droupadi Murmu. The resignation comes as a parliamentary committee was conducting day-to-day hearings to impeach him following the discovery of unaccounted, half-burnt currency at his Delhi residence in March 2025.

In his letter, dated April 9, Varma expressed "deep anguish" but declined to "burden" the President's office with his specific reasons. The



controversy began when fire tenders responding to a blaze at his home allegedly found stacks of cash—some reportedly 1.5 feet high.

Key Developments: The Inquiry: A three-member panel, including Supreme Court Justice Arvind Kumar, was

investigating "proved misbehaviour" under the Judges (Inquiry) Act.

Political Pressure: The move follows an impeachment motion sponsored by 146 Lok Sabha members.

Legal Status: Experts state the resignation renders the impeachment process infructuous, as parliamentary removal only applies to sitting judges.

Varma, who was previously stripped of judicial work and repatriated from the Delhi High Court, had consistently denied the allegations, claiming the cash did not belong to him or his family.

Assam Polls 2026: Zubeen Garg's Absence Leaves Musical Void

Guwahati, Apr 10: Garima Saikia Garg exercised her democratic right by voting in the Assam Assembly elections once again on Thursday, but the only difference this time was that she was not accompanied by her husband, the late music icon Zubeen Garg. "Earlier, I would always come along with him to cast my vote," she told media persons after casting her vote in the Dispur Assembly constituency in Guwahati.

She did not miss her vote despite being unwell. She was discharged from a hospital only the previous day. "It is our duty to vote, and that is why, although I am unwell, I have come to vote," said Garima who was accompanied by the singer's sister Palme Borthakur. On justice for Garg, she said, "We are fighting for his justice. We are hopeful that justice will be done in an expeditious manner." She was admitted to the hospital last week after she had complained of blood



pressure-related issues. Garg (52) had died mysteriously on September 19 while swimming in the sea in Singapore. He travelled to the country to perform at the fourth North East India Festival (NEIF). Later, the Assam Special Investigation Team arrested seven persons – NEIF organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, Garg's

manager Siddharth Sharma, DSP cousin Sandipan Garg, personal security officers Nandeswar Bora and Prabin Baishya, bandmate Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and singer Amritprabha Mahanta – in connection with the death. All of them are in judicial custody. The trial started in a fast-track court last month.

For the opposition parties, particularly Congress, justice for Garg was among the biggest poll planks. The demand for justice intensified after Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had claimed that the singer was murdered as part of a conspiracy. Garg was virtually a cult figure and the heartthrob of youngsters. Very few people could accept his untimely and mysterious death. The Congress had announced five guarantees for Assam, with the biggest being ensuring justice for the singer-musician within 100 days of coming to power.

Police Raid AJP Chief's Home Post-Clash

Dibrugarh, Apr 10: A search operation was conducted at the residence of Lurinjoti Gogoi, president of the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and an Assembly poll candidate, on Friday in connection with an incident on polling day, a police officer said. Gogoi was the opposition alliance's candidate from the Khowang constituency in Dibrugarh district, where voting was held in a single phase on Thursday. Dibrugarh Senior Superintendent of Police Gaurav Abhijit Dilip said the search was carried out based on technical inputs and in accordance with legal procedures. However, AJP leaders and members present at the residence alleged that police did not produce a search warrant during the operation. "An extensive search was carried out for nearly two hours. When we asked, why they had come and where the warrant was, the police team could not show anything," they said.

Another police officer had said on Thursday that AJP had alleged that BJP was running an IT cell at a house in the area in Khowang constituency. "A group of AJP workers reached there along with the police. After some time, AJP leaders Samudra Barua, Swakhyar Borgohain and Chittrakamal Handique also went there. Following a heated exchange of words, the AJP workers and BJP activists got involved in a physical brawl, in which the three AJP leaders were injured," the officer had said. The SSP had said that the building "seems to be a party office and further investigation is underway to ascertain what exactly was going on there", with no arrests made on the polling day.

NPP Seeks Re-poll at Alichen Polling Stations



Kohima, Apr 10: The National People's Party (NPP) has submitted a formal complaint to the Election Commission of India (ECI) seeking a re-poll in the Alichen cluster of polling stations under Nagaland's 28 Koridang Assembly Constituency, alleging irregularities and voter suppression. According to official data cited by the party, Alichen recorded a voter turnout of 39.9%, with 1,323 of 3,310 registered voters casting their votes. This is significantly lower compared to neighbouring areas, where turnout reportedly ranged between 70% and 99%. Some polling stations in Alichen recorded turnout between

15% and 23%.

The NPP has alleged that personnel of the India Reserve Battalion (IRB) created an atmosphere of fear during polling. The party also claimed that voting was halted for about an hour due to extensive identity verification checks conducted by ECI observers and district officials. It further alleged that no extension of polling time was granted, which it says affected voters, including rural residents, women, elderly persons, and daily wage earners.

The party has also submitted video footage as part of its complaint and alleged misuse of state machinery. It stated that these issues may have im-

acted the fairness of the polling process in the area. In its representation to the ECI, the NPP has demanded that polling in the Alichen stations be declared vitiated and that a re-poll be conducted in all affected stations. It has also sought deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), an inquiry into the role of security personnel and election officials, and preservation of all relevant records, including videography and documents. The party said that electoral processes must ensure free and fair participation and stated that any localized irregularities could affect the credibility of the results.

Gaurav Gogoi: People Backed 'New Congress'



Guwahati, Apr 10: Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on Friday said the "new Congress" in the state received strong support from voters in Thursday's Assembly elections. Addressing a press conference, he said that although a few leaders had left the party, a new Congress was delivered to the people, and they responded positively by extending their support to it.

The Congress lost several leaders to the ruling BJP over a period of time. Among them are Pradyut Bordoloi and Bhupen Kumar Borah, who joined the BJP in recent months. Both contested the polls on BJP tickets.

Gogoi underscored that the Congress had worked out an alliance strategy by excluding the minority-based All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and aligning with Assam Jatiya Parishad, Rajior Dal, CPI, CPI(ML), and All Party Hill Leaders Conference, which was appreciated by the people.

He claimed that the Congress had observed a strong anti-incumbency wave during the elec-

tion campaign and that the government's failure was clearly reflected during the elections. "From the tea industry to local enterprises, this government has not been able to create or promote any indigenous or local industries. The Congress was able to take this lack of industrialisation to the people," Gogoi said.

He alleged that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had taken the AIUDF's support during Rajya Sabha elections in March and facilitated defections. He said the Congress maintained dignity and respectful relations even with opponents, but Sarma created a "toxic" environment through aggressive outbursts in recent days. "I think the Chief Minister totally panicked. He did not expect these reports to come and become so viral. In the last five-six days, he had been literally tearing his hair out. His desperation can be seen in his words, actions and on his face. But just by shouting, truth does not become a lie," Gogoi said referring to party leader Pawan Khara's recent claims targeting the Chief Minister's family.

Manipur: BSF Jawan Killed By Stray Bullet During Exchange Of Fire In Ukhrul

Manipur, Apr 10: A personnel of the Border Security Force (BSF) died after being hit by a stray bullet during an exchange of fire between suspected Kuki-Zo and Tangkhul Naga village volunteers in Manipur's Ukhrul district on Friday, officials said. The incident occurred around 4:45 pm at Mongkot Chepu village under Litan police station. According to reports, firing broke out between suspected Kuki-Zo volunteers from Mongkot Chepu and Tangkhul Naga volunteers from Shikibung village. The deceased has been identified as Constable Mithun Mandal of the BSF's 170 Battalion, who was deployed in the area for road opening patrol duty. He sustained a bullet injury to his left shoulder during the exchange of fire.

Mandal was immediately evacuated to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal, where he later succumbed to his injuries. Hospital authorities stated that the bullet had damaged a vital organ. Police have registered a case in connection with the incident and launched an investigation. Security forces have been put on high alert in

the area, and efforts are underway to identify and apprehend those involved in the firing. The body was kept at the RIMS mortuary for post-mortem examination. Reacting to the incident, Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh strongly condemned the killing, describing it as an "unfortunate and tragic incident." He stated that Constable Mithun Mandal was martyred while on patrol duty after being struck by a bullet fired from an unknown direction.

In a statement, the Chief Minister said that despite the best efforts of medical personnel, the jawan succumbed to his injuries at around 6:00 pm at RIMS, Imphal. Hailing from Bhagjan Tola village in West Bengal, Mandal was remembered for serving the nation with courage, dedication, and a deep sense of duty. He further stated that the constable's sacrifice would be remembered with the highest honour and extended his condolences to the bereaved family. The Chief Minister assured that the State Government stands in solidarity with the family and remains committed to ensuring peace, security, and justice.



Sikkim LPG Supply Restored To Normal Levels



Gangtok, Apr 10: The Sikkim government on Thursday stated that the supply of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) in the state has been restored to 100 percent of pre-crisis levels, addressing the earlier shortfall in cooking gas availability.

Earlier, Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) had reduced LPG supplies to around 80 percent following a nationwide shortage linked to the West Asia crisis.

According to the Food and Civil Sup-

plies Department, supply has now returned to normal levels following coordination between the state government and oil marketing companies. Officials stated that LPG availability is expected to improve across all districts, with distribution being monitored to ensure adherence to regular supply schedules. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has also increased the allocation of 5 kg Free Trade LPG (FTL) cylinders for Sikkim. The additional supply is aimed at supporting migrant labourers and supplementing existing kerosene provisions.

The state government stated that it will continue to monitor the situation and maintain regular LPG supply. Residents have been advised to contact District Control Room helplines for assistance or to report any supply-related issues.

Editorial

A Hill District's Triumph — Dima Hasao Leads Assam's Educational Renaissance

The declaration of the Assam HSLC Examination 2026 results has brought with it a story that goes beyond numbers and percentages—it is a story of resilience, aspiration, and collective effort. While the state recorded an overall pass percentage of 65.62%, it is the stellar performance of Dima Hasao, topping the charts with an impressive 88.23%, that deserves both celebration and reflection.

For a district often perceived through the lens of its geographical remoteness and infrastructural challenges, this achievement signals a powerful shift. Dima Hasao's success is not accidental; it is the outcome of sustained commitment by students, tireless

dedication of teachers, and a gradually strengthening academic environment. In a region where access to resources can be limited, excellence achieved under such circumstances carries even greater significance.

Education in hill districts like Dima Hasao has historically faced hurdles—ranging from connectivity issues to shortages of teaching staff and learning infrastructure. Yet, the 2026 HSLC results demonstrate that these barriers are not insurmountable. Instead, they have been met with determination, innovative teaching approaches, and a growing awareness among parents and communities about the transformative power of education.

Effective pill for online ills

The Digital Safety Frontier: India's Push for Platform Accountability In a landscape where social media was once a lawless digital playground, several Indian states are finally drawing a line in the sand. Led by Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, a wave of new restrictions signals that child safety is no longer a peripheral concern, but a national public health priority. A Growing Consensus Across States The shift is palpable. On March 6, 2026, Karnataka made history as the first state to announce a ban on social media for children under 16, a move quickly followed by Andhra Pradesh's proposal for a ban on those under 13. Even in Odisha, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan recently signalled a crackdown on the "toxicity" of online platforms, moving toward legislation against abusive language and digital harm. Why Now? The Economic and Social Cost The 2025-26 Economic Survey has officially framed digital addiction as a major health challenge. The survey highlights that compulsive scrolling is directly linked to:

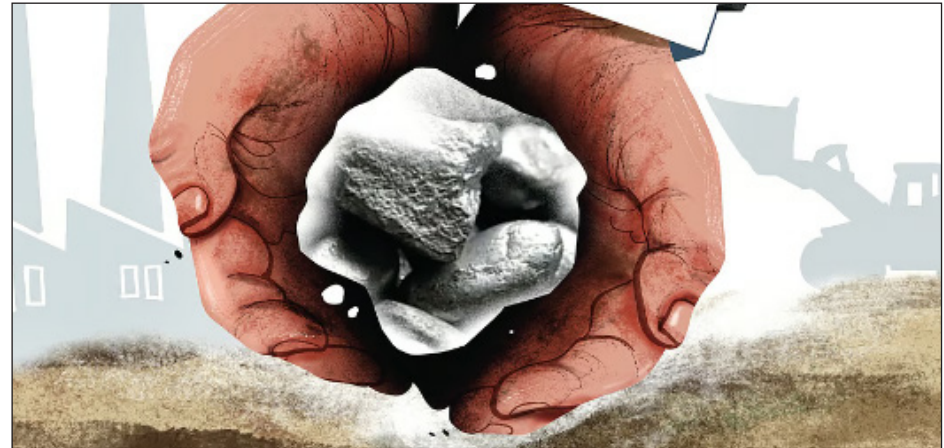
Mental Health: Rising rates of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. **Physical Well-being:** Significant sleep disturbances and reduced concentration. **Academic Impact:** Declining performance as digital consumption replaces learning. With the mainstreaming of generative AI, these platforms have become even more exploitative. From deepfakes to algorithmically amplified "pile-ons," the current safeguards—like basic teen accounts—are clearly insufficient. **Beyond the Ban: A New Accountability Model** While bans are the most immediate tools available, technology cannot be "undone." The conversation must shift toward achievable platform accountability: **Friction by Design:** Platforms should move away from "infinite scrolls" toward architecture that includes age-appropriate time limits, safer late-night defaults, and "break prompts" that actually work. **Safety Sandboxes:** No high-impact feature or AI tool should be rolled out to youth-heavy environments without rigorous testing in sandboxes and external reviews by child-rights experts. **A Specialized Regulator:** Just as we regulate food and drugs, India needs a specialized digital-safety regulator. This body would monitor design risks, demand transparency, and ensure that safety obligations are enforced uniformly across all states. The status quo is no longer defensible. As policymakers lose patience, the message to big tech is clear: either remodel these spaces to be meaningfully safe, or prepare for a future defined by regulation rather than innovation.

For critical magnets, the State must carry its part of the risk

India's push for building a domestic rare-earth permanent magnet (REPM) base will need more than just industry effort. Recent experience with the production-linked incentives (PLI) in battery manufacturing proves that the State cannot just design an incentive, hold a tender and then step away. The battery PLI was clearly ambitious. It envisaged rapid commissioning in two years and sales-linked incentives over a five-year window. Domestic value-addition was targeted at 60 percent within these five years. The challenges were limited technology availability, a skilled-manpower gap, dependence on imported equipment and non-availability of upstream components such as cathode/anode materials and electrolyte. The scheme tried to pull a gigafactory into existence, but the ecosystem that makes a gigafactory bankable and buildable was still to be set up.

By October 2025, only 2.8 percent of targeted capacity had been commissioned, commercial sales had not meaningfully begun and investment lagged far behind targets. The structural issue still existed: India is overwhelmingly import-dependent for the minerals that anchor the clean-tech stack. A recent assessment by Niti Aayog shows near 100 percent import dependence for lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare-earth elements—exactly the inputs that sit in batteries, electric vehicle motors and wind turbine generators. This is the context in which we are looking at the just-announced REPM PLI scheme. It makes an improvement by explicitly targeting an integrated midstream chain and recognising raw material constraints. However, more needs to be done with government support for market-making (offtake), bankability (risk-sharing finance) and supply security (feedstock, trade and stockpiles).

The scheme notes that India imports all its sintered neodymium-iron-boron magnet because of missing midstream steps—oxide-to-metal, metal-to-alloy, alloy-to-magnet—and aims to build integrated manufacturing capacities of 6,000



metric tonnes per annum. It allocates 600-1,200 MTPA to each of five potential bidders. The scheme correctly identifies feed stock constraints, but the numbers show a gap. The notification states that the country's existing neodymium-praseodymium oxide (NdPr) production capacity is 400 MTPA with a 500 MT stock, supporting roughly 1,500 MTPA of magnets—thus falling short of the 6,000 MTPA ambition. The scheme offers limited assured supply and the core challenge of oxide availability remains a problem that is pushed onto bidders.

The import-risk dimension is also sharper for magnets than for many other components. Trade data disclosed in Parliament shows that for permanent magnets, import dependency reached 90.4 percent in 2024-25. Bankability hates price volatility. NdPr prices have swung from triple digits to \$60 a kg in 2023, traded around the low-50s in mid-2024 and then surged again in 2026. That is not a commodity cycle but a whiplash that can wipe out any financial model.

Given this, five policy actions can be game-changers. First, the State must guarantee feedstock adequacy and a predictable oxide-to-alloy pathway. The scheme's NdPr allocation needs a time-bound plan to expand domestic availability. The recently-announced rare earth element (REE) corridors are a welcome step, signalling intent to create integrated mining-to-processing ecosystems. Fast-tracking these corridors with plug-and-play infrastructure, streamlined approvals and clear execution timelines would be essential to unlock production.

Complement this by a national push on recycling and circularity through strictly-enforced producer responsibility and targeted incentives and penalties to ensure recovery of rare earths from end-of-life products to augment secondary feedstock supply. These measures are essential to prevent the 6,000-MTPA aspiration from collapsing into a 1,500-MTPA reality. Second, the State moves to create bankable offtake and not just indicate an expected demand. In strategic sectors like defence, public transport and renewables, government procurement can anchor volumes. Australian and American experiences show that long-term contracts are often a prerequisite for financing new critical-mineral capacity. The REPM PLI needs a structured offtake mechanism with demand aggregation and standardised contracts, not the hope that downstream equipment suppliers will voluntarily pay any early-mover premium.

Third, the State can mitigate price volatility through risk-sharing. Price floors and stockpile-linked stabilisation can convert price uncertainty into an investable revenue curve. Other governments have explicitly used floor prices for NdPr to accelerate supply chains. India should not assume that a least-cost tender can manage a volatile commodity market with dominant global players holding concentrated supply power. Fourth, urgently build the ecosystem of skilling, testing, standards and leverage plug-and-play industrial commons like the Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemicals Investment Regions at Paradeep and Dahej. China has developed more than 400

courses in processing, beneficiation and downstream manufacture. It is imperative that India sees skilling in this area as essential infrastructure and not just training. Government-backed testing and certification, along with targeted skilling, is basic industrial plumbing.

Finally, the National Critical Minerals Mission and the REE corridors adopt a welcome whole-of-government approach. This is a multi-ministry mission across the complete value chain—involving mines, atomic energy, external affairs, petroleum, coal, heavy industries, renewables, electronics & IT, finance, transport, steel, chemicals & petrochemicals, environment & forest and Niti Aayog.

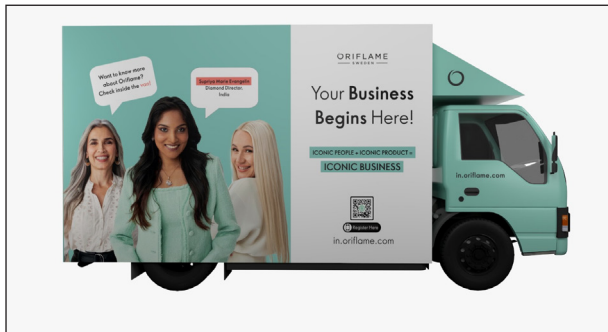
Industrial policy delivery is sub-optimal when each part delivers its piece and no one owns the outcome. Magnets and batteries should be operationally nested into the Critical Minerals Mission and REE corridor architecture with one dashboard, one escalation channel, and one set of milestones that the Cabinet monitors.

If battery PLI taught us anything, it is that aggressive timelines and incentives do not substitute for capability. For India to succeed in establishing resilience in critical mineral and rare earth supply chains and downstream manufacturing, the policy paradigm must treat success as a shared responsibility and obligation. The private sector must invest, build, qualify and improve yields. The State can pull the levers that make those investments deliver outcomes: feedstock access, offtake certainty, trade policy stability, common infrastructure and credible milestone governance.

Oriflame launches North-East Yatra across 13 cities to promote social selling opportunities

Shillong: Swedish beauty and wellness brand Oriflame has launched its month-long “Whosthat360 North-East Yatra” from April 7, aimed at promoting social selling as a viable income opportunity among young consumers. The initiative spans 13 cities across the Northeast and eastern India, combining beauty experiences with entrepreneurship outreach.

The yatra commenced at Lady Keane College in Shillong and will travel through Agartala, Aizawl, Dimapur and Kohima before entering Assam. In the state, it will cover Guwahati College on April 21, followed by stops in Nagaon and Dibrugarh. The



tour will further move to Itanagar, Siliguri and Durgapur, concluding in Kolkata on May 10.

Designed as an interactive platform, the campaign will feature product trials, skin-care sessions and consultations across colleges, malls and public venues. Accord-

ing to Edyta Kurek, Senior Vice President and Head of India and Indonesia, the initiative aims to tap into the growing demand for flexible income options among youth. Abhishek Chakraborty, Head of Brand, PR & Digital, said the Northeast presents strong potential for new earning

models and community-driven networks.

The company is also promoting its social selling model as a low-investment business opportunity, allowing individuals to build a second income stream at their own pace.

In Guwahati, the yatra is expected to draw strong participation from students and young professionals, reflecting the city's growing appetite for alternative income avenues and beauty-led entrepreneurship. With rising digital adoption and consumer awareness, Guwahati is emerging as a key market for direct selling and experiential brand engagement in the Northeast.

Axis Mutual Fund launches Defence Index Fund, opens NFO on April 10

Guwahati: Axis Mutual Fund has announced the launch of its new offering — the Axis Nifty India Defence Index Fund — an open-ended index fund designed to track the performance of the Nifty India Defence Total Return Index (TRI). The New Fund Offer (NFO) will open for subscription on April 10 and close on April 24, 2026.

The fund aims to provide returns, before expenses, that closely correspond to the underlying index, offering a low-cost and transparent route for investors to tap into India's growing defence sector. The move comes amid rising global defence spending, which crossed USD 2.7 trillion in 2024, and increased focus on military modernisation and domestic manufacturing.

India's defence budget has nearly tripled since FY14, reaching around ₹6.8 lakh crore in FY26, while exports have surged from under ₹2,000 crore in FY17 to over ₹23,000 crore in FY25. Commenting on the launch, B. Gopkumar said the sector is witnessing a “multi-year transformation,” driven by policy support, rising budgets, and export growth.

The fund, managed by Nandik Mallik and Rohit Gautam, will follow a passive strategy, investing in defence-related companies across segments such as aerospace, shipbuilding, and explosives. While offering diversification, the AMC noted that investors should be prepared for higher volatility and consider it as a long-term investment.

Croma expands in Guwahati with 4th store on Zoo Road, announces launch offers up to 11% off

Guwahati: Croma, the omni-channel electronics retailer from the Tata Group, has launched its fourth store in Guwahati and fifth in Assam, further strengthening its footprint in the Northeast. The new outlet, located on Zoo Road, spans 6,202 sq. ft. and aims to bring a comprehensive electronics shopping experience closer to consumers.

Strategically situated in one of the city's key commercial hubs, the Zoo Road store will cater to tech-savvy house-

holds and professionals with a wide range of products, including large appliances, consumer electronics, smartphones, computing devices, and home technology solutions. The store also offers live product demonstrations, expert guidance, and seamless service.

To mark the launch, the company has rolled out exclusive offers valid from April 1 to April 30, 2026. Customers can avail a flat 11% discount on select air conditioners, re-

frigerators, televisions, and washing machines, along with up to two EMI waivers on select ACs. Additionally, free earphones worth ₹5,999 are being offered on select Android smartphone purchases.

“Guwahati is an important market for us, and this launch strengthens our presence in the city,” said Mayank Sangani, Chief Business Officer - Stores, Infiniti Retail Ltd.

The store will remain open daily from 11:00 AM to 9:00 PM.

Stonelam highlights design innovation at AAA Conclave 2026 in Shillong



Guwahati: AAA Conclave 2026 saw participation from leading industry players as Stonelam showcased its design and material expertise at the second edition of the event held in Shillong from April 3 to 5. Centered on the theme “Regionalism in Architecture – A New Paradigm,” the conclave brought together architects, designers, and stakeholders from North-East India and across the country. The event

featured exhibitions, panel discussions, and collaborative sessions focusing on the role of regional identity in shaping contemporary architecture. Stonelam used the platform to engage with the architectural community and highlight its capabilities as a comprehensive façade solutions provider.

The company emphasised its focus on innovation, technical expertise, and integrated solutions tailored to evolving design needs. Speaking at the event, CEO Sandeep Bagade said the conclave offered valuable insights into context-driven architectural approaches and enabled meaningful engagement with industry professionals. The company's participation reinforced its position in the premium porcelain surface segment while contributing to wider discussions on materiality and design innovation. In Guwahati, growing urban development and demand for modern infrastructure are driving interest in advanced façade solutions. Industry observers note that platforms like AAA Conclave help bridge regional design needs with emerging material technologies, creating new opportunities for brands like Stonelam in the Northeast market.

HPCL scales up operations to meet fuel surge, moves 8.49 lakh KL in 8 days

Guwahati: Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) has significantly ramped up supply operations amid a sharp rise in fuel demand across the country, ensuring uninterrupted availability of petrol, diesel and LPG.

Between April 1 and 8, HPCL recorded sales of 3,02,631 KL of petrol and 5,46,690 KL of diesel. To support this surge, the company dispatched 55,589 tankers, moving over 8.49 lakh KL of fuel nationwide. The coordinated effort across terminals, depots and retail outlets ensured steady supply even during peak demand.

HPCL's LPG segment also witnessed high activity, with 119 lakh cylinders delivered in the same period. The company's infrastructure is currently equipped to handle over 15 lakh cylinder dispatches daily. Demand for Free Trade LPG is rising, with 2,27,075

units of 5 kg and 17,640 units of 2 kg cylinders supplied, indicating improved access among low-income and migrant households.

Digital adoption has nearly reached saturation, with 98.5% of LPG bookings now made through online platforms, enhancing efficiency and transparency.

In Guwahati, the surge in fuel consumption reflects increased mobility and commercial activity, particularly in transport and logistics sectors. Market sources indicate stable supply across retail outlets, with no major disruptions reported, even as demand rises in the region.

HPCL also strengthened enforcement, conducting 4,524 inspections, 658 raids, and registering 40 FIRs between March 14 and April 7. The company reiterated that supplies remain stable and urged consumers to avoid panic buying.

TAFE launches JFarm Rajasthan to boost farm productivity, strengthen sustainable practices

Guwahati: Tractors and Farm Equipment Limited (TAFE), one of the world's largest tractor manufacturers, inaugurated its adaptive research centre, JFarm Rajasthan, at Bhawani Mandi on April 2, 2026, aimed at enhancing farm productivity and empowering farmers through sustainable practices.

The facility was inaugurated by Sandeep Sinha in the presence of local government representatives, dealer partners and farmers, with opening remarks by T. R. Kesavan. The state-of-the-art centre includes a Customer Experience Centre for live product demonstrations, a Product Training Centre for hands-on technical training, and a Farmer Interaction Center focused on knowledge sharing and modern agricultural techniques.

TAFE said the integrated ecosystem will provide real-time demonstrations and insights into crop production, protection and farm mechanisation suited to Indian conditions. The initiative aims to transform Rajasthan's agricul-

tural landscape into a more productive and sustainable ecosystem through active farmer participation.

Vice Chairman Lakshmi Venu said the centre reflects TAFE's commitment to combining technology, sustainability and practical training to support farmers. JFarm, established in 1964 in Chennai, is a CSR initiative, with Rajasthan becoming its third



such facility in India.

In Guwahati, such initiatives are expected to strengthen demand for mechanisation and training-led farming solutions across Assam and the Northeast. Industry observers say exposure to demonstration-led centres like JFarm could accelerate adoption of modern equipment in the Guwahati market, where small and mid-scale farmers are increasingly shifting towards productivity-focused practices.

World Health Day alert: Rising illness burden exposes India's insurance gap

Guwahati: A recent assessment by TATA AIG General Insurance has flagged a widening gap between increasing health risks and financial preparedness in India, raising concerns on World Health Day. The findings show that serious illnesses, particularly heart disease, are increasingly affecting younger populations, while financial readiness remains alarmingly low.

According to a survey conducted among doctors, 59% said that fewer than 40% of heart disease patients are financially prepared for advanced treatment. The situation is further aggravated by a surge in critical illness claims, with lung cancer cases doubling in 2025. Smoking continues to be the primary cause, linked to over 85% of cases, although pollution, second-hand smoke, and occupational chemical exposure are also emerging risk factors. Hospitalisation costs have also risen sharply, with an average increase of 27%, intensifying the financial burden on families.

The report highlights a significant gender gap, with women comprising nearly half of the insured population but only around 20% having adequate coverage beyond ₹20 lakh—often insufficient for major illnesses like cancer or cardiac conditions.

In Guwahati, insurance advisors report growing awareness but limited adoption of high-value health policies. Many households continue to rely on basic coverage, leaving them vulnerable to rising treatment costs. Experts stress the need for improved awareness, timely health check-ups, and higher insurance coverage to bridge the gap and ensure financial resilience against critical illnesses.

Jayant Chaudhary launches 'Skills Outcomes Fund' to link skilling with jobs, targets youth livelihood boost

Guwahati: Jayant Chaudhary on Wednesday launched a national campaign to build a first-of-its-kind Skills Outcomes Fund, aimed at creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for youth from low-income backgrounds by directly linking skilling investments to verified employment outcomes.

The proposed fund will be anchored by National Skill Development Corporation under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, with support from industry and philanthropic partners. It seeks to mobilise public and private capital to scale outcomes-based financing (OBF), positioning India as a global leader in this model, as highlighted at the Outcomes Finance Alliance Summit 2026.

Addressing a funder roundtable hosted by British Asian Trust, Chaudhary said the initiative marks a shift towards ensuring skills translate into "real opportunities, sustained employment, and dignity of work." Officials noted that the model moves beyond enrolment-based metrics to focus on job placement, retention, and



career growth.

The initiative builds on the success of the Skill Impact Bond, which trained over 34,000 youth across 21 states, achieving strong placement and retention outcomes exceeding national benchmarks.

In Guwahati, the fund could boost de-

mand-driven skilling in sectors like logistics, healthcare, and services, aligning youth training with local industry needs. Experts believe such outcome-linked financing can improve employability and support regional economic growth by bridging skill gaps in Assam's expanding urban market.

HPCL ensures steady fuel, LPG supply nationwide; crackdown on irregularities intensifies

Guwahati: Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) has said it has maintained an uninterrupted supply of fuel and LPG across the country while stepping up action against malpractices in distribution.

The company reported sales of 38,986 KL of petrol and 69,357 KL of diesel on April 4, serving over 1.94 crore customers in a single day. To ensure smooth logistics, 9,951 fuel tankers were dispatched nationwide, maintaining timely deliveries to retail outlets.

In the LPG segment, HPCL delivered over 14.4 lakh domestic cylinders, along with 31,786 units of 5 kg and 2,383 units

of 2 kg free trade LPG cylinders, indicating stable and adequate supply. The company reiterated that domestic LPG availability remains sufficient despite ongoing geopolitical developments and is under close monitoring.

HPCL also highlighted that nearly 94% of LPG bookings are being made through digital platforms such as IVRS, SMS, HP Pay, and WhatsApp, with deliveries secured via OTP-based authentication. Customer support continues through its toll-free number and online platforms.

To curb irregularities, HPCL conducted over 4,028 inspections between March 14 and April 4, taking action against 53

distributors, including suspension of 20 agencies. Around 653 raids, 40 FIRs, and seizure of over 3,163 cylinders have been reported in coordination with state authorities.

In Guwahati, fuel and LPG supply remained stable with no reports of shortages, ensuring normal retail activity. Dealers confirmed consistent tanker movement and timely cylinder deliveries, helping maintain consumer confidence amid rising demand concerns.

HPCL urged customers to rely only on official information, avoid panic booking, and continue using digital platforms for efficient service access.

Honda hits 10 million sales milestone in East, strengthens grip in key markets

Guwahati: Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) has achieved a major milestone of 10 million cumulative sales in India's East region, underlining its growing dominance across states such as West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand and the North-East. The company said the achievement reflects steady expansion across metro and semi-urban markets, where two-wheelers remain central to daily mobility.

The East has emerged as a key growth engine for HMSI, driven by strong demand in cities like Kolkata, Patna, Ranchi, Bhubaneswar and Guwahati. Popular models such as the Honda Activa and Honda Dio in the scooter segment, along with Honda SP125 and Honda Shine 125, have significantly contributed to volumes. HMSI currently operates over 1,200 sales and

service touchpoints in the region.

Commenting on the milestone, Mutsuo Usui, Director – Sales & Marketing, said the achievement reflects deep integration of Honda products into everyday mobility and growing customer trust across diverse markets.

In Guwahati, the two-wheeler market continues to witness steady demand, particularly from young commuters and first-time buyers. Industry observers note that rising urban expansion, improved road connectivity and aspirational buying trends are boosting sales of scooters like Activa and motorcycles in the 125cc segment. HMSI's strong dealership and service network in the city has helped it maintain visibility and customer confidence in a competitive market.

Xiaomi bets on mid-premium segment with REDMI Note 15 SE launch at aggressive pricing

Guwahati: Xiaomi India has expanded its smartphone portfolio with the launch of the REDMI Note 15 Special Edition (SE), targeting India's fast-growing mid-premium segment with a mix of design, performance and AI-led features. The device features a 6.77-inch curved AMOLED display with FHD+ resolution, 120Hz refresh rate and peak brightness of 3200 nits, housed in a slim 7.35mm body weighing 178g and offered in three colour variants.

Powered by the Snapdragon 6 Gen 3 chipset, the smartphone integrates a 50MP AI dual rear camera and a 20MP front camera, supported by tools such as AI Erase, AI Sky and AI Reflection Removal. It is backed by a 5800mAh battery with 45W fast charging, dual speakers with Dolby Atmos, AI noise



cancellation, and 5G connectivity. The device also includes Google Gemini and Circle to Search for enhanced user interaction. On durability, the smartphone

comes with IP65/IP66 ratings, MIL-STD-810H certification and Titan Solid build, alongside in-display fingerprint and AI face unlock. Xiaomi has committed four years of Android updates and six years of security support.

Priced from ₹24,999, the device will be available at an effective starting price of ₹17,999 with ICICI Bank offers across Flipkart and mi.com from April 7.

In Guwahati, there is a strong potential demand for the REDMI Note 15 SE, citing its aggressive pricing and feature-rich positioning. The combination of AMOLED display, large battery and AI capabilities is expected to appeal to young consumers and upgraders in the region, particularly as competition intensifies in the ₹15,000–₹25,000 segment.



IndiaSkills 2025–26 ends with 288 medals, Odisha leads as India pushes skill economy

Guwahati: The IndiaSkills National Competition 2025–26 concluded at India Expo Mart, positioning itself as a key driver of India's emerging skill economy. Organised by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and supported by the National Skill Development Corporation, the event saw over 650 participants compete across 63 categories, with 288 winners securing medals. Odisha topped the tally with 57 medals, followed by Tamil Nadu (46) and Karnataka (29). Notably, 45 women were among the winners, reflecting rising female participation in technical and vocational domains.

Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary said the compe-



tion reflects a “young India ready to compete globally,” backed by ₹84,000 crore allocation for education and ₹60,000 crore for strengthening skilling institutions like ITIs. Industry-aligned evaluation standards and participation from over 200

companies, including Toyota Kirloskar and Maruti Suzuki, underscored strong public-private collaboration. With over 3.65 lakh youth participating nationwide, winners will now represent India at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026.

State leaders, including ministers from Bihar, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana, stressed that skilling is emerging as a core economic pillar, driving employment, entrepreneurship, and inclusive growth, especially in rural and semi-urban regions.

In Guwahati, the outcomes are expected to positively impact hiring trends in Assam, particularly in IT, construction, logistics, and service sectors. With increased alignment to industry standards and emerging technologies, local businesses and startups in Guwahati could benefit from a more skilled workforce, enhancing productivity and boosting regional economic competitiveness.

Dr. Reddy's launches India's first DCGI-approved generic semaglutide 'Obeda®' for diabetes care



Guwahati: Dr. Reddy's Laboratories has announced the launch of 'Obeda®', India's first Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)-approved generic semaglutide injection for the treatment of Type 2 diabetes, marking its entry into the GLP-1 receptor agonist therapy segment. The once-a-week injectable drug is available in 2 mg and 4 mg strengths in a pre-filled pen format, priced at ₹4,200 per month, aimed at improving access to advanced diabetes care in the country.

The company said Obeda® demonstrat-

ed non-inferior efficacy and comparable safety to the innovator drug in a Phase III clinical study involving 312 participants. It showed similar glycaemic reduction, fasting and post-prandial glucose control, and achieved target HbA1c levels, with no anti-drug antibodies detected. The drug has been developed entirely in-house, highlighting the company's capabilities in peptide science and complex formulations. India currently has over 101 million adults living with diabetes, with another 136 million considered

pre-diabetic, underscoring the need for accessible and effective treatment options. Company officials said the launch aligns with its strategy to expand into critical therapeutic areas and improve long-term outcomes for patients.

In Guwahati, the launch of a relatively affordable semaglutide option could see strong demand in the region, where diabetes prevalence is steadily rising. The ₹4,200 monthly pricing is expected to make GLP-1 therapy more accessible to middle-income patients, while the user-friendly pen device and once-weekly dosage may improve adherence. Local pharmacies and private hospitals are likely to witness increased prescriptions, particularly among urban patients seeking advanced diabetes management solutions.

Nestlé India, FDA Mizoram, NASVI launch 'Serve Safe Food' project; 10,000 vendors trained across Northeast

Guwahati: Nestlé India, in collaboration with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Mizoram, and the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), has launched Project 'Serve Safe Food' in the state, expanding its footprint across the Northeast. Under the initiative, 100 street food vendors in Mizoram will be trained, taking the total number of trained vendors in the region to over 10,000 across all seven states.

The project, launched by Nestlé India in 2016, has already benefitted more than 92,800 street food vendors across 26 states and four



Union Territories. It focuses on improving health, hygiene, safe food handling, waste disposal, and entrepreneurship skills among vendors. K. Lalrinzuali, IAS, Commissioner of Food Safety, FDA Mizoram, said

the initiative will strengthen food safety standards and enhance Mizoram's appeal as a tourist destination. “By improving hygiene among street vendors, we can boost both tourism confidence and local trust in street food,”

she said. Kunwar Himmat Singh of Nestlé India added that the programme aims to drive long-term behavioural change while supporting sustainable business growth for vendors.

In Mizoram, the initiative is expected to enhance consumer confidence in local street food, particularly in key hubs like Aizawl's markets and tourist destinations such as Reiek Mountain and Phawngpui National Park. Improved hygiene standards could boost footfall, support local livelihoods, and strengthen the state's growing tourism-driven food economy.

ICICI Prudential announces 'ICICI Pru GPP Flexi' to deliver guarantee dlifetimein come solutions



Imphal: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has announced the launch of its retirement-focused offering, ICICI Pru Guaranteed Pension Plan Flexi (ICICI Pru GPP Flexi), aimed at addressing the growing need for assured income in post-retirement years. The announcement comes against the backdrop of rising longevity in India, with the UNDP's 2025 Human Development Report noting an increase in life expectancy from 58.6 years in 1990 to 72 years in 2023. Government data further indicates that by 2036, nearly one in seven Indians will be aged 60 years or above.

The ICICI Pru GPP Flexi enables customers to build retirement savings through systematic contributions and receive guaranteed regular income for life. The payout rate is fixed at the time of purchase, ensuring stability and protection from interest rate

fluctuations.

Commenting on the launch, Vikas Gupta said, “Retirement planning is driven by one core need – certainty of income for life. ICICI Pru Guaranteed Pension Plan Flexi is designed to deliver this certainty through a simple and flexible structure.” The product offers seven flexible options, including Joint Life with Waiver of Premium, and features such as increasing income, top-ups, liquidity through loans, and a full refund option in case of critical illness or permanent disability. In Imphal, improving financial awareness, expanding insurance penetration, and a gradual shift towards long-term financial planning are supporting demand for structured retirement products. Solutions like ICICI Pru GPP Flexi are expected to gain traction as individuals increasingly prioritise income security and financial stability in their retirement years.

OutStation bets big on Guwahati with 'Aaj Kal' launch as 10,000+ fans register

Guwahati: India's teen pop boy band OutStation is set to launch its second single 'Aaj Kal' in Guwahati on April 4, 2026, signalling a strategic push into high-growth youth markets. The free-entry event at Silpagram, part of the band's “OutStation-To Your Station” pop-up IP, has already crossed 10,000 RSVPs, highlighting strong pre-release traction and fan engagement.

Organisers expect a turnout comparable to the band's December performance in the city. A key highlight will be a synchronised crowd-sing-along of 'Aaj Kal', positioned as a first-of-its-kind live launch aimed at creating a large-scale shared fan experience. “We knew our second song had to be launched here... we want this to be larger than life,” the band said. The 30-minute set will include their debut single 'Tum Se', unreleased tracks, and interactive segments. Formed through Visva Records' nationwide talent search, the five-member band is men-



tored by Grammy-nominated songwriter Savan Kotecha, known for global pop collaborations, and has previously supported Akon and Anuv Jain on India tours.

In Guwahati, the scale of early registrations underscores the city's emergence as a strong consumption hub for live youth entertainment. Rising Gen Z engagement, coupled with proven audience turnout, is positioning Guwahati as a key market for music IPs, brand activations, and touring artists targeting India's expanding pop segment.

Udaipur: The City of Lakes and Its Finest Lakeside Accommodations

Udaipur, often referred to as the “City of Lakes,” resembles a dream depicted in shades of blue and white. Enclosed by the Aravalli Hills and adorned with palaces, ghats, and gardens, the city appears to have emerged from a fairy tale. However, what genuinely renders Udaipur memorable are its glistening lakes—Pichola, Fateh Sagar, Udai Sagar, and Badi—each embodying a piece of royalty and tranquility. And what better way to enjoy Udaipur than by staying at a lakeside hotel, where every sunrise feels poetic and every sunset is dipped in gold? Here are four stunning lakeside stays you should bookmark for your next trip: Zana Lake Resort, Udaipur If peace had an address, it would be Zana Lake Resort. Sitting beside the serene and uncluttered Udai Sagar Lake, this resort blends nature with luxury. Wake up to the sound of birds, sip your favorite drink with the shimmering lake as your backdrop, and spend evenings under a starlit sky framed by surrounding moun-



tains. Perfect for couples, friends, and families, Zana promises a distinctive luxury experience with some of the best lake views in the city. Shree Vilas Orchid A hidden gem right on Lake Pichola, this boutique-style hotel feels like a mix of nature and luxury. Picture yourself in a tented villa facing the

lake, surrounded by greenery, yet enjoying all the comforts of a hotel. Watching the City Palace glow at night across the water is an experience you won't forget. Hotel Lakend As the name suggests, this one is all about the lake! Located on the banks of Fateh Sagar Lake, Hotel Lakend is perfect for a peace-



ful holiday. With its infinity pool touching the lake, open-air dining, and wellness spa, it makes you feel as though time has slowed down. If you love sunsets and long walks by the water, this place is calling your name. Jagat Niwas Palace Hotel Perched on the eastern banks of Lake Pichola, Jagat Niwas Palace Hotel offers that authentic Udaipur charm, with arched windows, courtyards, and jharokhas opening directly to lake views. Its rooftop restaurant is a highlight, where you can watch the changing colors of Lake Pichola

while savoring Rajasthani flavors. Intimate, warm, and full of character, this stay is truly unforgettable. Udaipur isn't just about sightseeing, it's about slowing down, breathing in the beauty, and experiencing the city's soul through its lakes. A stay by the water turns every moment into something special. These lakeside hotels don't just offer rooms; they offer experiences that linger long after your trip ends. So, when you plan your visit to the City of Lakes, choose a stay that lets you live the poetry of Udaipur, not just see it.

Hong Kong Tourism Board Leads a New Five City Travel Mission in India to Showcase its Year Round Attractions and Strengthen Tourism Ties

Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has witnessed great increases in Indian visitors, with the nation emerging as one of the key source markets for the region. In recent developments, Indian visitors have almost returned to pre-pandemic levels, with the city receiving 233,000 Indian visitors from January to July 2025, an 8% year-on-year growth. This marks a firm rebound in the tourism industry and underscores the continued appeal of Hong Kong as a top destination in Asia.

Key Factors Driving Indian Interest in Hong Kong

The increase in Indian visitors is being driven by a combination of improved connectivity, increased flight frequency, and enhanced tourism offerings. With 53 weekly flights connecting key cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad to Hong Kong, the city has become the most accessible international destination for Indian travelers in Asia. These direct flights are a major factor in the growing interest from Indian tourists, who now have easier access to Hong Kong's wide range of attractions and experiences.

Rising Demand for Family and Group Travel

One of the significant travel trends from India to Hong Kong is the increase in family and group tourism. According to data from the HKTB, the number of family travelers has grown, with 43% of Indian tourists visiting Hong Kong for the first time in 2025. The city's ability to offer a mix of family-friendly activities, such as theme parks, museums, and outdoor adventures, is a major draw for Indian families looking for both fun and educational travel experiences.

Premium Tourism and Increased Spending

In addition to the rise in family travel, premium tourism from India has also seen a significant boost. India now ranks 5th in terms of per capita spending among visitors to Hong Kong, reflecting the demand for luxury travel



experiences. Tourists from India are increasingly choosing high-end accommodations, fine dining, and exclusive tours, contributing to Hong Kong's reputation as a luxury travel destination.

Business Tourism and MICE Travel: A Strong Rebound

Another area of growth for Hong Kong's tourism industry is MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) travel. Indian MICE arrivals have surged by 33% year-on-year, with 55,587 Indian delegates attending business events in Hong Kong during the first half of 2025. This growth reflects Hong Kong's importance as a key business hub in Asia, with its world-class conference facilities, well-established infrastructure, and reputation as a global meeting destination. The increased focus on business tourism positions Hong Kong as a top choice for corporate travel and events.

Hong Kong as a Cosmopolitan Destination for Diverse Experiences

Hong Kong's appeal goes beyond just business and family tourism. The city offers an incredible range of attractions, from theme parks like Hong Kong Disneyland to the vibrant cultural scene and world-class shopping

districts. The city's culinary offerings are a major highlight, with world-renowned restaurants offering a diverse range of cuisines, from traditional Dim Sum to Michelin-starred dining experiences. Hong Kong's dynamic nightlife, including its famous bars and clubs, as well as unique cultural events such as the Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance and the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival, make it a year-round destination with something for everyone. Whether you're seeking adventure, relaxation, or luxury, Hong Kong offers a well-rounded experience for all types of travelers.

Promoting Cultural Exchange and Global Collaboration

The Travel Mission organized by the Hong Kong Tourism Board in India focused on fostering cultural exchange between India and Hong Kong. By offering a platform for tourism professionals, travel agents, and tour operators from both countries to meet and collaborate, the event was a significant step towards strengthening tourism ties. Hong Kong's unique cultural identity, mix of heritage and modernity, and diverse experiences make it an ideal destination for cultural exchange between India and the rest of the world.

Growing Popularity of Events and Festi-

vals in Hong Kong

Hong Kong's event calendar is a key driver of its tourism appeal. Throughout the year, the city hosts a range of mega events and festivals that draw international visitors. From Summer Viva to Halloween festivities, the Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival to WinterFest, and the New Year Countdown Fireworks, there is always something exciting happening in the city. These events not only entertain tourists but also showcase Hong Kong's cultural diversity, attracting a wide range of travelers looking to experience the city's unique blend of modern attractions and rich traditions.

Sustainability and Eco-Tourism: The Future of Hong Kong Tourism

Looking forward, sustainability and eco-tourism will play an increasingly important role in Hong Kong's tourism development. The government and tourism sector are working to integrate sustainable practices into the tourism industry, from green transportation options to eco-friendly accommodations. These efforts are aimed at ensuring that Hong Kong's tourism sector can continue to grow in a way that protects its natural and cultural heritage.

Hong Kong's Bright Tourism Future with India as a Key Market

The success of the Hong Kong Travel Mission to India and the steadily increasing number of tourists attest to the close bilateral relationship between the two nations as well as the growing popularity of Hong Kong as a tourist destination. From luxury tourism, business travel, and family holidays, Hong Kong is now a preferred destination for Indian travelers. Meanwhile, with an enhanced connectivity, a crowded event schedule, and a focus on sustainability, Hong Kong will continue to welcome even more Indian tourists in the years ahead. The tourism industry going from strength to strength, the cooperation between Hong Kong and India will promote regional cohesiveness, economic development, and cultural interaction.

Chowna Mein Joins Tawang Deputy Commissioners' Conference



Arunachal Pradesh, Apr 10: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Friday attended the second day of the Deputy Commissioners' Conference held in Tawang, along with Lok Sabha MP Tapir Gao, Cabinet Ministers Nyato Dukam and Kento Jini, and Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta. The day's discussions focused on several key administrative and developmental areas, including environmental protection, regulation of forests and wildlife, strengthening transport governance, and road safety. Deliberations were also held on improving Arunachal Pradesh's tourism sector and exploring its potential as a global tourism destination. Officials also reviewed the Gyan Bharatam Mission and discussed the use of technology and artificial intelligence to enhance governance and improve public service delivery. The conference brought together senior administrative officials and Deputy Commissioners to discuss policy implementation and coordination across districts.

AJP Candidate Kunki Choudhary Faces Election FIR

Guwahati, Apr 10: The Panbazar Police Station has registered a First Information Report against Kunki Choudhary, the Assam Jatiya Parishad candidate for the Guwahati Central Assembly Constituency, following allegations of election norm violations during the polling on April 9, 2026. The investigation targets the candidate alongside her social media team and a political worker identified as Sandeep Yadav for multiple reported irregularities. The official complaint asserts that Yadav

remained within the constituency during the mandatory 48-hour silence period despite movement restrictions for campaign-related personnel. Furthermore, the FIR alleges that Choudhary entered a polling station with an unauthorized group to interact with voters, a move that potentially influenced the electoral process.

Additional claims include the presence of vehicles linked to the candidate within restricted zones and the entry of her personal security detail into polling premises

without the required legal authorization. Authorities have reportedly received digital and video evidence to support the claims of prohibited voter contact during the silence period. In response to these developments, Kunki Choudhary stated via social media that several members of her team were detained overnight and that she visited the police station to record her statement according to legal protocol.

Denying all allegations, she maintained that her campaign adhered strictly to Election

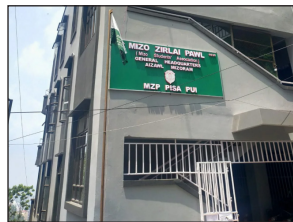


Commission guidelines and characterized the police action as a politically motivated attempt to curb her party's

rising public support. Investigation into the matter remains ongoing as officials review the submitted evidence.

Mizo Students Organisation Demands Tighter ILP Implementation

Aizawl, Apr 10: The Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) has called for stricter enforcement of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system to address the increasing influx of non-locals without valid permits in Mizoram. The demand was adopted as a key resolution during the MZP federal council meeting, the organisation's highest decision-making body, held in Aizawl on Friday, according to MZP general secretary Lalhminganga Chhange. The council unanimously urged the state government to implement a more stringent and technologically advanced ILP mechanism to curb the entry of individuals without valid documentation.



MZP president C Lalremruata stated during the meeting that safeguarding the ILP system is a collective responsibility to protect the identity, security, and future of the indigenous people of Mizoram amid reports of unauthorised entries. He also called on MZP branches to strengthen monitoring at the ground level, enhance implementation of ILP regulations, and increase public awareness

related to permit compliance. During the meeting, concerns were also raised regarding identity-related issues among 'Zofa' communities globally. The organisation reiterated its position on maintaining unity while cautioning against what it described as unverified claims to Mizo identity.

In addition to ILP-related matters, the council adopted several other resolutions. These included urging the government to address teacher shortages through rationalisation, promote Mizo ethical values (Zo nun zemawi) in educational institutions, and expand centres for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET), among other issues.



Tripura CM Dr Manik Saha Campaigns in Vangmun on Final Day Ahead of TTAADC Polls

Gangtok, Apr 10: Agartala, April 10: On the concluding day of active campaigning for the upcoming elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), Chief Minister Prof. Dr. Manik Saha addressed a large public gathering at Vangmun in North Tripura district on Friday. The rally witnessed a significant turnout, with supporters assembling in large numbers to back Rabindra Reang, the BJP candidate for the Damchhara-Jampui constituency. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister alleged that substantial financial allocations made for the development of tribal communities had been misused by the Tipra Motha Party. Referring to these concerns, he said the BJP has decided to contest all 28 seats independently in the ADC elections.

He asserted that the electorate is looking for a transparent and accountable administration to ensure holistic development of the Autonomous District Council, adding that

the BJP represents a credible alternative. Highlighting the concept of "Thansa," Dr. Saha described it as a symbol of unity and peaceful coexistence among communities. However, he accused the opposition of misusing the idea to mislead people.

The Chief Minister further stated that while opposition forces create obstacles, his government remains committed to resolving issues. He pointed out that the Jampui region continues to face multiple challenges, which, he assured, would be addressed once the BJP assumes power in the ADC. During his speech, Dr. Saha also underscored the resolution of the Bru-Reang refugee crisis, attributing the achievement to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Concluding his address, he alleged that despite the release of substantial funds over the past five years, the Tipra Motha-led administration failed to implement meaningful developmental projects in the ADC areas.

Manipur Police Clarify Shantipur Firing Incident

Manipur, Apr 10: Manipur Police have issued a clarification regarding the sequence of events that led to the firing incident at Shantipur in Kangpokpi district. In an official statement, police said the shutdown call followed an incident in which a man sustained bullet injuries after allegedly failing to stop his vehicle despite repeated signals from security personnel at a naka (checkpoint).

According to police, the incident took place on April 8, 2026, at around 9:30 PM near Kanglatongbi Bridge. A Chevrolet Cruze carrying three occupants and an Alto car with a single occupant had reportedly converged at the location for a test drive and vehicle exchange. During the process, the Cruze met with a minor accident after falling into a nearby nullah.

Police personnel stationed at a security naka near Kanglatongbi Hindi High School



in Shantipur rushed to the spot to assist. At the same time, the accompanying Alto car allegedly approached the checkpoint at high speed, ignored repeated signals to stop, and nearly hit security

personnel on duty. On noticing police presence, the Alto's occupant reportedly attempted to flee towards Kangpokpi. Citing imminent risk and suspicious behaviour, security forces fired

controlled rounds aimed at the tyres to stop the vehicle. However, the vehicle did not halt and continued to escape.

Police later confirmed that the Alto driver, identified as Lenkhogin Tuboi, sustained bullet injuries and was taken to Mission Hospital in Kangpokpi, where he is currently undergoing treatment. Meanwhile, the driver of the Chevrolet Cruze, identified as 21-year-old Janggingen Khongsai, was detained and handed over to G. Saramaina Police Station. He was later released after due formalities.

An FIR has been registered in connection with the incident, and further investigation is underway. Police reiterated their commitment to maintaining law and order and urged the public to remain calm, assuring that necessary steps are being taken to ensure transparency and peace in the region.

Vaishali Takes Sole Women's Candidates Lead



Bengaluru, Apr 10: R Vaishali, who had a slow start to the Candidates, is now the sole leader of the tournament. On a day when R Praggnanandhaa's hopes effectively ended with a loss to Javokhir Sindarov in the Open section, Vaishali's hopes soared. She was the joint leader coming into the 10th round. When it ended in Cyprus on Thursday, the Indian, thanks to her draw, led the field by 0.5 as Zhu Jiner lost to Bibisara Assaubayeva. Vaishali, playing with the black pieces against Anna Muzychuk, played a rock solid game and didn't give the Ukrainian as much as a sniff.

In a gruelling tournament like the Candidates, it's considered important to go into rest day in a good frame of

mind. She has certainly managed to do that before the final rounds begin with a game against Aleksandra Goryachkina on Saturday. The Russian had taken down the other Indian in the eight-player field, Divya Deshmukh. While Vaishali is the sole leader with six, 1.5 points separates six players so it's still all to play for. Results: Open (Rd 10): Javokhir Sindarov bt R Praggnanandhaa, Anish Giri drew with Hikaru Nakamura, Andrey Esipenko drew with Matthias Bluebaum, Wei Yi drew with Fabiano Caruana.

Women: Anna Muzychuk drew with R Vaishali, Bibisara Assaubayeva bt Zhu Jiner, Aleksandra Goryachkina bt Divya Deshmukh, Kateryna Lagno drew with Tan Zhongyi

Arsenal Wary as De Zerbi Joins Spurs

Manchester, Apr 10: The Premier League returns from a three-week hiatus this weekend with huge clashes in the battle for the title, European places and survival. Arsenal can shrug off their domestic cup disappointment by moving ever closer to a first league title in 22 years when they host Bournemouth before Manchester City travel to Chelsea. Liverpool boss Arne Slot cannot afford another damaging defeat when Fulham visit Anfield with Champions League qualification on the line. Tottenham have turned to Roberto De Zerbi to save them from the drop for the first time in nearly 50 years and the Italian takes charge for the first time at Sunderland. AFP Sport looks at three talking points ahead of this weekend's action: Still Arsenal's title to lose? Defeat in the League Cup final to City and at second-tier Southampton in the FA Cup have quickly turned Arsenal's quest for a quadruple into dreams of a Premier League

and Champions League double. Mikel Arteta's men can go 12 points clear at the top with victory over Bournemouth on Saturday, with City not in action until Sunday. A 1-0 Champions League victory at Sporting Lisbon got the Gunners back to winning



ways, but they needed heroics from goalkeeper David Raya after another unconvincing performance. City, by contrast, appear to be hitting top form after thrashing Liverpool 4-0 in the FA Cup quarter-finals and will smell blood should Arsenal stumble at the Emirates. Pep Guardiola's men still have a game in hand on Arsenal, and the two face off next weekend in a potentially decisive clash in the title race.

Ayush Shetty knocks out World No. 4 Christie; enters Asian Championships SF

Ningbo, Apr 10: Indian shuttler Ayush Shetty staged another upset at the Badminton Asia Championships as he stormed into the semi-finals after beating world No. 4 Jonatan Christie of Indonesia here at Ningbo Olympic Sports Center on Friday. Ayush registered a 23-21, 21-17 win over Olympian and third seed Christie to become the first Indian men's singles badminton player since HS Prannoy in 2018 to secure a medal at the continental meet. This was Ayush's first win over Christie in their maiden encounter.

It will also be India's first medal at the Badminton Asia Championships since Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj



Rankireddy's men's doubles gold in 2023. In the semi-finals, Ayush will take on the winner of the match between Paris 2024 silver medallist Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand and Weng Hongyang. The opening game was fierce-

ly contested, as neither player was able to break clear Christie heading into the break with a slender 11-10 lead. After resumption, the Indonesian took control of the game, stretching his advantage to 18-15 and even earning a

game point before Ayush produced a fightback and forced the contest into a tie-break.

The second game was equally hard-fought with the Indian carrying a slender 11-9 advantage into the interval before tightening his grip on the contest and closing it out to book his place in the semi-finals. Earlier in the tournament, Ayush had stunned world No. 7 and reigning Asian Games champion Li Shi Feng in the opening round before beating Chi Yu Jen of Chinese Taipei to qualify for the quarter-finals. Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu's campaign ended in the second round while Lakshya Sen bowed out in the opening round.

IPL 2026: Pressure piling on Samson, Gaikwad as CSK extend search for two points

Chennai, Apr 10: The veteran opening pair of Sanju Samson and Ruturaj Gaikwad faces a critical test on Saturday as Chennai Super Kings (CSK) hunt for their first points of the 2026 season against Delhi Capitals. Sitting at the bottom of the table after three consecutive losses, CSK returns to Chepauk desperate to arrest their worst start since 2022. The five-time champions have struggled with balance, but receive a major boost with the expect-



ed return of explosive South African batter Dewald Brevis from a side strain. However, uncertainty remains over MS

Dhoni, who is still recovering from a calf muscle strain and is unlikely to feature in the playing XI.

Golui Header Earns Jamshedpur Point

Mumbai, Apr 10: A dramatic late equaliser from substitute Sarthak Golui cancelled out Brandon Fernandes' first-half strike as Jamshedpur FC held Mumbai City FC to a 1-1 draw in a top-of-the-table clash in Indian Super League in Jamshedpur on Thursday. The result keeps Mumbai City FC at the top of the standings with 18 points, while Jamshedpur FC move to second with 15 points after a hard-fought contest.

Despite Jamshedpur's sustained pressure throughout the first half, it was Mumbai City who struck on the brink of half-time with a well-worked move. Joni Kauko initiated the attack on the left flank before finding Noufal PN, who squared the ball into the box for Brandon Fernandes. The midfielder showed great composure, turning swiftly before firing a shot that took a heavy deflection off Jamshedpur skipper Stephen Eze. Late in the second half, Golui equalised. From a corner delivered by Stojanović, the ball travelled towards the far post where Sarthak Golui rose to meet it, guiding a header that struck the underside of the crossbar and crossed the line, sending the home crowd into delirium; Jamshedpur had just levelled the score at 1-1. Jamshedpur pushed for a winner in stoppage time, but Mumbai City held firm to secure a point in a gripping contest between two contenders.

Zimbabwe to tour Pakistan for white-ball series before T20 WC

Lahore, Apr 10: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Friday that Pakistan will face-off against Zimbabwe in a six-match white-ball series starting next month. The series will serve as a critical preparatory series for Pakistan ahead of the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup, to be played in England from June 12 to July 5. The tour also marks Zimbabwe's first-ever visit to Pakistan for a women's bilateral series. All six fixtures - comprising three ODIs and as many T20Is - will be staged at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi. The tour will commence with the ODI leg on May 3, followed by the T20I series, which will begin on May 12. The Zimbabwe side is scheduled to arrive in Karachi on April 29, before both teams have practice sessions from April 30 to May 2.

The three-match ODI leg, scheduled for May 3, 6, and 9, carries significant weight as it comes under the ICC Women's Championship 2025-29 cycle. Pakistan currently occupies



fifth place in the championship table with two points.

Following the series against Zimbabwe, Pakistan will travel to Ireland for a T20I tri-series featuring the hosts and 2016 champions the West Indies, from May 28 - June 4, before heading to England for the showpiece event in the shortest format. Pakistan are in Group 1 of the T20 World Cup alongside India, South Africa, Bangladesh, six-time champions Australia and the Netherlands.