

In Brief

Unregistered Bulletproof Vehicle Found

Imphal: A serving havildar of Manipur Police, Thounaojam Nilkamal Singh, was arrested for travelling in an unregistered bulletproof vehicle in Imphal East district. The vehicle, a black Scorpio S11 SUV, lacked registration plates and official markings. During a routine police check, Singh could not provide ownership papers, leading to his detention and the vehicle's seizure. Authorities are investigating the vehicle's origins and its potential misuse, especially given the sensitive security situation in Manipur.

Accident

Margherita: In Margherita, a traffic accident on Tuesday night resulted in one death and three serious injuries. The incident occurred around 9:30 p.m. in the Hill View neighborhood, involving a car that struck a woman, Rita Tanti, and her 14-year-old daughter, Nikita Tanti, who were walking. Witnesses reported that the driver was speeding and possibly under the influence of alcohol, with thick fog contributing to limited visibility. Rita later succumbed to her injuries while Nikita remains in critical condition. The driver and another passenger were also seriously injured and taken to a hospital. Police are investigating the cause of the collision, and further updates are expected.

Anti-Drug Campaign

Itanagar: The East Siang Police conducted the final Narco-Coordination (NCORD) meeting of the year in Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh, focusing on the district's ongoing efforts against drug abuse. The meeting highlighted the support from community-based organizations, NGOs, and civil society, which have collaboratively enhanced anti-drug campaigns through effective monitoring and enforcement. East Siang Deputy Commissioner Sonalika Jiواني commended the proactive measures taken under the NCORD framework, noting the encouraging achievements of the involved departments.

Manipur police havildar held with unregistered bulletproof vehicle, probe launched



Imphal, Dec 31: A serving havildar of Manipur Police has been arrested after he was found travelling in an unregistered armoured vehicle in Imphal East district. The incident has raised serious concern within the police department, as the vehicle was bulletproof and did not have any registration number or official markings. The havildar has been identified as 30-year-old Thounaojam Nilkamal Singh. He is a resident of Malom Tuliyaimea Awang Leikai in Imphal West district. According to police, he was stopped during a routine checking drive at Andro Parking in the Wangkhei area, which falls under Porompat Police Station limits. During the inspection, police noticed that the black Scorpio S11 SUV was fitted with armoured protection and bulletproof features, but it carried no registration plates. Since the vehicle appeared to be modified for security use, police asked for documents. How-

ever, Singh could not provide valid papers showing ownership or official permission for the vehicle. He was then detained for questioning, and the vehicle was seized. Police have started an investigation to trace how the havildar obtained the vehicle and whether it was being used for any official purpose

or private use. Authorities are also trying to confirm when and where the armouring work was carried out. Officials said the matter is being treated seriously because the vehicle is of a type usually used by security personnel under proper authorisation. The unauthorised use of such a vehicle has led to concerns

about the possible misuse of security equipment by individuals, including those within the police system. The arrest took place at a time when Manipur remains tense and security forces continue to carry out regular operations in sensitive areas across the state. Police said the situation makes it even more important to

regulate weapons, vehicles and other security equipment strictly. On the same day as the arrest, a separate security operation was carried out at the foothills of Yerum Ching in Thoubal district. During this operation, security forces recovered a large cache of arms, ammunition and protective gear. The recovery was made under the jurisdiction of Nongpok Sekmai Police Station. Among the seized items were three bolt-action rifles and five 9mm pistols along with magazines. Police also recovered a 36 high-explosive hand grenade, which is a military-grade explosive device. In addition to the weapons, the team found 40 rounds of ammunition of different calibres, three INSAS magazines, one SLR magazine, four detonators, and other items normally used in riot or combat situations. These included two bulletproof vests, three helmets, two tear smoke shells, and one anti-riot rubber bullet.

Assam CM warns of demographic shift and infiltration risk near ‘Chicken’s Neck’ corridor

Guwahati, Dec 31: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has raised concerns over demographic changes and illegal infiltration in parts of eastern India, especially in areas located near the narrow “Chicken’s Neck” corridor that connects the Northeast to the rest of the country. In a recent interview, Sarma said that some communities living close to the Bangladesh border share strong cultural and family ties across the border. He stated that while these people live in India, their links with Bangladesh remain active through language, education, music, and radio. According to him, there is a risk that “at the right moment, some may align with Bangladesh,” which could influence the social and political situation in the region. The Chief Minister also spoke about demographic trends in Assam. Referring to past court observations, he said de-

mographic changes in the state began decades ago and became more noticeable after the 1960s. He stated that the Muslim population stood at about 34 per cent during the 2011 Census and claimed that it could have risen close to 38 per cent had a census been conducted in 2021. Sarma further suggested that if the same trend continued, the percentage may now be approaching 39 to 40 per cent. He said that although the level of infiltration may have slowed in recent years, the overall impact on population figures would still remain significant. Sarma warned that if the demographic balance crosses a certain threshold, it may influence the functioning of state institutions. He said government services, administration, and the police could eventually see shifts in representation and influence. According to him, the situation can only be delayed



to some extent but may not be fully reversed in the long term. The Chief Minister also said that the challenge of illegal infiltration is not confined to Assam alone. He pointed out that parts of eastern India, including West Bengal and Jharkhand, are also facing similar concerns. He added that the matter needs to be viewed from a broader national security and social stability perspective.

Pilot Pearl Farming Initiative launched in Sivasagar to Support Fishers



Sivasagar, Dec 31: The District Administration of Sivasagar initiated a pilot project on freshwater pearl farming in the district using a convergence-based approach, which is a major step toward livelihood diversification and revenue development in the fisheries sector. In close coordination with the district government and NABARD, the District Fishery Development Office (DFDO), Sivasagar, launched the program, which represents a new turning point in the district's embrace of innovative aquaculture techniques and technology. The district government designed and funded a three-day organized capacity building workshop in freshwater pearl cultivation as part of the pilot. The program's goal was to introduce progressive fish farmers to pearl growing as an additional source of revenue in addition to conventional fish farming. In front of KN Chandana Jahnvi, Assistant Commissioner of Sivasagar, Aayush Garg, District Commissioner of Sivasagar, officially launched the initiative, reiterating the district administration's dedication to sustainable livelihoods and farmer-led entrepreneurship. The first training program was held at the Superintendent of Fisheries Training Institute, Joysagar, a historically significant institution that has served the Northeast by offering

candidates from all over the region the 9-month Fishery Demonstrator Course, according to district administration sources. The institute remained largely unused after the course was moved to Guwahati in 2006. The Fisheries instruction Institute-cum-DFDO, Sivasagar, has been revitalized as a center for hands-on, technology-focused instruction under the direction of Dr. JP Duarah, Superintendent, with strong backing from the district administration. Five forward-thinking fish farmers received extensive practical training in freshwater pearl production methods as part of this pilot program. As a crop diversification approach, the farmers started growing pearls in their own ponds after receiving training. The district's emphasis on field-based implementation and farmer-centric innovation was symbolized on Tuesday by the first program, which was held at the farm of Partha Pratim Neog, a forward-thinking fish farmer in Changmai Gaon under Gaurisagar Development Block.

Tripura student's death sparks Supreme Court plea to recognise racial slurs as hate crime

Agartala, Dec 31: A public interest litigation has been filed in the Supreme Court after the death of a young student from Tripura, with the petitioner urging the court to recognise racial slurs and racially motivated attacks as hate crimes in India. The case has drawn fresh attention to the long-standing concern that people from the North-East often face discrimination and abuse in different parts of the country. The plea follows the death of 24-year-old MBA student, Anjel Chakma, who was studying in Dehradun.

He passed away on December 26, 2025, after battling for his life for more than two weeks. Chakma had been stabbed during an alleged racially motivated assault on December 9 in the Selaqui area on the outskirts of Dehradun. The petition has been filed under Article 32 of the Constitution by Anoop Prakash Awasthi, who has requested the court to intervene

and treat racially motivated crimes as a special category of offence. The plea argues that there has been a failure on the part of the state machinery to protect citizens from the North-East, who continue to face threats, insults, violence, and humiliation on account of their appearance and identity. According to reports, Chakma and his younger brother were out shopping when they were allegedly confronted by a group of men. The group is said to have hurled racial slurs at them, mocking their looks and origin. The situation soon turned violent, and both brothers were beaten and stabbed. Chakma suffered serious injuries to his neck and spine and remained unconscious until his death. The petition states that the incident highlights a deeper problem. It says that India's criminal justice system does not recognise racial bias during the investigation of crimes. As a result, even when an attack clearly involves ra-



cial hatred, it is treated like an ordinary criminal case. The petitioner argues that this approach weakens the seriousness of such acts and allows the pattern of racial hostility to continue without proper accountability. The plea also points out that this is not an isolated case. It recalls earlier incidents,

including the 2014 death of Nido Taniam, a student from Arunachal Pradesh, who died after being assaulted in Delhi following racial taunts. It notes that many students and workers from the North-East have reported similar abuse in big cities across India over the years. The petition further states

that although the Union government has acknowledged the existence of racial discrimination in replies to Parliament, there is still no dedicated law or institutional system to handle these types of offences. Even newly enacted criminal laws such as the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 do not contain provisions that recognise hate crime or racial violence as a separate category. At present, police do not have to record racial motivation or bias in First Information Reports (FIRs). There are also no special guidelines for investigating such offences or protecting victims and witnesses. The plea argues that this absence of legal recognition violates Articles 14, 15, 19 and 21 of the Constitution, which guarantee equality, non-discrimination and the right to life. It also says that it goes against the constitutional value of fraternity.

White Owl Literature Festival 2026 to celebrate Northeast stories in Nagaland this February

Kohima, Dec 31: The White Owl Literature Festival & Book Fair will return in 2026 with its third edition, and this time it will once again shine a light on the rich storytelling traditions of Northeast India. The festival will be held in Nagaland from February 5 to 7, and will bring together writers, artists, performers, and readers from across the region and the country. The festival will take place at Zone Niathu by The Park in Chümokedima, near Dimapur.

The theme for the event is “Celebrating Stories, Inspiring Minds.” Organisers say the focus will be on both old and new storytelling traditions — from age-old oral histories to modern literature. The festival is being organised by Penguin Random House India, in partnership with The White Owl, a literary institute that works to promote reading and writing in the Northeast. Several well-known names from the world of books and the arts are expected to attend.

These include author Daribha Lyndem, Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar winner Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, actor Merenla Imsong, known from the web series Paatal Lok Season 2, and noted musician Alobo Naga. Organisers say more speakers and performers will also be part of the programme. Festival Director Viketuno Rio said the event has steadily grown over the years while remaining closely connected to the culture of the Northeast.

He said the 2026 edition will bring together voices from the region as well as from across India, creating space for conversations on stories, identity, and creativity. The three-day festival will feature discussions, readings, workshops, and interactive sessions. Topics will include children's reading, fiction and non-fiction writing, translation, mental health, culture, media literacy, podcasting, social media, entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, and legacy-building.

One of the major attractions will be Penguin's writing mentorship programme “The Perfect Pitch.”

Through this initiative, new and unpublished writers from across India are invited to submit stories inspired by the Northeast. Entries will remain open until January 10, 2026. Programme Director Deepthi Talwar, who is also an Executive Editor at Penguin Random House India, said the festival aims to bring together a wide group of creative people — including storytellers, translators, podcasters, academics, illustrators, and entrepreneurs.

She said the event has become one of the most thoughtfully planned literary gatherings in the region. Tickets for the festival are available online.

However, students from schools and colleges will be given free entry on showing valid identity cards.

The organisers hope this will encourage more young people to attend and develop an interest in reading and writing.

Anti-Drug Campaign

Itanagar, Dec 31: The East Siang Police held the 15th and last monthly Narco-Coordination (NCORD) meeting of the year on Tuesday at Pasighat in the East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The meeting reviewed the district's consistent progress in combating drug abuse through coordinated and persistent action by numerous stakeholders. Community-based organizations (CBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society have provided strong support for the district's anti-drug campaign, which has gained momentum as a result of close collaboration between the district administration, police, and allied departments. Their combined efforts have strengthened district-wide monitoring, awareness campaigns, and enforcement strategies. The meeting was presided over by East Siang Deputy Commissioner Sonalika Jiواني, who also examined the action taken reports (ATRs) that several stakeholder departments had filed. She praised the proactive measures implemented within the NCORD framework, stating that the accomplishments thus far were “heartening” and demonstrated the dedication of all participating departments.

11 Bangladeshi group connections were held in Assam and Tripura

Guwahati, Dec 31: Eleven people have been arrested in Assam and Tripura for their alleged links with Bangladesh-based fundamentalist groups that were aiming to destabilise the Northeast, police said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference, Guwahati Police Commissioner Parthasarathi Mahanta said the Special Task Force (STF) made the arrests on the basis of intelligence inputs provided by central agencies. “An operation was carried out last night in Barpeta, Chirang, Baksa and Darrang districts of Assam, besides Tripura. We have arrested a total of 11 jihadi elements, who were working under direct orders from Bangladesh-based groups,” he said. Those arrested were members of the Imam Mahmud Kafil (IMK) module, he said. “Ten of them were apprehended from Assam, and one from Tripura. Their main aim was to destabilise Assam and the rest of the Northeast. They wanted to establish ‘Muslim supremacy’ in this part of the country,” he claimed. Mahanta said the police teams have made a lot of seizures, sans any arms and ammunition, during the simultaneous raids. Those arrested from Assam were identified as Nasim Uddin alias Najimuddin alias Tamim (24), Junab Ali (38), Afrahim Hussain (24), Mizanur Rehman (46), Sultan Mehmud (40), Md Siddique Ali (46), Rasidul Aalam (28), Mahibul Khan (25), Sharuk Hussain (22) and Md Dilbar Razak (26), he said.

Jagir Miah (33) was nabbed from Tripura, he added. “The Indian security and intelligence apparatus has been keeping a hawk eye on jihadi activities in the Northeast, particularly in Assam,” Mah-

anta said. He said the IMK is a Bangladesh-based offshoot of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), which is banned in India. “IMK was founded in 2018 by ex-JMB member Jewel Mahmud alias Imam Mahmud Habibullah alias Sohail, who claims to be the Amir of IMK and propagates the ideology of ‘Ghazwatul Hind’,” he said. Several Indian operatives also use UPI platforms to channel money and lakhs of rupees have been systematically remitted from Assam and Tripura to Bangladesh to support extremist training and logistics, Mahanta said. Additionally, extremist material relating to weapons and bomb-making circulated within Assam bears similarity to material earlier recovered from IMK-linked activities in Bangladesh, he added. “It has been reliably learnt that following the regime change in Bangladesh in August 2024, senior leaders of JMB, Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) and Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) issued directions to IMK leadership to activate and expand its Indian modules,” the police commissioner said. Mahanta claimed that among the people targeted were individuals possessing Indian passports who had visited Bangladesh, as well as known former members of proscribed groups. “Radical literature is systematically circulated to indoctrinate cadres and sympathisers through online platforms. In Assam, such extremist content was circulated within the encrypted platform titled ‘Purba Akash’,” Mahanta said. IMK also exploits social and religious gatherings and several clandestine meetings have been held at local mosques since December 2024, advo-

cating violent armed struggle in India to stop “atrocities on Muslims”, he added. He said that some IMK cadres have already visited Bangladesh with Indian passports to meet IMK leadership, and many are being encouraged to go to Bangladesh, even with family, for arms training. Talking about their funding pattern, the police commissioner said IMK’s operations are bankrolled through a combination of Hawala and small account transactions. “Recruits and local supporters contribute cash donations. Funds collected are routinely transferred to Bangladesh via Hawala networks. Multiple bank accounts were used for funding,” he added. “The cumulative effect of IMK’s activities poses a grave threat to India’s unity and integrity. The IMK maintains active cross-border linkages with its Bangladesh-based patrons. Following the ouster of the Hasina government in 2024, the Amir of IMK was released from custody,” he said. After his release, recruitment and mobilisation activities of the outfit intensified with holding several meetings in parts of Assam, Tripura and West Bengal, he added. “The IMK projects itself as a Ghazwatul Hind-centric extremist module and propagates an ideology aligned with proscribed transnational jihadi organisations. It was found that following the change of government in Bangladesh, cadres of JMB, ABT and AQIS were released or emboldened,” Mahanta said. This has resulted in revival of their ideological influence and Indian networks, including through IMK-linked platforms, which disseminate extremist propaganda advocating violent jihad and armed conquest of India, he added.

White Owl Lit Fest 2026 in Nagaland to focus on Northeast’s literary heritage

Kohima, Dec 31: The third edition of The White Owl Literature Festival & Book Fair will be held in Nagaland from February 5 to 7, 2026, with a focus on celebrating the Northeast’s rich literary and storytelling traditions, organisers announced. The three-day festival, themed “Celebrating Stories, Inspiring Minds”, will be hosted at Zone Niathu by The Park in Chümoukedima. Organised by Penguin Random House India in collaboration with literary institute The White Owl, the event aims to trace the region’s narrative journey from its deep-rooted oral traditions to contemporary

writing, while highlighting the Northeast’s contribution to India’s cultural and literary landscape.

A wide range of writers, artists and cultural voices are expected to participate in the festival. A key highlight of the festival will be Penguin’s flagship writing mentorship and discovery initiative, The Perfect Pitch. For the 2026 edition, unpublished writers from across the country have been invited to submit fiction inspired by the Northeast, adding a strong regional emphasis to the programme. Entries will be accepted until January 10, 2026. Programme director Deepti Talwar



said the festival brings together an expansive mix of storytellers, translators, podcasters, academics, illustrators and entrepreneurs, making it one of the most carefully curated

editions focused on the Northeast. Tickets for the festival are available online. Entry will be free for school and college students on the production of valid identity cards.

IDPs who missed the relocation deadline will march to Lok Bhavan

Imphal, Dec 31: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of the Manipur crisis, still languishing in relief camps, have announced a peace march to Lok Bhavan on January 12, 2026, after the state government’s resettlement plan failed to meet its December deadline.

The government had earlier pledged to close all IDP camps by December 2025 through a three-phase resettlement programme, offering prefabricated housing or financial aid for rebuilding homes. However, insecurity and slow progress have left thousands of displaced families in camps across the violence-affected hills and valley districts.

Since early December, IDPs backed by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) have staged sit-in protests in Imphal, demanding concrete action under President’s Rule. In a joint statement, they expressed resentment over the administration’s “failure to keep its promise” and accused authorities, including the Governor,



of maintaining silence on the issue.

The statement alleged that despite repeated memoranda, no written assurance or progress report has been provided. It said the continued non-response compelled IDPs to conclude that their constitutional grievances were being ignored.

Announcing the January 12 march,

the IDPs and COCOMI stressed that the action was not a demand for privileges but an assertion of constitutional rights—safety, rehabilitation, and dignity for citizens displaced within their own state. They affirmed that the march would remain lawful, democratic, and non-violent, while cautioning that responsibility for

any further distress due to inaction would rest with the administration.

The joint statement urged the Governor to break the silence and present a time-bound resettlement roadmap, adding that peace in Manipur cannot be sustained without justice, accountability, and transparency in governance.

MoU with Komkar village for pre-feasibility studies of Siang Upper project

Itanagar, Dec 31: The people of Komkar village in Upper Siang district on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Arunachal Pradesh government for the preparation of the pre-feasibility report (PFR) of the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP).

The project was declared of national importance by the Centre in 2008. The MoU was signed in the presence of Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Ojing Tasing, Mariyang-Geku MLA Oni Panyang, Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta, and senior government officials.

The MoU was signed on Tuesday with the consent of 245 out of 257 households in Komkar village, representing over 95 per cent of the community, reflecting broad-based support for conducting PFR-related studies, a statement from the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO) said. In his address, Khandu expressed gratitude to the people of Komkar for becoming the first village in Upper Siang district to extend formal support for PFR stud-



ies, following similar agreements by four villages in Siang district earlier.

He clarified that the current agreement is limited strictly to the preparation of the pre-feasibility report and assured that no construction decision would be taken without exhaustive consultations and consent of all project-affected

families (PAFs). The chief minister expressed gratitude to the Central government for approving a Rs 350 crore special development package for Siang and Upper Siang districts, aimed at strengthening education, healthcare, livelihoods and infrastructure. Reiterating the government’s commitment to transparency and public participa-

tion, the chief minister said that public opinion and consent would remain central at every stage of the pre-construction process after the completion of the PFR.

He urged the people of Komkar village to constitute a village development committee to identify priority programs under the package.

Vaikunta Dwara Darshan heavy crowds in Andhra

Tirumala, Dec 31: The sacred Vaikunta Dwara Darshan began at the Lord Venkateswara Swamy temple in Tirumala on Tuesday amid devotional fervour. The temple echoed with chants of Govinda Nama as devotees passed through the Vaikunta Dwara after having darshan of Lord Venkateswara.

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) made elaborate arrangements to ensure a smooth experience. Chairman BR Naidu, Executive Officer (EO) Anil Kumar Singhal, and Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary inspected queue lines and interacted with devotees, who expressed satisfaction with the arrangements. Opening of the Vaikunta Dwara took place at 12.05 am, following rituals by priests. VIP darshan was permitted after exclusive annual poojas, while general darshan commenced at 7.15 am. As directed by Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, priority was accorded to devotees. For the first three days, entry is restricted to those holding e-DIP tokens. Out of 24 lakh registrations nationwide, 1,72,000 devotees were selected through the system. Token holders are required to adhere to their allotted time slots. From January 2 to 8, devotees without tokens can avail darshan through the Sarva Darshan queue lines. On Vaikunta Ekadasi, the Swarna Ratham procession was con-

ducted magnificently between 9 am and 10.30 am. The Ratharanga Dolotsavam of Sri Malayappa Swamy enthralled devotees along the Mada Streets, with thousands participating in the chariot-pulling fete.

The temple was adorned with floral and fruit decorations, captivating devotees. From the Mahadwaram to the Dhvajasthambam and Vaikunta Dwaram, the arrangements created a divine ambience. A special Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple setting near the Srivari Temple drew large crowds. This arrangement, supported by donors, was supervised by TTD Garden Department Deputy Director Sri Srinivasulu.

On Wednesday, Vaikunta Dwadasi will be marked by the sacred Chakra Snanam of Sri Sudarshana Chakrathalwar at Swami Pushkarini between 4.30 am and 5.30 am. Devotees believe a holy dip at the time grants merit equal to bathing in 66 crore theerthams of the Seshachala hills. Officials said planning ensured a smooth, spiritually uplifting darshan that satisfied the devotees. For the first three days, entry is restricted to those holding e-DIP tokens. Out of 24 lakh registrations nationwide, 1,72,000 devotees were selected through the system. For the first three days, entry is restricted to those holding e-DIP tokens. Out of 24 lakh registrations nationwide, 1,72,000 devotees were selected through the system

‘Tamil should be medium of instruction’ Union Minister

Chennai, Dec 31: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday asked the Tamil Nadu government to implement the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, in the state, stating that Tamil should be the medium of instruction up to standard five as per the policy’s recommendation. “We are now implementing the national education policy. In Tamil Nadu, Tamil should be the medium of instruction up to standard five. This is the recommendation of the national education policy. I am hopeful that the local government will encourage the Tamil language in the early stages. If we take care of the children, they will be the future leaders of our society,” Union Minister Pradhan told reporters in Madurai. The Tamil Nadu government has opposed the NEP 2020, claiming the imposition of

Hindi under the three-language formula. In August 2025, the MK Stalin government rolled out the State Education Policy with a two-language formula to counter the Centre’s NEP. The tussle between the Centre and the state has also reached the apex court. On December 15, the Supreme Court directed the Tamil Nadu government to hold discussions with the central government on the issue of establishing Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas Senior counsel P Wilson, appearing for the Tamil Nadu government, argued that the Centre should adopt a two-language formula in line with the State government’s policy, instead of a three-language formula. The counsel representing the Centre, on the other hand, contended that the State government want to thrust the Hindi language.

Assam: Kamrup Metro administration orders closure of govt schools amid cold wave

Guwahati, Dec 31: In view of the prevailing extreme cold weather conditions, the Kamrup (Metropolitan) district administration has ordered the temporary closure of all government and provincialised schools in Guwahati for one week. According to an official advisory issued to all heads of schools by the Inspector of Schools of Kamrup Metropolitan district, all schools will remain shut from December 31, 2025, to January 6, 2026. Classes will resume on January 7. The decision follows a sharp drop in daytime temperatures in the state capital. The decision has been taken with the approval of the District Commissioner, Kamrup (Metropolitan). School authorities have been instructed to inform students, parents, and staff about the closure and ensure that no academic or co-curricular activities are conducted during this period. Heads of Schools have also been asked to make necessary arrangements for the smooth resumption of classes after reopening.

The Chief Minister’s Office said the closure was ordered in view of the ongoing cold wave and to ensure student safety. Meanwhile, private schools have been advised to take their own decisions regarding closure, keeping the interests and well-being of students in mind.

According to the India Meteorological Department, the maximum tem-



perature in Guwahati on Tuesday was 18.1 degrees Celsius, which was 6.4 degrees below normal. The minimum temperature stood at 15.1 degrees Celsius, 4.3 degrees above normal. The Met department has predicted cloudy skies with light rain or drizzle in the city, along with shallow to moderate fog till Thursday morning. Maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to hover around 19 degrees Celsius and 14 degrees Celsius, respectively.

BJP misusing Rs 100-crore Brahmaputra project funds for party office construction: Debabrata Saikia

Guwahati, Dec 31: Leader of the Opposition in the Assam Assembly and senior Congress leader Debabrata Saikia has alleged that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has set up its party office on land that was originally sanctioned for a government project worth Rs 100 crore to study the flow pattern of the Brahmaputra River. Addressing the media, Saikia said the project was launched to conduct scientific research on the Brahmaputra so that the government could better understand the river’s course, erosion behaviour and flood pattern. He said that the project was approved with public money and a large amount had already been spent from the state exchequer. However, he claimed that the project land has now been used for constructing a BJP party office instead of the proposed river-study centre. He questioned how a political party could occupy land linked to a government project funded by taxpayers. He added that there is still no clear public information on what happened to the research work that was supposed to be carried out under the project. He alleged that there has

been no transparent report on the progress, results, or use of the funds that were sanctioned for the study. The senior Congress leader stated that projects meant for people’s welfare should not be diverted for political use. He said the Brahmaputra affects millions of lives every year through floods and erosion, and therefore the study project was of great importance. He alleged that the BJP, instead of ensuring that the project was completed, turned the location into party infrastructure. Saikia said this raises questions about priorities and governance. He further said that people in Assam deserve to know what happened to the project and whether the sanctioned funds were used properly. He called for transparency and accountability from the government. Saikia also criticised the Assam Chief Minister, alleging that the ruling party uses communal issues to distract citizens from real problems such as unemployment, price rise, floods, erosion and development challenges. “To divert attention from Assam’s core problems, the Chief Minister has resorted to communal politics on

issues like Hindu-Muslim relations, Ajan Pir and other matters,” he said. He said the government often brings up emotional or religious topics whenever there is public anger or dissatisfaction over governance-related concerns. According to him, such tactics divide people instead of solving real-life issues. The Opposition leader also said that the BJP frequently talks about history and promises a golden future but fails to protect the present. He said the government should focus on basic needs such as employment, security, education, healthcare, agriculture, and flood control instead of political showmanship or polarising debates. Saikia claimed that when serious issues arise, the ruling party makes evasive remarks rather than giving clear answers. The Congress leader also mentioned that several schemes and projects in Assam have seen delays or controversy. He said people want job opportunities, better infrastructure, and relief from natural disasters like floods and erosion. He alleged that despite big announcements, progress on the ground has



often been slow. He said that when questions are raised about policy failures, the public is instead shown political drama and communal narratives. Saikia also referred to government initiatives linked to welfare schemes and rural employment programmes. He said many of these need better implementation and regular monitoring so that common citizens benefit directly. The Leader of the Opposition said that political parties must remember that they are elected to serve the people, not themselves. He said using public resources for political activities sets a wrong example. He added that the government should respect democratic responsibility and financial discipline. He said that the

public property and funds must always remain dedicated to public interest. Saikia said the Congress has governed Assam in the past and accepts both its achievements and shortcomings. But he said the responsibility of the current ruling party is to govern the state honestly, transparently and fairly. He stressed again that the Brahmaputra study project was important for Assam because erosion and flooding remain serious and recurring problems. Many people lose homes, farmland and livelihoods every year. Research on the river’s changing flow could have helped in planning embankments, flood control and disaster management, he said. He questioned why such a vital project appears to have been sidelined. The Congress leader indicated that the Opposition may bring this issue up more strongly in the public domain and in the Assembly. He said the matter concerns governance, public trust and the fair use of state resources. He added that democratic systems require questioning and transparency and Opposition parties have a duty to raise matters of public interest.

Lunglei DC felicitates Rashtriya Bal Puraskar awardee Esther Hnamte

Aizawl, Dec 31: Lunglei district Deputy Commissioner Navneet Mann felicitated Esther Lalduhawmi Hnamte of Lunglei College Veng, recipient of the “Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2025”, at her office chamber and presented her with a token of appreciation. Esther Hnamte was conferred the country’s highest civilian award for children (below 18 years of age) by the President of India on December 26. The felicitation programme, organised by the Lunglei DC’s Office, was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Rochuangkimi Khen-glawt and Sub-Deputy Commissioneri Lalhlimpuii Pachuau. Esther was ac-

companied by her mother, R. Lalawmpuii, and other family members. As part of the honour, the Deputy Commissioner presented Esther with a Certificate of Honour along with a cash award of Rs 10,000. Congratulating her on the achievement, Navneet Mann said that Esther has brought laurels to Lunglei district and the state of Mizoram. She commended Esther’s contribution to promoting unity and harmony through music, describing the national recognition as well-deserved, and encouraged her to continue striving for excellence in both academics and music. Expressing gratitude, Esther’s mother, R. Lalawmpuii, thanked all those who



supported and guided Esther in her journey. She also acknowledged the Lunglei district administration for its timely recommendation for the award and for the continued support extended after the honour was conferred. The district administration also invited Esther Hnamte to perform at the Lunglei District Republic Day celebrations 2026, to which she agreed, subject to there being no unforeseen constraints.

CM Khandu Reaffirms Indigenous Identity on Donyi Polo Day

Itanagar, Dec 31: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu greeted the state’s citizens on Donyi Polo Day, characterizing the celebration as a powerful statement of the region’s indigenous identity and cultural heritage. The designation of December 31 as Donyi Polo Day, according to Khandu’s statement on X, demonstrates the profound reverence given to the ancient belief system that has formed the values and way of life of the indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh. Additionally, he emphasized that Donyi Polo is an essential component of the people’s identity rather than a foreign belief. According to the chief minister, Donyi Polo’s philosophy serves as the cornerstone of ethics, directs

human interactions with nature, and preserves the generation-to-generation understanding of truth. He pointed out that what has been passed down from ancestors cannot be discarded, diluted, or substituted. Additionally, Khandu asked for Almighty Donyi Polo’s blessings, asking for strength, harmony, and wisdom for everyone. “May Almighty Donyi Polo bless us all with wisdom, harmony, and strength,” he concluded. For the Adi community, Donyi Polo Day is more than just a religious celebration. It serves as a reminder of their strong ties to both nature and ancestors’ customs. Everyday living, morals, and the community’s interactions with the outside world are all still shaped by the religious system.

Assam Court sentences man to life imprisonment for setting up Pakistan-linked terror module

Guwahati, Dec 31: A special court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in Guwahati has sentenced a man to life imprisonment for setting up a module of a Pakistan-based terror organisation in Assam with the aim of carrying out terrorist activities in the state. Officials said on Wednesday that the court found the accused, Md Kamruj Zaman, also known as Kamruddin, guilty under different provisions of the anti-terror law for creating a network of the banned outfit Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) in Assam during 2017 and 2018. The court awarded him three separate punishments, with the harshest being life imprisonment. All the sentences will run at the same time. Along with the jail term, the court also imposed a fine of ₹5,000 in each of the three cases. If the fine is not paid, he will have to un-



dergo three more months of simple imprisonment for each default. According to the NIA, the activities of Zaman were part of a conspiracy to spread fear among the public and disturb peace and security in the region. Investigators said he took steps to build a base for the banned outfit in Assam and tried to bring in more

people to support the organisation. During the investigation, the NIA found that Zaman had recruited several people, including Sahnewaz Alom, Saidul Alam, and Omar Faruk, along with a few others. These individuals were allegedly brought into the network to support the organisation’s plans.

The agency said that the actions were aimed not just at recruitment but also at helping the terror group expand its reach in the northeastern state. The NIA had filed a chargesheet in March 2019 against five accused, including Zaman. During the course of the trial, three of the accused: Sahnewaz Alom, Saidul Alam, and Omar Faruk pleaded guilty. All three were convicted based on their admission before the court. The fifth accused in the case, Jaynal Uddin, died due to illness while the trial was still going on, the agency said. The NIA said that the conviction and the sentencing reflect the agency’s continued effort to break terror networks and prevent extremist activity in the country. According to the agency, strict legal action is necessary to ensure that organisations linked to foreign terror networks do not gain ground in India.

Kamrup Metro Schools Closed for Week Amid Cold Wave

Guwahati, Dec 31: Guwahati is facing severe cold weather, leading to the closure of all government and provincialised schools in the Kamrup (Metropolitan) district for one week, from December 31, 2025, to January 6, 2026. The district education authorities issued this order after a review of weather conditions to ensure student safety. The order, originating from the Office of the District Elementary Education Officer, was approved by the Deputy Commissioner. Schools are to inform students and staff about the closure and refrain from any activities, including outdoor gatherings. The decision considers children’s vulnerability to health issues from cold exposure, particularly for those commuting from distant areas early in the morning. Reopening may be re-evaluated depending on weather conditions.

Assam CM inaugurated the new campus of Bhattadev University at Medhikuchi



Guwahati, Dec 31: An important turning point in the state’s higher education system was reached when Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma opened the new Bhattadev University campus in Medhikuchi. The university campus, which spans 120 bighas of land, was built under a project valued at Rs 52.99 crore. Senior authorities and local representatives, including Education Minister Ranaj Pegu, Cabinet Minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, Barpeta MP Phani Bhushan Choudhury, and Bhawanipur MLA Phanihar Talukdar, attended the inaugural ceremony. Bhattadev University is being envisioned as a “Global Smart University,” with a strong focus on technology-driven teaching, research, and innovation, according to teaching Minister Ranaj Pegu, who spoke at the event. Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister, emphasized how digital technology will revolutionize Assam’s future. He predicted that the state would experience rapid technical advancement in the next years. “Through digital platforms, a professor will be able to teach students across every corner of Assam from a single location,” added the chief minister. “A doctor sitting in America will be able to treat a patient in Assam,” Sarma continued, highlighting the potential of telemedicine and highlighting the government’s goal of using technology into healthcare and education.

Komkar village supports pre-feasibility study for Siang Upper Multipurpose Project

Itanagar, Dec 31: Residents of Komkar village in Arunachal Pradesh’s Upper Siang district have formally extended their support to the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP). On December 30, the villagers signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the state government to allow preparation of the project’s Pre-Feasibility Report (PFR). The agreement was signed with the consent of 245 out of 257 households in the village. This means more than 95 per cent of families agreed to allow PFR-related studies for the project, which was declared a project of national importance by the Government of India in 2008. The MoU signing was attended virtually by Chief Minister Pema Khandu. Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Ojing Tasing, Mariyang-Geku MLA Oni Panyang, Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta and senior officials were also associated with the event. Officials said the development marks an important step in moving the project discussion forward. They described it as an example of informed decision-making and cooperation between the state

and local communities.

Village representatives said the decision was taken keeping in mind national interest, long-term water security and the well-being of the Siang belt and the Adi community. They also appreciated the state government for holding regular meetings and awareness programmes before the agreement. Chief Minister Pema Khandu thanked the villagers of Komkar for becoming the first village in Upper Siang district to formally support the PFR process. He said four villages in neighbouring Siang district had earlier signed similar MoUs. Khandu also clarified that the present agreement is only for preparing the Pre-Feasibility Report. He assured that no construction activity will begin without detailed consultations and the consent of all project-affected families. The Chief Minister also raised concerns about changing hydrological conditions in the Siang river, including the risk of reduced or diverted river flow in future. He said a scientific study was necessary to protect ecological balance and water security in the region. Khandu further thanked the Union govern-

ment for approving a ₹350-crore Special Development Package for Upper Siang and Siang districts. The package will support education, healthcare, livelihood and infrastructure. He also requested the people of Komkar to form a Village Development Committee to identify priority projects. Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta praised the unity shown by the villagers and said Komkar’s decision would contribute to both regional and national development. MLA Oni Panyang said the move reflected maturity and collective wisdom and could become an example of participatory decision-making for the whole district. Minister Ojing Tasing said the signing of the MoU was the result of more than a year of discussions with every household in the village. He said the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project has strategic importance for Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, especially in terms of reducing downstream risks and ensuring long-term stability. He also appreciated the villagers for keeping state and national interest in mind while taking the decision.

Margherita night crash

Margherita, Dec 31: In the town of Margherita, a terrible traffic accident late on Tuesday night resulted in one fatality and three serious injuries. The local community was rocked by the tragedy, which happened around 9:30 p.m. in the Hill View neighborhood in the center of the town. Witnesses said that a lady and her little daughter were walking down the road when the automobile struck them at a fast speed. The car crashed into a neighboring wall after the impact flung the victims aside. Locals claimed the motorist was driving recklessly and under the influence of alcohol when the collision occurred. However, locals also noted that the driver’s failure to slow down close to speed limiters and the thick fog in the region might have had a role in the collision. They claimed that the fog caused limited vision, making it challenging to evaluate the state of the roads. The pedestrians, Rita Tanti and her 14-year-old daughter Nikita Tanti, were seriously injured in the collision. Nikita is still in serious condition, and Rita Tanti later passed away from her wounds. Ayush Bansal and Harshit Agarwala, two young people riding in the vehicle, were also gravely hurt in the collision. For emergency care, all of the injured were taken to a neighboring hospital. They are said to be in critical condition. Soon after the occurrence, police arrived on the site and began an investigation to ascertain the precise reason of the collision. As the inquiry progresses, more information is anticipated.

Assam Rifles Pays Tribute to Martyrs in Manipur

Imphal, Dec 31: At the Assam Rifles War Memorial in Maram, Manipur, Assam Rifles honored two of its deceased troops on Monday with a somber wreath-laying ceremony. Rifleman Nityanand Roy and Naik Dal Bahadur Gurung, who were killed in battle on December 29, 1971, while fighting insurgents at Peren in Nagaland, were honored with a ceremony. “A solemn wreath laying ceremony was conducted at #AssamRifles War Memorial at Maram in Manipur on 29 Dec 2025 to honour the supreme sacrifices of Rfn Nityanand Roy (Late) and Naik Dal Bahadur Gurung (Late) who laid down their lives while fighting insurgents at Peren in Nagaland on 29 Dec 1971,” Assam rifles posted on X. A moment of silence was observed in remembrance of the courageous warriors by senior officials, Assam Rifles personnel, and local government representatives who attended the event. According to the force, the event was held to commemorate the bravery and devotion of its members who gave their lives while performing their duties and to reaffirm the force’s resolve to ensuring the security of the country.

A contemporary family tragedy: busy lives, vacant homes

In the contemporary context characterized by rapid pace, intense competition, and heightened ambitions, prioritizing family has evolved from being an emotional desire to a necessity for social survival. As 2025 transitions into 2026, a reflection on societal dynamics reveals that although advancements in development and technology have introduced notable comforts, they have simultaneously eroded the essence of human relationships. The family, historically viewed as a sanctuary, is now facing significant instability and insecurity. The critical inquiry thus shifts from questioning the flaws of modernity to assessing our collective commitment and capacity to sustain family structures amidst modern lifestyles. In a high-pressure work environment, allocating time for family is increasingly crucial. The emotional, physical, and mental fortitude gained from strong family ties underscores this importance. A recent study highlights a concerning trend: over sixty percent of individuals express a desire to change jobs due to overwhelming work pressure that hampers their ability to spend quality time with family. This data, particularly alarming for India—currently ranked 42nd globally in work–life balance—calls attention to the pressing need for re-evaluation of priorities in both personal and professional spheres to safeguard family relationships amidst modern demands. The pressures of professional life have become so pronounced that individuals often remain psychologically tethered to work even while physically present at home. The advent of digital connectivity has blurred



the lines between personal and professional realms, removing the natural barriers once upheld between home and workplace. This shift has diminished opportunities for genuine interactions, attentive listening, and emotional bonds among family members. Paradoxically, while individuals strive to provide for their families, the sacrifices made in this endeavor often lead to emotional distance. The work-from-home paradigm, initially embraced as beneficial, has now transformed into a significant challenge for family dynamics. Homes are no longer sanctuaries for relaxation and communication; they have morphed into remote extensions of the office. Parents engrossed in devices, notifications interrupting couple conversations, and the disregard of elders’ input contribute to the erosion of familial bonds. While families occupy the same physical space, their emotional connections splinter, risking the disintegration of core values, traditions, and shared responsibilities.

Moreover, the corporate culture, characterized by escalating performance demands and fierce competition, perpetuates a climate of anxiety where even brief pauses are synonymous with losing one’s edge. This relentless speed of life stigmatizes stillness and self-reflection as signs of weakness, despite the fact that a strong familial foundation serves as a source of mental fortitude, confidence, and resilience to face life’s adversities. Consequently, when family structures weaken, individuals may project an image of success while fostering inner turmoil and fragmentation. Social media has further deepened this crisis. Even under the same roof, family members inhabit separate virtual worlds. The culture of display, constant comparison, and the pressure to remain perpetually available generate dissatisfaction and tension in relationships. We have become so preoccupied with observing others’ lives that we scarcely have time to understand the emotions unfolding within

our own homes. If this trajectory continues, the family will remain merely a structure—devoid of soul. Restoring an ideal and exemplary family system in such times is undoubtedly difficult, but not impossible. The first step is to accept that career and family are not adversaries; they are complementary. We must discard the notion that success is measured solely by position, wealth, and prestige. Without dialogue, affection, and belonging within the family, such success is not only incomplete but also hollow. As the new year approaches, we must resolve to reassess our time, energy, and priorities. Preserving the family does not require grand philosophies but small, practical changes: consciously distancing ourselves from technology while at home, sharing meals together, listening attentively to children and elders, and valuing one another’s emotions. Quality time is not defined by the number of hours spent but by the sensitivity and engagement present in those moments. A renewed

family framework does not imply a rigid return to old traditions; rather, it calls for safeguarding relational values amid modern realities. In households where both spouses are working, balanced distribution of responsibilities, mutual cooperation, and respect can significantly strengthen family bonds. Instead of preparing children solely for competitive success, it is equally vital to nurture emotional intelligence, sensitivity, and an appreciation for relationships. Viewing elders not as burdens, but as repositories of experience and values, keeps the soul of the family alive. Digital connectivity, even while at home, has introduced new forms of stress, compounded further by long commutes that consume a significant portion of daily life. At times, workplace pressure erodes self-confidence itself. Debates around extending working hours persist, with arguments suggesting that increased productivity requires longer hours. Consequently, labour laws are being relaxed to allow

extended work schedules. There is no denying that the desire to earn more has intensified, along with the burden of work. It is therefore imperative that both institutions and society take work–life balance seriously. Legislation alone is insufficient; a humane perspective must be woven into workplace culture. Productivity does not merely signify longer working hours—it reflects balanced and satisfied employees. Only when an individual’s family life is stable can they contribute creatively and effectively at work. As we transition into the new year, it becomes crucial to engage in introspection regarding our familial relationships. The message emphasizes the importance of prioritizing family over material comforts, suggesting that future generations, while enjoying material wealth, may miss out on the vital warmth of familial bonds if we do not emphasize human relationships today. The author argues that family is defined not just by physical cohabitation but by emotional connectivity and shared experiences. A breakdown in family dynamics could undermine the very fabric of society. As we approach 2026, it is essential to commit to leveraging technology in ways that enhance our lives while fostering, rather than replacing, our relationships. The text advocates for a harmonious balance between embracing modern advancements and nurturing familial ties, positing that this balance is crucial for developing a strong, resilient family structure capable of thriving amidst societal changes, ensuring that the essence of human relationships persists despite evolving circumstances.

Assam requires improved eye care services

A survey conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) reveals that nearly 40% of the population in Assam experiences some form of defective vision, highlighting a significant public health concern in the region. Approximately 18.8% of individuals in India diagnosed with cataracts originate from Assam, indicating a localized prevalence of this eye condition. The survey identifies that defective vision is particularly widespread among rural inhabitants of Assam, largely attributed to factors such as ignorance, poverty, and inadequate access to proper eye care facilities. The findings indicate that most adults in these rural areas suffer from refractive errors, whereas the elderly are predominantly affected by cataracts. Furthermore, there is an alarming rise in diabetes-related cataracts among the rural populace. Additionally, farmers are notably vulnerable to eye injuries, particularly those related to agricultural work, which often lead to complications such as corneal ulceration, corneal opacity, and ultimately, blindness. These statistics underline the urgent need for improved eye care services and public health education in rural Assam to address these critical issues. Due to defective vision, productivity among adult rural inhabitants in Assam declines, contributing to increased poverty within families. Children in these areas particularly suffer from vitamin A deficiency-related blindness and refractive errors, resulting in poor academic performance. Approximately 80 percent of cases of defective vision are treatable with straightforward interventions—43 percent through corrective eyewear and 33 percent via relatively simple cataract surgery. Despite global initiatives aimed at eliminating avoidable blindness, rural Assam faces significant barriers, as it exhibits the lowest accessibility to fundamental eye care services. In contrast to urban regions of Assam, where individuals can easily access eye examinations, glasses, and cataract surgeries, rural residents encounter numerous obstacles. The absence of affordable and accessible eye care services and products severely hampers their ability to seek treatment. Most eye care facilities are concentrated in urban areas, creating a disparity that adversely affects over 80 percent of the state’s population residing in rural contexts. Government primary health centres and community health centres in rural Assam are significantly understaffed, lacking ophthalmologists and optometrists necessary for the diagnosis and provision of corrective lenses. This systemic shortage contributes to the continued prevalence of visual impairments and the resultant socio-economic challenges faced by rural communities. People in rural Assam face significant barriers to accessing eye healthcare, necessitating travel over long distances to reach the nearest cities or towns for services. To get a routine eye check-up, individuals must travel with a relative, leading to a loss of a day’s wage, alongside additional costs for travel and food. Upon accessing care, they pay the same rates as urban patients, which often proves unaffordable. The process escalates further if they require spectacles, necessitating another trip to the city to pick them up, which incurs further expenses and another day’s wage lost. In total, the financial burden for these services amounts to approximately Rs 3,000-4,000, a sum that exceeds the total disposable income of many rural households. For those requiring cataract surgery, the costs can be even more prohibitive. The financial constraints are particularly acute for lower-income groups in rural Assam, largely comprised of farmers and daily wage workers. The challenge of accessing affordable eye care is exacerbated by factors such as poor economic conditions, political unrest, and inadequate transportation infrastructure in rural areas, which collectively impede these communities’ ability to obtain necessary healthcare services. Every individual should have the opportunity to see clearly and live a fulfilling life, regardless of their age, gender, location, or economic circumstances. However, in rural Assam, there exists a significant underserved population lacking access to essential eye care services. Many residents in these areas suffer from low vision and have not pursued corrective measures. Currently, rural eye camps under the National Programme for Control of Blindness are suspended in Assam. The government has proposed adopting the ‘Madurai pattern’ of eye care, which involves NGOs diagnosing patients in their villages before transporting them to hospitals for cataract surgery. This approach ensures patients receive treatment in hygienic environments where intraocular lenses, surgeries, and spectacles are provided free of charge before being returned home. Although this model holds promise for improving eye care for the rural population, its implementation in Assam is flawed, as many district hospitals lack the necessary facilities to perform cataract surgeries, leading to continued blindness in these regions. To address these issues, the Assam Government must make eye care services and products accessible and affordable for rural residents, aligning them with urban standards to enable correction of vision impairments. This requires establishing basic eye care facilities at the primary healthcare level, with at least one optometrist present at each primary health centre to offer free spectacles for refractive errors. Additionally, the government should collaborate with NGOs to create a delivery model for basic eye care in remote areas, establishing satellite eye care centres. District headquarters need an eye centre equipped with surgical facilities linked to these satellite centres, ensuring comprehensive basic eye care in surrounding rural regions. The government can also engage health agencies to provide these vital services. Eye care providers from satellite centres could conduct door-to-door screenings in rural areas to promote eye care awareness, frequently organizing eye check-up camps that offer free spectacles to those in need and identify patients who require cataract surgery, subsequently transporting them to capable surgical centres for treatment.



The Third Eye: Increasing Productivity

A good corporate body plays a crucial role in fostering effective interpersonal relations, ensuring that senior employees adopt a nurturing attitude towards juniors, and addressing the critical aspect of work-life balance for all staff members. It is essential to regard all employees as ‘knowledge workers’ and to carry out a systemic evaluation of the feedback they provide, benefiting the organization as a whole, as highlighted by D.C. Pathak. In today’s context of productivity enhancement, particularly during the Age of the Knowledge Economy, several new concepts have emerged. These concepts are closely aligned with the rapid pace of business transactions and the integration of technology, notably through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) agents in various business processes. In the contemporary business landscape, the significance of ‘business intelligence’ has risen markedly, particularly when fostered through adept analysis and the eradication of personal corruption within corporate structures. Essential to enhancing productivity is the establishment of an organizational environment that encourages each member to contribute optimally to their collective goals. Moreover, the accelerating pace of business operations has redefined ‘time’ as a critical resource, akin to money, materials, and manpower. The efficient management and minimization of time wastage have emerged as vital factors in boosting productivity. Timely and accurate information is crucial in distinguishing between informed decisions and mere guesses, underscoring the necessity for immediate access to relevant data. Consequently, organizations must actively seek to eliminate all ‘time stealers’ that impede processes. This includes bridging gaps between information gathering and decision-making, ensuring timely



communication of decisions to relevant parties, and facilitating the prompt execution of those decisions. Delays, particularly in making ‘course corrections’, can significantly impact overall productivity, highlighting the need for swift and decisive action in business management. Technology, combined with effective human intervention, serves as a powerful means for enhancing output. It serves to infuse ‘smartness’ into systems, defined as the capacity to increase productivity per unit of resources—such as money, manpower, or time. Embracing smartness equates to achieving cost-effectiveness, which can be realized through technological advancements. These advancements facilitate reductions in both the workforce required for operations and the number of procedural steps involved. Notably, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into various sectors has become a significant contributor to cost-effectiveness, with applications in inventory management, customer outreach, and supply chain main-

tenance becoming increasingly prevalent and beneficial. Business intelligence has emerged as a vital component for securing competitive advantage in the market. It involves the strategic use of reliable information that provides foresight into future trends, helping organizations identify potential risks to mitigate and opportunities to capitalize on. This intelligence can be derived through the analysis of publicly available data or through ethical intelligence-gathering techniques targeting competitors and the overall market landscape. A key aspect of effective analysis relies on the unique ability of human imagination, which distinguishes insightful analysts from mere data processors. This imaginative insight allows analysts to see beyond the surface, ensuring they do not overlook critical factors due to an overwhelming focus on specifics. It is important to note that business intelligence consists of exclusive information, which necessitates careful handling and confidentiality until it is utilized,

as premature disclosure could diminish the strategic advantage it offers. In profit-oriented organizations, even a minority of corrupt individuals can significantly undermine productivity by eroding core values such as honesty, hard work, and loyalty. This corruption leads to lax supervision and fosters a culture of inefficiency, ultimately negating cost-effectiveness achievements. Specifically, corruption is defined as the diversion of organizational profits for personal gain. To combat this, forward-thinking corporations establish vigilance frameworks, staffed by trained personnel, tasked with identifying corrupt practices through confidential investigations and monitoring for further action. The presence of a corrupt member can be likened to having a compromised insider. Vigilance functions should be executed under the direction of the organization’s top authority, with the Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO) playing a critical role in assisting the leader in establishing ethical behavioral standards and standard operation-

al procedures (SOPs) related to financial transactions and tender management. This structured approach aims to maintain integrity and accountability within the organization. In nurturing a productive organizational work environment, leadership plays a crucial role by fostering conditions that enable all employees or teams to operate at their highest potential, free from anxiety regarding credit-sharing and favoritism. An effective measure of this environment is evident when individuals display a sense of urgency in their work, even in the absence of crises. A well-functioning corporate entity establishes a framework that promotes healthy interpersonal relationships, emphasizes nurturing behavior from senior staff towards junior employees, and facilitates resolutions regarding work-life balance issues. It is essential to regard all employees as ‘knowledge workers’ and to incorporate a systematic approach for evaluating their feedback, thereby facilitating the organization’s overall development and success.

As gold hits records, Indians opt for bars and coins over jewellery

New Delhi: For nearly two decades, Mumbai homemaker Prachi Kadam marked every festive season with a gold jewellery purchase, blending tradition with personal style. This year’s record rally in prices, however, led her to choose a 10-gram gold coin instead of necklaces or bangles.”I like jewellery because it can be worn during functions, but it’s hard to justify paying an additional 15% in making charges,” said Kadam, who, like millions of Indians, considers buying gold during festivals to be auspicious. “So I settled for a 10-gram coin this time,” she added. Her decision reflects a broader shift in India, one of the world’s largest gold markets and where the metal holds deep cultural and financial significance. With prices heading for their biggest annual gain in 46 years, consumers are increasingly turning away from jewellery toward small coins and bars.Strong demand for safe-haven assets, US interest rate cuts and a weaker dollar drove global gold prices up 67% so far this year and saw them hitting a record high of \$4,549.7 per troy ounce on December 26.Analysts say the trend is cushioning a drop in overall demand and is likely to persist into 2026, echoing a global

slowdown in ornament purchases as bullion prices soar. For others, the adjustment means buying less gold rather than abandoning jewellery altogether.Kolkata-based Nibedita Chakraborty said her household budget has not kept pace with rising prices, prompting her to switch to lightweight designs.Even reducing the weight of a gold necklace by six or seven grams can save more than 100,000 rupees (\$1,114),” Chakraborty said.As prices rise, consumers are becoming more design- and value-conscious, said Saurabh Gadgil, chairman of P N Gadgil Jewellers, which launched a new sub-brand for lightweight and lower-carat jewellery in June.”Buyers want pieces that allow them to participate in gold ownership without feeling price pressure, and modern craftsmanship has made lightweight jewellery aspirational rather than entry-level,” Gadgil said.India’s total gold demand fell 14% year on year in the first nine months of 2025, with jewellery consumption down 26% to 278 metric tons and investment up 13% to 185 tons, the World Gold Council (WGC) said. Investment made up a record 40% of total demand during the period underscoring gold’s enduring role as a store



of wealth in Indian households.The shift toward investment gold and away from jewellery is expected to persist through 2026, as the metal continues to outperform other asset classes, Prithviraj Kothari, president of the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA), said.”Consumers are purchasing gold in the form of coins, bars, or gold ETFs, assuming that the rally will continue,” Kothari said.India-listed gold-backed exchange-traded funds (ETFs) saw an inflow of \$3.3 billion, equivalent to 28.7 tons so far this year, which raised their holdings to 86.2 tons, according to the

WGC.Leadng industry consultancy Metals Focus expects the softness in India’s jewellery demand to carry into 2026, with full-year jewellery consumption projected to decline by a further 9%. With gold becoming less affordable, jewellery consumption has seen a structural shift where consumers are opting for lower caratage and lighter-weight designs, it added.There is growing acceptance of lower-carat jewellery, including 18-carat and 14-carat options, particularly among younger customers and working professionals, said Santosh Kataria, chairman of DP Abhushan Ltd.

IndiGo slapped with Rs 458 crore GST penalty, airline to challenge order largest airline IndiGo

New Delhi: The country’s largest airline IndiGo on Tuesday said authorities have slapped a GST penalty of over Rs 458 crore, and that it would contest the decision.The Additional Commissioner of CGST- Delhi South Commissionerate has slapped the penalty. It pertains to the assessment order under Section 74 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, for FY-2018-19 to FY 2022-23, according to a regulatory filing.”GST department has passed an order imposing GST demand along with interest and penalty on compensation received from foreign supplier and denial of Input Tax credit. The company strongly believes that the order passed by the GST department is erroneous and not in accordance with law, backed by advice from external tax advisors. Accordingly, the company will contest the same and shall take appropriate legal remedies against the aforesaid order. The company is already in appeal before the Commission-



er (Appeals) in a similar matter for FY 2017-18,” the filing said on Tuesday. Further, IndiGo said that since it will contest the order, the order does not have any significant impact on financials, operations or other activities of the company.Separately, the Office of the Joint Commissioner, Lucknow, has imposed a penalty of Rs 14,59,527 on IndiGo for the period 2021-22.”The department has denied input tax credit it availed and has raised a demand along with interest

and penalty on the company. The company believes that the order passed by the authorities is erroneous. Further, the company believes that it has a strong case on merits, backed by advice from external tax advisors,” InterGlobe Aviation, the parent of IndiGo, said in another regulatory filing.According to the company, it will contest the order before the appropriate authority, and there is no significant impact on its financials, operations or other activities.

Meta buys AI startup Manus to boost autonomous agents Mark Zuckerberg

Mumbai: Meta Platforms is acquiring artificial intelligence start-up Manus, which is working on AI agents capable of making decisions and executing tasks autonomously. The acquisition, reportedly valued between \$2 billion and \$3 billion, is a rare example of a US technology group buying an AI platform with Chinese roots. Manus, which originally had its headquarters in China but moved to Singapore to shield itself from ongoing US-China tensions, is one of the “leading autonomous general-purpose agents”, with tools that can perform market research, coding and data analysis. The talent at Manus will join Meta’s team to “deliver general-purpose agents across our consumer and business products, including in Meta AI,” the Mark Zuckerberg-led company said in a statement. The deal is Meta’s third-largest acquisition after WhatsApp and Scale AI.



Meta paid \$19 billion for the former in 2014 and up to \$15 billion for a 49 per cent stake in Scale AI this year.Backed by its parent company, Beijing Butterfly Effect Technology, Manus raised \$75 million this year at a valuation of around \$500 million, in an investment round led by US venture capital firm Benchmark.Manus released its AI agent earlier this year, saying it outperforms OpenAI’s DeepResearch. AI agents — a buzzword in 2025 — are tools that do not

require human supervision to perform specific digital tasks. Companies such as Salesforce and ServiceNow are promoting their agents as an effective way to conduct business.”The era belonging to this generation of young entrepreneurs has arrived,” said Liu Yuan, partner at ZhenFund, on WeChat, about the deal.Alexandr Wang, Meta’s chief AI officer, said on X that Meta is recruiting more widely in Singapore. “We already have some amaz-

ing researchers and engineers there, buoyed now by the 100-strong Manus team, and we’re growing fast,” he said.Zuckerberg is under pressure to justify his AI spending. “I’m very focused on establishing Meta as the leading frontier AI lab,” Meta’s chief executive said in a recent earnings call. Over a billion people use Meta AI each month, he added.So far, Meta has said that its AI spending has improved its advertising business, which accounts for nearly all of its revenue. The company has also said AI has enhanced its social media algorithms, especially for Instagram Reels.”Joining Meta allows us to build on a stronger, more sustainable foundation without changing how Manus works or how decisions are made,” said Xiao Hong, chief executive of Manus, in a statement.

Sebi fires a “research analyst” grocery store in Madurai

New Delhi: A Securities and Exchange Board of India order cancelling an over seven-year-old registration of a Madurai-based research analyst (RA), found running a grocery shop, has shed light on regulatory oversight and how misused credentials can enable investor fraud.In an order dated December 12, Sebi cancelled the registration of Purooskhan after he was found running a small store selling daily essentials and appeared largely unfamiliar with securities market activities.Sebi’s quasi-judicial authority Santosh Shukla, who issued the order, however, noted that it was “not reasonably gauged” how such an individual came to hold a research analyst licence.Shukla stopped short of probing the registration process, which was not matter of investigation before himAccording to Sebi’s regulation, an RA provides research services, which include the preparation or publication of research reports for investors, making “buy/sell/hold” recommendations for stocks, giving price targets or stop-loss targets, offering advice on public offers and recommending a model portfolio. However, RAs cannot execute trades on behalf of investors.Market observers were baffled by how an individual claiming to run a grocery shop could hold an RA registration, as the prerequisites for becoming an RA were strict.Individuals with a postgraduate degree or diploma in either finance, accountancy, business management, commerce, economics, capital market, financial services or completing a postgraduate programme from the National Institute of Securities Market (NISM) qualify to become an RA.Graduates applying for an RA registration need to have at least five



years of experience in the financial services sector.But the five-year experience requirement was relaxed in 2024 to encourage more individuals to become RAs, said a senior executive of a city-based capital market firm. “This development also underscores how the misuse of regulatory credentials can facilitate large-scale investor deception,” he said.The Madurai case traces its origin to complaints received by Sebi in 2022 and 2023, alleging guaranteed and “sure-shot” options trading calls with no risk and doubling of capital amount, offered through a website, optionresearch.in, which claimed Purooskhan’s Sebi registration number to lend credibility.Payments collected from investors were routed to bank accounts held by a partnership firm, Option Research Consultancy (ORC), formed by three individuals — G. Faheeth Ali, Fathima M. and M.S. Ahammed Ali, none of whom were registered with Sebi. While Purooskhan maintained that his registration details had been mis-

used without his consent and stated that he had lodged police and cyber-crime complaints, Sebi’s designated authority flagged serious lapses. These included his admission that he had shared the password of his registered email ID — a key authentication channel with Sebi — with one of the ORC partners (Faheeth Ali), effectively allowing third-party access to regulatory communications and enabling misuse of his credentials. Separate proceedings against ORC and its partners concluded in August 2024, with Sebi ordering a refund of over ₹30 lakh to investors, imposing monetary penalties and barring the entities from accessing the securities market for two years.In Purooskhan’s case, although an adjudicating officer gave him the benefit of doubt on allegations of collusion and monetary gain, Sebi proceeded with the cancellation of registration, citing investor protection concerns and the threat posed by such conduct to orderly market functioning.

Smarter loans, safer cards: India’s youth are using credit differently in 2025

New Delhi: One of the clearest shifts is visible in housing loans. Despite higher interest rates, home loan disbursements grew 12% during the year. What stands out is who is taking these loans. Nearly 16% of new home loan borrowers in 2025 were under the age of 30, almost double the share seen just three years ago. This suggests that young, salaried professionals—often part of dual-income households—are choosing to buy homes earlier, using stable incomes and better access to credit to plan long-term.Loan sizes have grown, too. The average home loan now stands at about Rs 37 lakh, up from Rs 29 lakh three years ago, reflecting both rising property values and stronger borrowing capacity. Most young buyers are still opting for joint ownership, which accounts for 58% of housing loans, though a growing number are confident enough to buy on their own.India’s retail credit story in 2025 is quietly changing—and it’s being reshaped by younger borrowers who are approaching loans with far more caution and intent than in the past. A year-end analysis by PB Fintech, the parent of Policybazaar.com, shows that Indians are entering the formal credit system earlier, but instead of borrowing to spend, they are borrowing to build.Credit cards, often seen as a gateway to impulsive spending, are also being used more thoughtfully. PB Fintech’s data shows



that issuance of unsecured credit cards fell sharply in 2025, while secured cards, backed by fixed deposits, rose by over 60%. For many first-time borrowers, especially younger ones, secured cards are becoming a safer way to build a credit history without risking overspending. Younger consumers are clearly driving this trend. Over a third of new cardholders were under 30, and nearly one in ten were under 25, far higher than a few years ago. Big cities continue to dominate card adoption, with Delhi-NCR and Mumbai leading the way.Personal loans tell a similar story. While overall growth was strong at 35%, most of the increase came from small, short-term loans rath-

er than big-ticket borrowing. These loans are increasingly being used to manage short-term cash needs, not fund lifestyle upgrades. Salaried individuals accounted for nearly 70% of these loans, highlighting the importance of steady incomes in responsible credit use.Taken together, these trends point to a more mature retail credit ecosystem. Young Indians are borrowing earlier, but they are also borrowing smarter—choosing secured products, focusing on assets, and using credit as a tool rather than a temptation. For lenders, this shift could mean healthier portfolios. For borrowers, it signals a growing confidence in managing money with discipline and foresight.

Poco M8 5G launch date in India announced: specs, and features

New Delhi: Poco is launching its new generation M series models, the Poco M8 5G, in the coming weeks. The company has started to tease the launch, revealing crucial features such as an AI camera system and its sleek design. The smartphone will reportedly be launched in the affordable segment, offering budget-conscious buyers great options. Now, the company has revealed the India launch date of the Poco M8 5G.The Poco M8 5G will be announced on January 8, 2026, in India, at 12 PM IST. The smartphone will be available for sale on Flipkart. The e-commerce



platform has also started to tease the launch, revealing smartphone design and features. The smartphone flaunts a dual-tone rear panel with a matte finish, giving it a

unique look. As per confirmed specifications, the Poco M8 will be 7.35mm thin and will weigh around 178 grams, making it one of the slimmest phones.

It is revealed to feature a squircle-shaped camera module housing a 50MP AI camera setup.Poco M8 5G launch: What to expectThe Poco M8 5G is expected to be powered by the Snapdragon 6 Gen 3 processor that will likely be paired with up to 8GB RAM and 256GB of storage. It may feature a 6.77-inch AMOLED display with a 120Hz refresh rate and may offer up to 3200 nits peak brightness. In terms of lasting performance, it will likely be backed by a 5,520mAh battery. Now, to confirm these features and pricing, we will have to wait until January 8.

INTERNATIONAL

Sanctions Urgently Needed as Myanmar Junta Rebrands to Evade Accountability

Washington: A new joint policy brief by The Sentry and Justice For Myanmar exposes how the Myanmar military junta is attempting to evade international sanctions and manufacture false legitimacy by rebranding its executive, legislative and judicial structure and engaging lobbyists in the United States to further the effort. As the military prepares to stage a sham election while continuing widespread atrocities against civilians, the brief warns that the junta is exploiting gaps in sanctions regimes to maintain access to international political and financial systems. The brief calls on the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand and other like-minded governments to urgently update and expand sanctions to close these loopholes and target the junta’s international enablers

On 31 July 2025, the junta dissolved the already-sanctioned State Administrative Council (SAC) and replaced it with a newly created body, the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC). Despite the change in name, the SSPC is led by the same senior military figures, performs the same functions, and remains firmly under the control of junta leader and military commander Min Aung Hlaing. “Nothing has changed except the letterhead,” said Yadanar Maung, spokesperson for Justice For Myanmar. “The junta’s rebranding is a deliberate attempt to evade sanctions and create a fraudulent narrative around its sham election, while it continues to slaughter civilians with blanket impunity.” The brief documents extensive overlap in senior figures between the SAC, the SSPC and the National Defence and Security Council (NDSC), noting that nearly all SSPC members are current or former senior military officers who are already sanctioned in at least one jurisdiction. Since the SSPC’s establishment, the military has continued indiscriminate airstrikes, shelling and mass arrests with impunity. Alarmingly, within days of the rebranding, two US lobbying firms — DCI Group AZ, LLC and the McKeon Group — entered into contracts with junta-controlled entities. According to filings under



the US Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), the firms agreed to provide public affairs and lobbying services aimed at influencing the US government on behalf of Myanmar’s military junta. “The junta is racing to reinvent its image and is enlisting foreign enablers to normalize its rule,” said Justyna Gudowska, Executive Director of The Sentry. “Providing political services that ultimately benefit a military junta responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity carries serious legal, ethical, and reputational risks.” The brief warns that unless sanctions lists are updated to include the SSPC—either as an alias of the SAC or as a newly designated entity—international actors may unknowingly do business with the junta or, in more troubling instances, be given the cover of plausible deniability. This risk is especially acute in the lead-up to the junta’s planned sham election, which has already been condemned by the European Union. The Sentry and Justice For Myanmar urge governments to: Immediately designate the

SSPC under existing Myanmar-related and Global Magnitsky-style sanctions regimes. Apply coordinated, multilateral targeted network sanctions against enablers of the junta. Strengthen sanctions enforcement and investigate potential violations. Publicly denounce the junta’s sham election and reject its results, and refuse any form of recognition or support. The brief also calls on private sector actors, including professional service firms and financial institutions, to terminate any dealings with junta-controlled entities and to exercise enhanced due diligence when engaging with Myanmar-related clients. “Sanctions must evolve as the junta adapts,” said Yadanar Maung. “Without decisive action now, the military junta will continue to launder its crimes through rebranding, lobbying and international complicity while waging a campaign of terror against the people.” (Short descriptor for press use: “The Sentry, an investigative and policy organization that seeks to disable

multinational predatory networks that benefit from violent conflict, repression, and kleptocracy.”) The Sentry is an investigative and policy organization that seeks to disable multinational predatory networks that benefit from violent conflict, repression, and kleptocracy. Pull back the curtain on wars, mass atrocities, and other human rights abuses, and you’ll find grand corruption and unchecked greed. These tragedies persist because the perpetrators rarely face meaningful consequences. The Sentry aims to alter the warped incentive structures that continually undermine peace and good governance. Our investigations follow the money as it is laundered from war zones to financial centers around the world. We provide evidence and strategies for governments, banks, and law enforcement to hold the perpetrators and enablers of violence and corruption to account. These efforts provide new leverage for human rights, peace, and anti-corruption efforts. Learn more at: TheSentry.org

Iran’s ailing supreme leader resorts

New York: Hundreds of women lined up for a marathon on Iran’s resort island of Kish in early December wearing matching shirts and leggings with hair tied loosely behind their backs.

In a country where ignoring dress codes could land you hefty fines and prison sentences, the runners turned their focus on the course ahead, ignoring government directives and the complimentary headscarf placed by the race organizers in the marathon starter pack, in anticipation of violations. In October, a band played the “Seven Nation Army” riff to a headbanging crowd on the streets of the Iranian capital Tehran in a viral moment on social media reposted by the American guitarist behind the White Stripes hit, Jack White.

This week, shopkeepers and bazaar merchants took to the streets in several Iranian cities, chanting anti-regime slogans over their inability to pay rent after the currency hit record lows. The protests were the largest since a 2022 nationwide uprising sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody after she was arrested for allegedly wearing her headscarf improperly. Despite being so far limited, the protests mark the latest chapter in growing discontent in Iran while a population quietly reclaims public spaces and personal freedoms through uncoordinated acts of defiance. The Islamic theocratic regime – long opposed to Western cultural influence – appears to be overlooking the growing civil disobedience to focus on its own survival. At the helm is Iran’s ailing 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who spent decades trying to fortify his regime from domestic and foreign threats, but must now contend with a failing strategy. Domestically, a frustrated youth are showing unprecedented defiance of Islamic norms, the national currency has plummeted to record lows, Iranian cities are running dry and protests are beginning to emerge.

Outside its borders, its arch-enemy Israel continues lobbying the United States over further military action against the Islamic Republic. With limited options, Khamenei is now adopting a cautious waiting game, avoiding major decisions and drastic strategies despite the mounting domestic challenges. The Supreme Leader, or “Vali-ye Faqih” – a significant title granting its holder ultimate authority over all state and religious affairs – was reportedly incommunicado and confined to a secure underground bunker for his own safety during a 12-day war with Israel in June, a conflict that caught Tehran off guard despite decades of preparation. Many observers relay a sense of no one being at home; no one making any big decisions, or rather that Khamenei is not permitting any real decisions,” Mohammad Ali Shabani, editor of Amwaj.media, a London-based news site focusing on Iran, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula countries, told CNN.

“Right now, whatever decision Khamenei may make will likely feature a significant downside, so it seems as if he’s sitting out any major decision,” he said.

Second near midair collision reported Venezuela involving US Air Force tanker



Beijing: Radio transmissions reviewed by CNN show that the pilots of a private jet narrowly avoided a collision with a United States Air Force refueling tanker near Venezuela on Saturday – one day after a similar incident nearby. The pilots of a Falcon 900EX business jet flying from Aruba to Miami reported the near collision to air traffic controllers in Curaçao shortly after the incident Saturday afternoon, according to audio captured by LiveATC.net. “They were really close,” one of the pilots told controllers of the encounter at approximately 26,000 feet. “We were climbing right into him,” the unidentified pilot said. “It was big, maybe a 777 or a (767).” CNN has reached out to the US Air Force and United States Southern Command for comment. The incident marks the second reported near-collision near Venezuela in two days. On Friday, the pilots of JetBlue flight 1112 from Curaçao to New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport radioed controllers that they were forced to abruptly stop their climb after a US Air Force aerial refueling tanker crossed directly in front of their flight path with its position-reporting transponder turned off. The Pentagon and Dutch aviation officials say they are reviewing the earlier JetBlue incident.

In a statement to CNN, United States Southern Command said it was “aware of the recent reporting regarding US military aircraft operations in the Caribbean and (is) currently reviewing the matter.” The National Transportation Safety Board told CNN it was aware of both incidents and was gathering information. Curaçao lies about 40 miles north of the coast of Venezuela.

The Federal Aviation Administration issued an advisory last month warning US airlines of heightened military activity at all altitudes near Venezuela. On Tuesday, it repeated the warning. “Threats could pose a potential risk to aircraft at all altitudes, including during overflight, the arrival and departure phases of flight, and/or airports and aircraft on the ground,” it said. Several international airlines canceled flights out of Venezuela following the FAA warning last month. On Tuesday, Copa Airlines said it would extend its suspension of flights to and from Caracas until January 15, “due to operational conditions at Maiquetía International Airport.” Curaçao is part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Dutch Safety Board said it was aware of the incident in Curaçao’s airspace.

As Russia approaches a grim milestone, Putin projects

Russia: Approaching a grim milestone: by mid-January, President Vladimir Putin’s “special military operation” in Ukraine will have dragged on longer than the war on the Eastern Front that began with the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and ended with the fall of Berlin in May 1945. Putin is famously obsessed with World War II and official veneration of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany is part of the ideological glue that holds together the Russian state. Putin’s Russia has even seen the rehabilitation of Josef Stalin, the Communist dictator who presided over a ruthless purge in the 1930s before leading his country in what is known in Russia as the Great Patriotic War. But nearly four years after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a decisive victory over Kyiv eludes the Kremlin leader: Russia controls about 20% of Ukrainian territory, the war is estimated to have cost Moscow more than a million casualties, and in perhaps the biggest affront to Putin’s war aims, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky remains in power. But as the year comes to an end, Putin is projecting confidence that time is on his side and that winning is inevitable. Ahead of a summit with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December, Putin gave an interview with India Today where he said Russia would “liberate Donbas and Novorossiya in any case – by military or other means,” doubling down on his demand to acquire all the regions of Ukraine that Russia claims, including those that his troops have not managed to take by force. And that bloody-mindedness seems to be a bargaining strategy. Putin is surely aware that US President Donald Trump is determined to reach a deal on Ukraine and the Russian leader has done everything in his power to extract the maximum gain from Washington’s eagerness to end the conflict. In his year-end press conference, the Russian president said his country was ready and willing “to finish the conflict by peaceful means” – but not without boasting that his forces were “advancing across the whole of the front line.” Putin’s reasons for projecting swagger are clear. For starters, the



Kremlin leader has been able to watch as a once-unified Western front supporting Kyiv showed serious fractures after Trump took office in January. In February, US Vice President JD Vance stunned European leaders at the Munich Security Conference with a speech excoriating Washington’s transatlantic allies. That spectacle was followed by a very public dressing-down of Zelensky by Trump and Vance in the Oval Office. A few months later, another public-relations coup for the Kremlin followed with the summit meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, between Putin and Trump. While the summit fell short of yielding a thaw in US-Russian relations, it was more than a photo opportunity for Putin: Budapest fell through and the Trump administration slapped sanctions on Russia’s two largest oil companies. The US president, who often has words of praise for Putin, expressed frustration with his Russian counterpart. Putin’s reasons for projecting swagger are clear. For starters, the Kremlin leader has been able to watch as a once-unified Western front supporting Kyiv showed serious fractures after Trump took of-

fice in January. In February, US Vice President JD Vance stunned European leaders at the Munich Security Conference with a speech excoriating Washington’s transatlantic allies. That spectacle was followed by a very public dressing-down of Zelensky by Trump and Vance in the Oval Office. A few months later, another public-relations coup for the Kremlin followed with the summit meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, between Putin and Trump. While the summit fell short of yielding a thaw in US-Russian relations, it was more than a photo opportunity for Putin: The Russian president was able to play for more time in his relentless war of attrition against Ukraine. But Putin’s apparent reluctance to engage more seriously in peace efforts after Anchorage did eventually test Trump’s patience. An invitation to a second US-Russian bilateral summit in Budapest fell through and the Trump administration slapped sanctions on Russia’s two largest oil companies. The US president, who often has words of praise for Putin, expressed frustration with his Russian counterpart.

Eating takeout food too often may increase cardiovascular disease risk

A new study, published in Food Science & NutritionTrusted Source, finds a correlation between the amount of takeout food a person consumes and their likelihood of developing chronic low-level inflammation, a key driver of cardiovascular pathology. Deaths from cardiovascular disease and the consumption of takeout foods are both on the rise, and while that does not prove a causal relationship, the study explores whether there is a connection between the two.The study tracked degrees of systemic inflammation according to the Dietary Inflammatory Index (DII), a scale that quantifies the risk of inflammation related to the intake of specific dietary substances.The authors analyzed a decade of cross-sectional data from 8,556 participants in the 2009 to 2018 U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).Participants in the survey were interviewed in their homes, and also visited a mobile examination center, where they recalled their food intake, received cardiometabolic health assessments, and had blood collected.This analysis sought to identify relationships between participants’ consumption of takeout food, their DII scores, and their assessed cardiometabolic risk. There were three major takeaways from the analysis:higher takeout food consumption aligned with higher adjusted DII

scores — higher DII scores were also associated with increased mortality a higher level of takeout food consumption corresponded to an unfavorable cardiometabolic profile consisting of lower HDL, as well as higher triglycerides, fasting glucose, serum insulin, and insulin resistance with a higher level of takeout food consumption, there was a trend toward higher mortality rates, though no statistically significant association was observed between takeout food by itself and all-cause or heart disease mortality. Takeout food varies widely in quality. Dinner carried out from a high-quality restaurant is likely to be nutritionally more sound than a meal grabbed from a fast-food emporium. That having been said, much takeout food contains ingredients that are not necessarily heart-healthy, as Jayne Morgan, MD, cardiologist and Vice President of Medical Affairs for Hello Heart, who was not involved in the study, explained: “Takeout food raises the cardiovascular risk not because of one ingredient, but because of a predictable combination of nutrients, additives, and preparation methods that adversely affect blood pressure, lipids, insulin sensitivity, inflammation, and endothelial function.”“This includes,” she continued, “excess sodium that increases blood volume and arterial stiffness, and unhealthy fats usually

saturated fats or trans fats, that increase dyslipidemia and atherosclerosis.Even full-service eateries may be problematic, Morgan said. “Restaurants often reuse oils leading to oxidized fats that directly damage arteries and accelerate plaque formation,” along with refined carbohydrates and added sugars leading to insulin resistance. “Spikes in glucose lead to insulin resistance, which then in turn triggers high triglycerides, low HDL, and increased visceral fat and inflammatory markers. Then, finally,” Morgan listed, “ultra-processed ingredients that also lead to chronic inflammation. Emulsifiers, preservatives, artificial flavor enhancers, disruption of the gut microbiome, and low-fiber content.”Takeout food also frequently involves oversized portion sizes that contribute to weight gain and blood pressure increases. “Technology is the single biggest driver of the Dietary Inflammatory Index,” said Morgan.With people connected and expected to be interacting at any waking moment, “It is that very reliance and expectation of progress and speed — as well as the simplification of many activities that previously required physical labor and time — that has created a need to cut corners in other areas,” she said.“Preparing and cooking food takes time and includes the shopping process for the appropriate ingredients,” Morgan pointed out.“The limit of the time factor,”

she asserted, “is a primary driver of the proliferation of dependence and normalization of food delivery services and readily available food without much discernment.” When a schedule offers no other practical choice than resorting to takeout food, said Routhenstein, there are still things one can do to minimize the cardiovascular risk. “Choosing grilled instead of fried items, adding vegetables or salads instead of fries, opting for smaller portions of refined starch, and swapping sugary drinks for water or unsweetened beverages can help reduce some of the metabolic strain,” Routhenstein recommended.Takeout meals can also be augmented, she said, with “more anti-inflammatory, heart healthy foods such as leafy greens, colorful fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, whole grains, and omega-3 rich fish [that] can further support cardiovascular health.” “Well-studied cardioprotective approaches such as the Mediterranean, DASH, and plant-forward portfolio-style patterns can help people move away from a takeout-heavy menu without requiring a complete lifestyle overhaul,” said Routhenstein. “Although the DASH diet is widely recommended, my preference is for the Mediterranean diet,” noted Morgan.“Home-cooked meals generally have more unsaturated fats, more whole grain carbohydrates, with higher fiber content and



improved portion control,” she added.”Furthermore, Morgan said, “home cooked meals generally contain only about 25% of the salt content of take-out foods and a greater percentage of potassium. In fact, this sodium-potassium imbalance in takeout foods is one of the strongest drivers of blood pressure variability.”“Importantly,” Routhenstein concluded, “[home-cooked menus] can be adapted to real life by simplifying meals, using convenient staples like frozen produce or canned beans and fish, and even balancing takeout choices more thoughtfully rather than eliminating them.”

Lucy Hale’s Polka Dot Dressy Chic Fit Is Supposed To Bring In Luck This New Year

Did you know that wearing clothes with polka dots on New Year’s Day is thought to be lucky?And as this print is having a renewed resurgence this year, with celebrities like Kendall Jenner, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Demi Lovato and more flaunting this style. Lucy Hale also joined the bandwagon and opted to style this fun, industrial revolution pattern. In the Philippines, wearing polka dots on New Year’s Eve is a cherished superstition symbolising prosperity and wealth. The round dots mimic coins, inviting financial abundance into the coming year. Paired with round fruits or jingling coins in pockets, this fun tradition sets an optimistic tone for fortune. The 36-year-old styled a vibrant blue polka dot shirt with a pair of high-waisted denims. She added sex appeal by opting to keep the shirt undone till her midriff and tucking it into her jeans. The actor, who is best known for her role in Pretty Little Liars, layered dainty gold chains of varying lengths, which had pops of blue and white in them. She also wore a ring on each of her fingers and added delicate gold hand chains to both her hands for a maximalist appeal. She also added a few bracelets for good measure, and the actor even wore a pair of dangling gold earrings with pearls and crystals.Lucy Hale elevated this otherwise simple outfit with her accessories, making



it a great look for those who want to wear it for a New Year’s Eve party but don’t want to go OTT.Today, polka dots are timeless, feminine sta-

one can trace their fashion roots to the mid-19th century, born from the Industrial Revolution’s textile advances. Before sewing machines were invented, handcrafting uniform

the irregular spots were linked to plague or uncleanness.But by

the 1840s, the polka dance craze from Bohemia swept Europe and America, inspiring “polka” merchandise. The term “polka dot” was first printed in 1857’s Godey’s Lady’s Book, describing embroidered scarves. By the 1920s, Norma Smallwood’s polka-dot Miss America swimsuit (1926) and Minnie Mouse’s iconic dress (1928) boosted popularity. With celebrities like Marilyn Monroe, Princess Diana, Prince, and Brian Hyland’s “Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini” (1960) alluding to the polka dots, the polka dot became iconic. Actors Lucy Hale and Ian Harding will soon be sharing the screen in a new holiday movie. This reunion comes more than eight years after Pretty Little Liars ended. The two actors played love interests on all seven seasons of the show, which aired from 2010 to 2017. The former co-stars will star together in the new holiday rom-com The Twelve Dates of Christmas.The film is directed by David Lipper. The Twelve Dates of Christmas “follows Christina Walker (Hale), a successful shop owner who has devoted her energy to her career at the expense of her dating life. As she finds herself single while watching her younger siblings marry ahead of her, Christina makes a promise to herself: to go on 12 dates in the 12 weeks leading up to Christmas in hopes of finding ‘Mr. Right’. Along the way, she navigates the often complicated and unpredictable world of online dating, discovering unexpected connections, personal growth, and the true meaning of the season,” according to Deadline.

New Launches In Fashion, Beauty And Lifestyle For The Season

As winter settles in, the season brings with it a renewed appetite for warmth, texture, and little luxuries that elevate everyday life. From the richest colour palettes in fashion to deeply nourishing skincare, festive-ready beauty statements, and thoughtfully designed lifestyle essentials, this is the time of year when creativity meets comfort. Designers embrace suede, tweed, velour, jewel tones, and sculptural silhouettes, while beauty formulations lean into collagen-boosting, hydrating and restorative ingredients to help skin transition seamlessly through the colder months. Footwear trends continue to favour craftsmanship with purpose, lightweight boots, structured soles, and earthy tones built for movement. Meanwhile, holiday collections across categories spotlight gifting, indulgence, and moments of self-care. Whether you’re refreshing your wardrobe, updating your winter grooming staples or hunting for festive treats, the season’s newest launches offer a blend of style, innovation and seasonal charm. A winter-ready high-top in supple suede, the Bacu blends structure, texture and colourblocking in four hues, beige, burgundy, green and red. The lace-up plus rip-tape fastening ensures comfort, while the sculpted sole adds quiet authority. Pairs effortlessly with denim, knits or travel layers. Powered by Marine

Collagen and Pomegranate Extract, this cream lifts, plumps and replenishes moisture for firmer, bouncier winter skin. It enhances elasticity, reduces fine lines and brings a hydrated glow. A festive blend of shimmer and softness across lingerie, satin sleepwear and gifting favourites. Expect jewel tones, pearlescent neutrals, romantic blush shades and luxe details like lace trims, crystal accents and velour textures. Available in sizes XS–XXL and 32A–44D at stores and online. A science-led, lightweight water-gel serum that accelerates the skin’s natural renewal cycle. Offers visible hydration in week one, improved elasticity by week four and supports stressed, postpartum or sensitive skin.A refined lineup of full-sleeve polos, crewneck tees, cotton canvas jackets, track pants and denim jackets. Built for layering and comfort, the range blends warmth with an easy, modern aesthetic. Seasonal delights include Vanilla Almond Yule Log, Chocolate Hazelnut Yule Log, Strawberry Tart, Fondant Pistachio Cake, and the Plaisir Sucré Croissant, adding a touch of Parisian indulgence to holiday gifting. A contemporary take on classic tweed, designed across mini, shoulder and crossbody silhouettes. Multi-tonal yarns, chain details and clean flap closures offer quiet luxury for day-to-night styling and gifting.



ENTERTAINMENT

In the Sandese Aate Hai remake, Anu Malik anticipates receiving credit with Javed Akhtar

Mumbai: Earlier this week, the producers of Border 2 released a preview for Ghar Kab Aaoge, a redux of the classic song Sandese Aate Hain from Border. Mithoon remade the song and added words from Manoj Muntashir. Javed Akhtar wrote the original song, while Anu Malik scored it. According to the composer, he hopes his name will appear in the credits for the new version as well. Anu Malik spoke Ghar Kab Aaoge in an interview. "I think the music has been replicated. I'm not involved with it. Since I wrote the song, I'm confident they will give it my name. They ought should since people are aware of our participation and are unable to avoid it. Without Sandese Aate Hai, Border 2 cannot be produced. They will need to include our name because Anu Malik and Javed Akhtar are also up there (in their contributions). With Sonu Nigam returning and Arijit Singh joining the mix, the composer has great expectations for the reproduction. Sonu is an amazing singer, therefore I think it will be fantastic. He is among the greatest vocalists of our time, and Arijit is a gifted vocalist. The song will be by Anu Malik, but the combination of Arijit and Sonu will be wonderful.

He remarked, "You can't get away from Anu Malik and Javed Sahab; the song he wrote is so great." Vishal Mishra and Diljit Dosanjh both contribute their voices to the song. Sonu and Roopkumar Rathod sang Sandese Aate Hai, which became famous for its music, lyrics, and visuals. Anu Malik stated, "I gave it all that I had for my love for my country when I was offered a chance to do this," in reference to the original song. I don't say this because I'm Indian or because I think other nations are



inferior, but I do think that India is the best country in the world. Sunny Deol, Jackie Shroff, Suniel Shetty, and Akshaye Khanna led the film Border, which was directed by JP Dutta. Sunny, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, and Ahan Shetty are among the ensemble cast members of Anurag Singh's latest film. On January 23, 2026, Border 2, which is produced by T-Series and JP Dutta's J P Films, will be released in theaters.

China is enraged over Salman Khan's "Battle of Galwan" A Retrospective of the 2020 Conflict

Mumbai: Five years ago, Indian and Chinese troops engaged in a devastating battle at Galwan, which is still a painful memory. For example, when a film has been produced about it. What it referred to as "misrepresentation of facts" has drawn strong criticism from China. "Artistic license" is India's response. Behind the artistic freedom, however, are terrifying facts: a fierce battle in the dark, in below-freezing temperatures, involving batons and nailed clubs, resulted in numerous deaths—20 from India and four from China, though Indian army sources have suggested that the true number of Chinese casualties is probably higher. India and China's bilateral ties are still not entirely normal as a result of the aftermath. It all began on June 15, 2020, when a small group of Indian soldiers went to the Galwan river valley, which is 15,000 feet above sea level on the Karakoram mountain in Ladakh, close to the Line of Actual Control, to remove a Chinese tent. Following negotiations on June 6, China had agreed to remove the tent and establish a buffer zone. However, when the Chinese forces attacked Indian Colonel BL Santosh Babu, a struggle broke out. The battle intensified as both sides called in reinforcements. About forty Chinese soldiers had died by the time it was over, which was about six hours later. Twenty bravehearts were lost by India. A number of Chinese and Indian soldiers were killed by cold after falling into the Galwan River. However, China reported that only four troops had perished, and just one of them—Junior Sergeant Wang Zhuoran—had drowned. No precise figure was ever determined. Over two years later, "at least 38 PLA (People's Liberation Army) troops along with Wang were washed away and drowned that night... of whom only Wang was declared among the four officially dead soldiers," according to an Australian investigative



journal called "The Klaxon." It claimed that during the initial moments of the battle, the Chinese soldiers had fallen into the river while trying to cross it, citing "several Weibo users" as its sources. After then, there was a harsh confrontation, conflicting declarations from China, and years of cold that had just now begun to warm. India said that "an attempt by the Chinese side to unilaterally change the status quo" on the border was the cause of the conflict. Beijing blamed the Indian soldiers. The amount of fatalities was also controversial. Beijing first denied any casualties, but New Delhi formally admitted that it had lost 20 soldiers. Later, it claimed it lost just four soldiers.

Isiah Whitlock Jr., a Wire actor, passes away in New York at age 71



Mumbai: Actor Isiah Whitlock Jr., who starred in five films with director Spike Lee and frequently made noteworthy appearances on the HBO programs The Wire and Veep, passed away on Tuesday. He was seventy-one. The Associated Press was informed by Whitlock's manager, Brian Liebman, that the actor passed away in New York following a brief illness. Whitlock appeared in 25 episodes over the course of The Wire's five seasons as the blatantly dishonest State Senator Clay Davis. Fan-favorite character Davis was well-known for his vulgar catchphrase, "shee-it," which Whitlock would utter during triumphant and direct times. When his detective character finds a narcotics stash concealed in a sofa in his first movie with

Lee, 25th Hour (2002), the actor used the word for the first time. "It's a big, big, big loss," Lee told the AP over the phone on Tuesday night. "I'm going to miss him for the rest of my life." Whitlock later starred in four more Lee movies: She Hate Me (2004), Red Hook Summer (2012), Chi-Raq (2015), BlackKlansman (2018), and Da 5 Bloods (2020). "We vibed over all those years," Lee remarked. "We clicked from the jump." Lee recounted the last time he saw Whitlock, which was when he and his daughter, Satchel, sat with Whitlock at a screening of Kiss of the Spider Woman earlier this year. He said he had particularly happy recollections of the long time he spent with Whitlock when filming Da 5 Bloods on location in Thailand.

Fans are astounded by Nayanthara's initial appearance as Ganga from Yash's Toxic

Mumbai: The first glimpse of actor Nayanthara from the movie A Fairytale for Grown-Ups has been released. The actress will appear in the next movie starring Yash as Ganga. The new image, which debuted on Wednesday, features Nayanthara in a powerful and somber avatar. She is depicted in the ad brandishing a rifle while standing at what looks to be a big casino's entrance. Her character as a strong, courageous lady in the movie is hinted to in the picture. A fan wrote, "Lady Superstar Nayanthara As Ganga," following the poster's release. It couldn't get much better or bigger." Yash plays the main character in Geetu Mohandas' film Toxic. On March 19, 2026, the movie will open in theaters alongside Dhurandhar 2, starring Ranveer Singh. Mohandas shared her ideas about casting Nayanthara, stating that she intended to give the actor a whole new per-



spective. "We all know Nayan as a celebrated star with a commanding screen presence and a remarkable career spanning two decades, but in Toxic, audiences will witness a talent that had been quietly waiting to explode," she said in a release. I wanted to exhibit Nayan in a way that has never been done before. But as the shoot went on, I noticed how much her personality reflected the character's essence." Other cast members' first looks have already been revealed in the movie. Huma Qureshi was identified as Elizabeth, and Kiara Advani was previously introduced as Nadia. Yash and Geetu Mohandas wrote the screenplay, and Venkat K. Narayana and Yash produced it under the names Monster Mind Creations and KVN Productions. Ujwal Kulkarni is the editor, Ravi Basurur is the music composer, and Rajeev Ravi is the cinematographer.

Deepika Padukone crosses a Backstreet Boys performance off her bucket list

Mumbai: The Backstreet Boys will play at the Sphere at The Venetian Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada, US, to round off the year. Together with her friend Sneha Ramachander, Deepika Padukone crossed attending their concert off her bucket list. Sneha Ramachander shared a detailed account of the event on Instagram. It was dubbed a "millennial" moment by fans. On Wednesday, Deepika's friend Sneha shared a photo of them at the Backstreet Boys performance on her Instagram stories. She wrote, "We did it!" after posting it. We've crossed the big one off our bucket list. Deepika and Sneha were seen in the photo hugging each other tightly and using their other hand to make a V. They can see the stage and the enormous concert throng in the background. When fans viewed the photo, they were ecstatic to see Deepika having a good time. "Every now and

then, Deepu reminds us of how millennial she is, love that for her," a Redditor commented. "As a member of Generation Z, I also adore Backstreet Boys. As one fan said, "They transcend generations." "Oh the face card," an admirer wrote in adoration of Deepika. Never f**king decline. The fact that she was at the concert with "her childhood bestie Sneha" was even praised by a Redditor. Fans recently saw Deepika and her husband, actor Ranveer Singh, vacationing with their family in New York. The couple looks to be spending the New Year in the United States with their loved ones. Ranveer is enjoying the success of Aditya Dhar's Dhurandhar, which has made over ₹1100 crore globally. Deepika will soon costar with Shah Rukh Khan in Siddharth Anand's film King. Abhishek Bachchan, Rani Mukerji, Suhana Khan, and other actors are featured in the movie.

As 2025 draws to a close, Namrata Shirodkar considers special times spent with Priyanka Chopra

Mumbai: On December 31, former model and actor Namrata Shirodkar used social media to consider the previous year. To reminisce over wonderful times spent with her husband Mahesh Babu, children Sitara and Gautam Ghattamaneni, actor Priyanka Chopra, and others, she shared a reel of previously unseen photos. Namrata posted a reel to Instagram and said, "The year that was..." using red heart emojis. She wrote on the Reel, "And with that... the 2025 season comes to an end." Many memories from family trips in Sri Lanka and other locations are included in the video. Along with glimpses of them celebrating other celebrations together, the Reel also includes images of the Ganapati puja at home. In one photo, Namrata and her sister Shilpa Shirodkar are seen posing for a selfie. She also shared a photo of herself with Miheeka Bajaj, the wife of Rana Daggubati. In some photos, Mahesh gives Sitara a tender kiss on the head while holding her close. She also shared moments from their recent Christmas get-togethers with close pals. Namrata also shared amusing photos of herself and Priyanka posing for the camera. She also included a photo in remembrance of their recently deceased pet dog, Nobu. Mahesh, Namrata, Sitara, and Gautam were seen at the

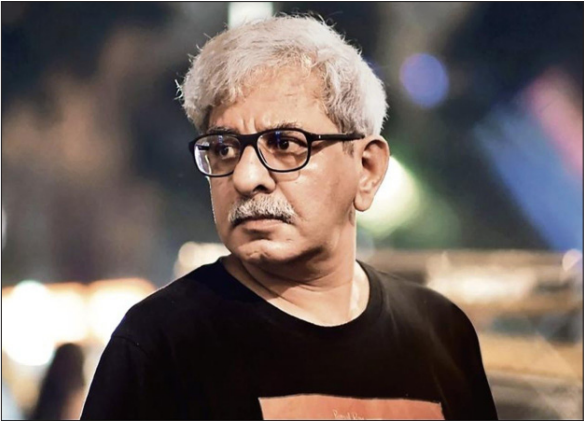


Hyderabad airport on Monday as they departed the city for a leisurely holiday and to celebrate the start of the new year. Sitara even adopted Mahesh's signature look, donning trousers and a T-shirt along with a hat and sunglasses. Early in 2025, Mahesh started filming Varanasi, directed by SS Rajamouli, following Trivikram Srinivas' 2024 feature Guntur

Kaaram. Mahesh started practicing for the movie in 2024, and it debuted with a silent puja in January of this year. The announcement was formally announced in November during a lavish event at Hyderabad's Ramoji Film City. He costars with Priyanka Chopra and Prithviraj Sukumaran in the Sankranthi 2027 film.

Sriram Raghavan Explains Why He Would Never Make a Film Like Dhurandhar

Mumbai: Sriram Raghavan has made it apparent that the popular spy thriller Dhurandhar is much outside of his own creative comfort zone, even as Aditya Dhar's film continues its successful run at the box office. Prior to the premiere of his upcoming movie, Ikki, Raghavan gave an explanation of why, despite its skillful execution, the Ranveer Singh film embodies a cinematic language he would not personally embrace. Sriram emphasized that it is more about mindset than quality when comparing Dhurandhar to the spy movies he and his brother Shridhar Raghavan have previously produced. "It's not our style of movie, but it's a well-made movie with amazing performances. We have to acknowledge that we live in different eras. The older James Bond movies with Roger Moore and Sean Connery were entertaining. Bond movies later became more somber. One film is Dhurandhar. It is performing



remarkably well, as it ought to. However, there are other formats available. "It will be the silliest thing to do if I start following it," he remarked. Raghavan was keen to emphasize his respect for Aditya Dhar even as he distanced himself from the director's aesthetic decisions. Having both won National Awards in the same year—Raghavan for Andhadhun and Dhar for Uri: The Surgical Strike—the two filmmakers share a noteworthy professional achievement. In retrospect, Raghavan re-

marked, "I had Andhadhun and Aditya shared the National Award platform when he made Uri. I enjoy seeing his films, but I wouldn't make them because of his unique sense and skill." His next project, Ikki, a biographical war play based on the life of India's youngest Param Vir Chakra recipient, Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, is likewise influenced by this ideology. Agastya Nanda plays the 21-year-old military hero in the film, while Dharmendra plays his father.

The Year That Millennial Stars Take Over the Big Screen

Mumbai: Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan's espionage characters Tiger and Pathaan had a spectacular exchange in 2023's Pathaan that was an overt jab at those who thought the Khan-dom period was over. The top spies (stars), who were old, bruised, and had shattered ribs, likewise appeared to consider giving up on everything before clapping back at the new generation. Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan were above all these silly games, so no names were taken—not because it would create a commotion. To begin with, they were getting close to sixty at the time. Aamir Khan, the third member of the Khan troika, and the Karan Arjun combo are both sixty years old today. The three Khans have made the decision to go all out in the upcoming year and decade at the end of 2025, just as Pathaan's post-credit scene concludes. "Bhai, humein hee karna padega. Shah Rukh Khan's Pathaan tells Salman Khan's Tiger, "Desh ka sawaal hai, bachhon pe nahin chhod sakte." Despite the recent release of "Dhurandhar," Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, and Aamir Khan take control of Bollywood in 2026. Salman Khan's films were review-proof long ago, and he was no longer just an actor. According to his own comments from Kick, "dil mein aate hain, samajh mein nahin," he is a phenomenon. The actor, who turned 60 on December 27, had a difficult year in 2025. Even the most devoted bhai fans weren't impressed by his Sikandar, which failed miserably at the movie office. With a reported budget of Rs 200 crore, the film made Rs 176 crore, making it one of the biggest grossing Hindi films of the year despite its failure. No year in his 37 years as an actor has seen a movie without Salman Khan, regardless of the duration of the part.

Officer on the Chamoli train collision: “It has nothing to do with Indian Railways”

New Delhi, Dec 31: Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay, a Northern Railway officer, confirmed that the incident has nothing to do with Indian Railways in response to claims that linked Indian Railway trains to the Chamoli train collision. The Chief Public Relations Officer added that the tunnel project team had included these trains in a local transportation plan. “It is explained that the local trolley transit arrangement in the Chamoli region of Uttarakhand caused an incident during the construction of a hydro power plant and tunnel. Indian Railways is unrelated to this incident. Indian Railway trains are not the ones reported in the news. The Tunnel Project team made this local transit arrangement, according to Northern Railway Chief Public Relations Officer



Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay. Earlier on Tuesday night, two loco trains collided at the THDC Vishnugad-Pipalkoti Hydroelectric Project construction site in Pipalkoti, Uttarakhand’s Chamoli district. Gaurav Kumar, the Chamoli District Magistrate, claims that 109 persons were on board when the trains crashed at approximately 9:30 p.m. Approximately sixty of them were hurt in the collision. 42 individuals have been admitted to the district hospital, according to the District Magistrate. “Last night at approximately 9:30 p.m., two loco trains running in the tunnel collided during the shift change. Of the 109 passengers aboard the trains, 60 were hurt, 42 were sent to the district hospital, and 17 were admitted to the Vivekananda Hospital in Pipalkoti, according to Kumar. Pushkar Singh Dhami, the chief minister of Uttarakhand, received a thorough update on the situation and gave officials instructions to make sure the injured receive appropriate medical attention and are moved to higher medical facilities if necessary. Regarding the accident that happened at the TBM site of the under-construction THDC Vishnugad-Pipalkoti Hydroelectric Project in Pipalkoti, Chamoli district, I am in continuous communication with the Chamoli District Magistrate. All injured people have been instructed to receive better medical care and to be referred to higher medical facilities when necessary. “I ask God to grant all injured workers a speedy recovery,” CM Dhami remarked.

India women defeat Sri Lanka 5-0 in the T20I series, with Deepti Sharma setting a world record

New Delhi: In the fifth Twenty20 International, India defeated Sri Lanka by 15 runs to complete a 5-0 whitewash in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. Bowlers produced a flawless effort after captain Harmanpreet Kaur led the way with a doughy 68. At a crucial point in the match when India was struggling at 77 for five, Harmanpreet scored her maiden fifty of the series with a 43-ball knock that put the hosts at 175 for five. Imesha Dulani (50) and opener Hasini Perera (65) answered with half-centuries, but Sri Lanka was unable to find the last flourish and finished at 160 for seven. Thus, India concluded a remarkable year of winning the World Cup on a positive note. Sri Lanka answered with a second-wicket partnership of 79 runs between Perera and Dulani, which kept them in the hunt despite losing their captain Chamari Athapaththu (2) early in the chase.

Although Perera and Dulani batted with conviction to consistently find boundaries and rotate the strike effectively, Sri Lanka was still marginally behind the asking rate due to their inability to clear the ropes during their 56-ball partnership. Perera held one end firmly with her 42-ball effort and Sri Lanka No. 3 Dulani hit eight fours in her 39-ball innings, but a mistake in the shape of wickets in cluster caused the necessary run rate to rise

above 13 per over. Indian spinners Deepti Sharma (1/28) and Vaishnavi Sharma (1/33) bowled suffocating spells in the second half, which prevented Sri Lanka from producing the explosive finish they required. Deepti took advantage of India’s chance when Amanjot Kaur (1/17) removed Dulani in the 12th over. With her 152nd dismissal in 134 matches at 18.62, Deepti trapped Nilakshika Silva leg before in the 14th over to surpass Australia’s Megan Schutt (151 wickets in 123 matches at 16.57) as the top wicket-taker in women’s Twenty20 Internationals. The Islanders were shut out when Perera fell in the seventeenth over. Earlier, India reached a competitive 175 for seven thanks to a determined effort from captain Harmanpreet Kaur (68) and a late attack from Arundhati Reddy (27 not out). After ten overs, India was struggling at 77 for five, but Harmanpreet stood firm with her series’ first significant knock. Later, Arundhati made a crucial 11-ball 27 not out to help the hosts surpass the 150-mark by hitting four fours and a six. Harmanpreet sparkled with some strong knocks on both sides of the wicket in her 43-ball innings, hitting nine fours and a six. Her 61-run sixth wicket partnership with Amanjot Kaur (21) was equally significant. Harmanpreet lost partners for the most of her



knock, which also hurt India’s chances of scoring a higher total. However, alongside Amanjot, the Indian captain made sure her bowlers had a total to defend. Harmanpreet also skillfully pierced the field on the off-side for a couple of boundaries, making good use of the long handle. After vice captain Smriti Mandhana was rested for the game, India’s fresh opening duo of rookies G Kamalini and Shafali Verma fell short. Shafali (5), who had just hit three straight fifty, tried to attack right away but was caught at long-on by Imesha Dulani off Nimasha Meepage in the second over. After hitting a few fours in her first game, Kamalini (12) was stuck in front after failing to

connect on a sweep off Kavisha Dilhari (2/11). A DRS appeal to reverse the ruling was unsuccessful. India looked to Harleen Deol (13) and Harmanpreet for a pairing.

Harleen, however, opted for a massive heave across the line off Rashmika Sewwandi after receiving one lifeline through a dropped catch, only to get an inside edge onto her stumps. India’s decline continued as Athapaththu (2/21) claimed the fourth wicket of the innings, catching the dangerous Richa Ghosh (5) behind to put them in peril at 64 for four. Soon after, Deepti Sharma (7) was also dismissed by the Lankan skipper, leaving India at 77 for five.

With a commanding 4-1 victory over Villa, Arsenal will finish the season

New Delhi: With all of their goals coming in the second half, Arsenal defeated Aston Villa 4-1 at home to secure the top spot in the Premier League at the end of the season. The depth of Arsenal’s bench this season was demonstrated by the fourth goal, which was scored by substitute Gabriel Jesus one minute after he entered the game. At the final whistle, coach Mikel Arteta joyfully gave his assistants high fives. Arsenal’s victory put them six points ahead of third-place Villa and five points ahead of Manchester City, who play at Sunderland on New Year’s Day. It’s a lovely evening. They are a formidable opponent, therefore that was a really difficult game, as we anticipated,” Arteta told broadcaster Sky Sports. “We really turned things up and were

efficient in everything we did, and the way we started the second half was amazing.” Arteta is under pressure to succeed because Arsenal hasn’t won the Premier League since 2004. “We know what we want in 2026,” Arteta declared. Later, Villa manager Unai Emery justified his refusal to shake Arteta’s hand at the conclusion of the match by claiming that it was “cold” at the Emirates. The former Arsenal manager told Sky Sports, “I always go to the opposition coach, shake hands, and go inside.” “It was cold, and I can’t wait if he doesn’t follow the same rule.” In other news, Newcastle defeated lowly Burnley 3-1, Chelsea drew 2-2 at home against Bournemouth, and Manchester United was held 1-1 at home against Wolverhampton.



Magnus Carlsen wins his 20th world title in Doha



New Delhi: Days after winning the somewhat longer “rapid” version, Norway’s Magnus Carlsen, the world’s best chess player, won the World Blitz Championship in Doha on Tuesday, earning his 20th world title. After losing the first game, Carlsen, 35, defeated Nodirbek Abdusattorov, 21, of Uzbekistan, winning the fourth and final match with black. Blitz games begin with three minutes for each player, plus an extra two seconds for each move. After losing three of the 19 qualifying games, Carlsen finished third in the rankings and nearly missed the semi-finals. In the semifinals, he defeated American Fabiano

Caruana to face 2021 Rapid World Champion Abdusattorov. Carlsen won the title of rapid world champion on Sunday. The competition is held without a final phase, and competitors have 15 minutes and 10 seconds added to each move. Carlsen finished first in the regular standings. The Nordic grandmaster now holds nine blitz titles: five in the most famous lengthier format, which consists of more than ten games between the world champion and a challenger, and six in quick. In 2023, Carlsen gave up his long-format title due to a lack of drive. Dommaraju Gukesh of India currently holds it. In order to prepare for his comeback, he and the International Chess Federation (FIDE) supported a new world championship format in October. One combined champion for each of the three disciplines—fast classic, rapid, and blitz—will be chosen from the four events that make up the new “Total Chess World Championship Tour” each year. The competition’s first full season is scheduled for 2027, but a pilot version will be tested in the fall of the following year.

Before the new year, delivery workers at Swiggy, Zomato, and Amazon go on a statewide strike

New Delhi, Dec 31: Just one day before the New Year, on Wednesday, December 31, gig and platform workers nationwide went on strike. According to Shaik Salauddin, President of the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU), these workers, who work for firms like Swiggy, Zomato, Zepto, and Amazon, have banded together to demand their rights through the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT). Workers participating in the nationwide strike are calling for adjustments to their wages and working conditions, and the walkout may have an impact on delivery services on well-known applications. The Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU) issued the call for the demonstration. According to Salauddin, the founder and president of the organization, the strike is being organized in reaction to what employees perceive to be discriminatory policies implemented by platform-based businesses. He continued by saying that despite numerous requests, the various issues brought up by employees have not been resolved. It is evident to the public that we have consistently increased our demands of platform firms. We have presented them with five important demands. First, we want the previous payout system to be reinstated. Fair payments were previously paid during holidays like Dussehra, Diwali, and Bakrid. Salauddin was cited as saying, “That system needs to be implemented again on a regular basis.” the reinstatement of the previous compensation structure, which employees



said offered more consistent and open wages than the current one. The 10-minute delivery system was discontinued. Employees complain that this strategy puts their safety on the road at danger, makes them hustle, and creates stress. Deactivating or banning employee accounts: According to Salauddin, IDs are frequently suspended without adequate notice or explanation, leaving employees without a mechanism to contest the decision and suddenly without a source of income. Platform firms’ use of algorithms: The gig workers’ organization claims that these systems have an impact on incentives and total wages, making gig workers’ salaries erratic and

unreliable. The establishment of social security benefits is the last demand. The organization has demanded welfare benefits and insurance coverage, pointing out that despite their increasing employment, gig workers are still not covered by essential social services. Due to the lack of progress on these problems, Salauddin stated that the union has decided to go with a flash strike on December 31. He urged gig and platform workers nationwide to peacefully participate in the demonstration. He went on to say that the strike is intended to make businesses and legislators aware of the pressing issues gig workers face.

In Indore, tainted water caused three deaths and more than 100 hospital admissions

Indore, Dec 31: The mayor of Indore, Madhya Pradesh, acknowledged on Tuesday that three people have died and another 100 have been hospitalized in recent days after becoming unwell purportedly from drinking tainted water. However, a local resident stated that there were five fatalities, four of which were women.



Pushyamitra Bhargava, the mayor of Indore, claimed he was informed that three persons in the Bhagirathpura district had died from diarrhea, but he did not reveal who they were. “We have asked Chief Minister Mohan Yadav to give the grieving family the proper financial support. The mayor stated, “The government is paying for the treatment of every patient.” Following reports of a diarrhea outbreak in the Bhagirathpura district, the

health department inspected 2,703 houses and assessed about 12,000 people, giving 1,146 patients with moderate symptoms immediate primary treatment, according to Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Madhav Prasad Hasani. After consuming tainted water, the patients reported experiencing vomiting, diarrhea, and dehydration, according to Hasani. Although the results of the water sample tests

are still pending, it is likely that drinking water supply lines may have come into contact with drainage water, contaminating the water. He said that the officials would face severe consequences for their carelessness.

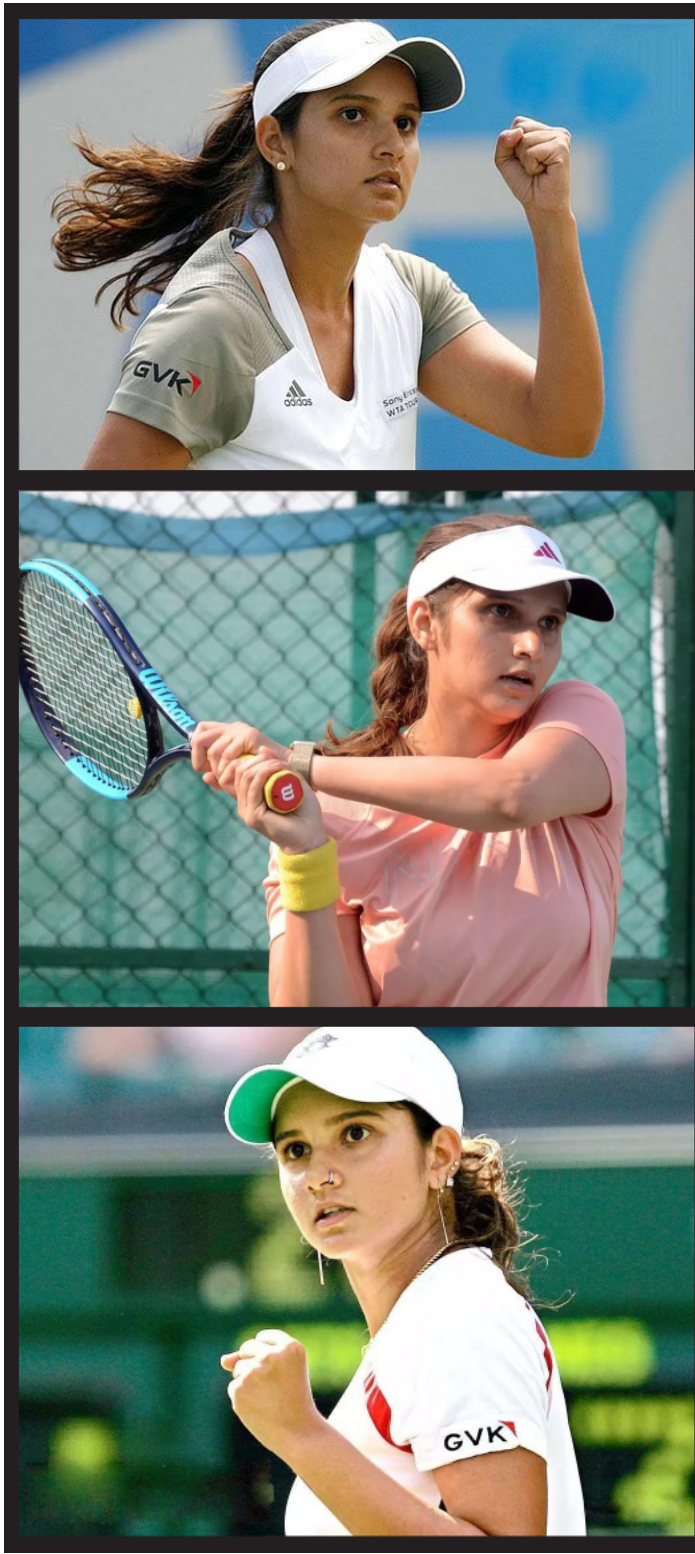
The local councilman claims that on December 25, residents reported that the water had an odd odor and that some individuals might have become sick after drinking it.

BCCI Selectors might make a drastic U-turn on Mohammed Shami World Cup



New Delhi: The 35-year-old fast bowler is once again on the selectors’ radar after months of conjecture regarding his form, fitness, and future. The 2027 ODI World Cup has now become a clear benchmark for his possible comeback. A BCCI source told NDTV that Shami’s domestic performances are being “closely tracked” and that a recall is no longer out of the question. “Mohammed Shami is frequently brought up. He is still relevant. His fitness is the main thing to worry about. He is the kind of bowler who will take wickets. Saying that he is no longer on the selection radar is incorrect. For the New Zealand One-Day series, he appears to be in fine shape. Even though he finished the ICC Champions Trophy in March 2025 as India’s joint-highest wicket-taker with nine scalps, this is a major change in tone for a man who hasn’t played for India since. His most recent Test match was in

the World Test Championship final against Australia in June 2023, although his most recent ODI was against New Zealand in that competition. Shami’s stats have kept the discussion going, which is one of the main reasons his case has refused to go away. In his last six games—three in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and three in the Vijay Hazare Trophy—he has claimed 17 wickets. He took 20 wickets in just four Ranji Trophy games this season, demonstrating that his striking prowess is still intact. His continuing exclusion has also been questioned by former Indian cricket players. Shami’s exclusion from recent ODI selections, especially when senior quicks Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj were rested, shocked Mohammed Kaif in public. Given his track record in high-pressure competitions, Shami’s absence was more noticeable as India experimented with their pace.



Sania Mirza born 15 November 1986) is an Indian former professional tennis player. A former doubles world No. 1, she won six major titles – three in women’s doubles and three in mixed doubles.From 2003 until her retirement from singles in 2013, she was ranked by the Women’s Tennis Association as the No. 1 Indian in singlesThrough-out her career, Mirza has established herself as one of the most known, highest-paid, and influential athletes in India.[8][9][10]In singles, Mirza had wins over Svetlana Kuznetsova, Vera Zvonareva, and Marion Bartoli, as well as former world-number-ones Martina Hingis, Dinara Safina, and Victoria Azarenka. She is the highest-ranked Indian female player ever, peaking at world No. 27 in mid-2007. However, a major wrist injury caused her to shift to doubles. Mirza has achieved a number of firsts for women’s tennis in India, including reaching the one million-US\$ mark in career earnings (currently over US\$7.2 million), winning a singles WTA Tour title, and winning a major title, as well as qualifying for (and eventually winning) the WTA Finals in 2014 in doubles partnering Cara Black, and defending her title the following year partnering Martina Hingis.[11] Mirza retired from professional tennis in February 2023. She is one of only two Indian women to win a WTA Tour title, and the only one to be ranked within the top 100 in singles. Mirza is the third Indian woman in the Open Era (after Nirupama Mankad and Nirupama Sanjeev, and the second in singles after Sanjeev) to contest and win a match at a major, and the first to advance past the second round. In doubles, Mirza won 43 titles and spent 91 weeks as world No. 1.In 2005, Mirza was crowned the Newcomer of the Year by the WTA, and in 2015 she and Martina Hingis were the Doubles Team of the Year, going on to earn a 44-match winning streak, one of the longest in history. Mirza has also won a total of 14 medals (including six golds) at three major multi-sport events, namely the Asian Games, the Commonwealth Games and the Afro-Asian Games.Mirza was named one of the “50 Heroes of Asia” by Time in October 2005.In March 2010, The Economic Times named Mirza in its list of the “33 women who made India proud”.She was appointed as the UN Women’s Goodwill Ambassador for South Asia during the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November 2013.She was named in Time magazine’s 2016 list of the 100 most influential people in the world.

Early life: Sania Mirza was born on 15 November 1986 in Mumbai to Hyderabadī Muslim parents Imran Mirza, a sports journalist,and his wife Naseema, who worked in a printing business. Shortly after her birth, her family moved to Hyderabad where she and younger sister Anam were raised in a Sunni Muslim family. Anam is married to cricketer Mohammad Asaduddin, the son of former India national cricket team captain, Mohammad Azharuddin.She is the distant relative of former cricket captains Ghulam Ahmed of India, and Asif Iqbal of Pakistan.She took up tennis at the age of six. She has been coached by her father and also Roger Anderson.She attended Nasr School in Hyderabad. She later graduated from the St. Mary’s College, Hyderabad. Mirza also received an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from the Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute in Chennai on 11 December 2008.

Tennis career
2001–2003: Success on the ITF Junior Circuit
Mirza began playing tennis at the age of six, turning professional in 2003. She was trained by her father. Mirza won ten singles and thirteen doubles titles as a junior player. She won the 2003 Wimbledon Championships girls’ doubles title, partnering Alisa Kleybanova. She also reached the semifinals of the 2003 US Open girls’ doubles, with Sanaa Bhambri, and the quarterfinals of the 2002 US Open girls’ doubles. On the senior circuit, Mirza started to show early success as she made her debut in April 2001 on the ITF Circuit as a 15-year-old. Her highlights of 2001 include a quarterfinal showing in Pune and a semifinal finish in New Delhi. As the 2002 season began, she turned around a season of early losses to winning three straight titles; her first in her hometown Hyderabad and the other two in Manila, Philippines. Mirza clinched the women’s gold medal in tennis in 2002 National Games of India in Hyderabad at the age of 16 years. In February 2003, Mirza was given a wildcard to play in her first ever WTA Tour event, at the Hyderabad Open, in her hometown. She lost the tough first round encounter to Australia’s Evie



Sania Mirza

Dominikovic in three sets. The following week, at the Qatar Ladies Open, she fell to Czech Olga Blahotová in the first qualifying round. She had a good result representing India on the Fed Cup, winning three straight matches. She helped India win a bronze medal in the mixed doubles event of the 2002 Asian Games in Busan, partnering Leander Paes. In addition, Mirza picked up four gold medals at the 2003 Afro-Asian Games in Hyderabad.
2004–2005: Success in WTA Tour and Grand Slam tournamentsAt her hometown event, the Hyderabad Open, Mirza was a wildcard entrant. She put up a good fight against the fourth seed and eventual champion, Nicole Pratt, in round one, but lost in three sets. She won her first WTA doubles title at the same event, partnering Liezel Huber. She then received a wildcard to compete at Casablanca, Morocco, but suffered a first-round defeat by eventual champion Émilie Loit.On the ITF Circuit, Mirza ended runner-up at the Palm Beach Gardens Challenger where she fell to Sesi Karatantcheva. Mirza won six ITF singles titles in 2004. Going into the 2005 Australian Open, she defeated Cindy Watson and Petra Mandula in the first and second rounds, respectively, to reach the third round where she was beaten in straight sets by eventual champion Serena Williams. In February, Mirza became the first-ever Indian woman to win a WTA Tour title, by winning her hometown event, the Hyderabad Open, defeating ninth-seeded Alona Bondarenko in the final. At Dubai, she upset in round two fourth seed and reigning US Open champion, Svetlana Kuznetsova, to reach the biggest quarterfinal of her career. In the second round of the Wimbledon Championships, she lost to Kuznetsova in a tight three-setter. In August, she reached the third round at the Stanford Classic, falling to Morigami. Mirza reached her second WTA final at the Forest Hills Tennis Classic, falling to Lucie Šafářová. Mirza became the first Indian woman to reach the fourth round of a Grand Slam tournament at the US Open, defeating Mashona Washington, Maria Elena Camerin and Marion Bartoli, before losing to top seed Maria Sharapova, in the round of 16. At the Japan Open, Mirza reached semifinals with wins over Vilmarie Castellvi, Aiko Nakamura and Vera Zvonareva, before being overpowered by Tatiana Golovin.

Sport of athletics

Usain Bolt
Usain St. Leo Bolt (/ˈjuːseɪn/;born 21 August 1986) is a Jamaican retired sprinter who is widely considered to be the greatest sprinter of all time He is an eight-time Olympic gold medalist and the world record holder in the 100 metres, 200 metres, and 4 × 100 metres relay.Bolt is the only sprinter to win Olympic 100 m and 200 m titles at three consecutive Olympics (2008, 2012, and 2016). He also won two 4 × 100 relay gold medals. He gained worldwide fame for his double sprint victory in world record times at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, which made him the first person to hold both records since fully automatic time became mandatory.An eleven-time World Champion, he won consecutive World Championship 100 m, 200 m and 4 × 100 metres relay gold medals from 2009 to 2015, with the exception of a 100 m false start in 2011. He is the most successful male athlete of the World Championships. Bolt is the first athlete to win four World Championship titles in the 200 m and is one of the most successful in the 100 m with three titles, being the first person to run sub-9.7s and sub-9.6s races.
Early years: Usain Bolt was born on 21 August 1986 as Usain St. Leo Bolt to parents Wellesley Bolt (1957–2025)and Jennifer Bolt[10] in Sherwood Content,[18] a small town in Jamaica. Jennifer named her son Usain at the suggestion of her nephew-in-law, who suggested the name as he had a classmate of that name, while Bolt’s middle name, St. Leo, was given to him by his aunt.[19] He has a brother, Sadiki,and a sister, Sherine.His parents ran the local grocery store in the rural area, and Bolt spent his time playing cricket and football in the street with his brother,later saying, “When I was young, I didn’t really think about anything other than sports.”As a child, Bolt attended Waldensia Primary, where he began showing his sprinting potential when he ran in his parish’s annual national primary school meet.By the age of twelve, Bolt had become the school’s fastest runner over the 100 metres distance.Bolt also developed an affection for European football teams Real Madrid and Manchester United.
Early competitions: Representing Jamaica in his first Caribbean regional event, Bolt clocked a personal best time of 48.28 s in the 400 metres in the 2001 CARIFTA Games, winning a silver medal. The 200 m also yielded a silver, as Bolt finished in.He made his first appearance on the world stage at the 2001 IAAF World Youth Championships in Debrecen, Hungary. Running in the 200 m event, he failed to qualify for the finals, but he still set a new personal best of 21.73 .Bolt still did not take athletics or himself too seriously, however, and he took his mischievousness to new heights by hiding in the back of a van when he was supposed to be preparing for the 200 m finals at the CARIFTA Trials. He was detained by the police for his practical joke, and there was an outcry from the local community, which blamed coach McNeil for the incident.

Andreas Thorkildsen
Andreas Thorkildsen (born 1 April 1982) is a retired Norwegian track and field athlete who competed in the javelin throw. He was the Olympic Champion in 2004 and 2008, European Champion in 2006 and 2010, and World Champion in 2009. He is the first male javelin thrower in history to simultaneously be European, World and Olympic Champion. He was also a three-time silver medalist at the World Championships, placing second in 2005, 2007 and 2011. His personal best of 91.59 m, set in 2006, is the Norwegian record.
Personal life: Thorkildsen’s father Tomm Thorkildsen is a former javelin thrower, achieving a personal best throw of 71.64 metres in 1974.His mother Bente (née Amundsen) became national champion in the 100 metres hurdles in 1972, representing Hamar IL.He has one older brother.He took his secondary education at Kristiansand Cathedral School.
Career: Thorkildsen at the GE Money Grand Prix in Helsinki, July 2005Thorkildsen took up javelin throwing at the age of 11, and was coached by his father Tomm until 1999.He established numerous national boys’ records as a teenager. In 1996 he set a national record for the 14 years’ class (53.82 m), in 1998 for the 16 years’ class (61.57 m), in 1999 for the 17 years’ class (72.11 m), and in 2000 a record for the 18 years’ class.In 1999 he finished seventh at the European Junior Championships.In 2000 Thorkildsen took his first medal at the Norwegian championships, finishing in silver medal position behind Ronny Nilsen.[12] His form earned Thorkildsen his first call-up to the Norwegian European Cup team. In October he participated at the World Junior Championships and received a silver medal behind winner Gerhardus Pienaar from South Africa.
2001–2003: In 2001 Thorkildsen moved to Oslo and started competing for the club SK Vidar under coach Åsmund Martinsen,a former javelin thrower who

won the bronze medal at the 1994 Norwegian Championships,and had a career best throw of 68.12 metres.The cooperation proved fruitful as Thorkildsen soon broke the 80 metre barrier, throwing 83.87 metres at Fana stadion in June.This was a world junior record till 2011.Participating in his second European Junior Championships, he won a silver medal behind Aleksandr Ivanov. Both competed at the World Championships in Edmonton, but while Ivanov managed to reach the final, Thorkildsen finished last in the entire competition with only 68.41 metres. When asked to comment on his own throwing he described it as “completely awful”.At the national level Thorkildsen became Norwegian champion for the first time.In August he competed in a discus throw meet at Sognsvann, establishing a personal best of 38.02 metres.He has not competed on national level in other athletic events.In 2002, he recorded a season best of 83.43 metres in June before witnessing his form gradually declining over the next months.At his first European Championships, which were held in August in Munich, he again failed to progress from the qualifying round. With a best throw of 78.36 metres he finished fifteenth overall, 68 centimetres behind Ari Pakarinen who secured the last spot in the final.Although Thorkildsen only managed to take silver at the Norwegian championships behind Pål Arne Fagermes,his result of 83.43 metres



Thorkildsen in 2008

was enough to front the national top list in javelin throw for the first time.Next year he finished eleventh at the 2003 World Championships in Paris, his first major international final. His performance and throw of 77.75 metres was slightly disappointing as he had thrown 79.44 metres in the qualifying round,having travelled to Paris with a personal best of 85.72 metres, established in June in Ventspils.On the lighter side he took his second national title, consolidating his spot as Norway’s leading javelin thrower.
Claudia Testoni
Claudia Testoni (19 December 1915 – 17 July 1998), was an Italian hurdler, sprinter and long jumper. She was European champion, in 1938, on 80 metres hurdles. She was born in Bologna and died in Cagliari.
Biography: Testoni is one of the 38 athletes included in the FIDAL Hall of Fame (list of Italian athletes who have won at least one gold medal at the Olympic Games, World Championships or European Championships, or who have achieved a world record).She was 4th at the 1936 Summer Olympics in two events. From 1931 to 1940 she has 17 caps in the Italian national athletics team. In the 1930s was celebrated her rivalry with compatriot Ondina Valla (the winner in Berlin 1936), after a thrilling final, resolved by a photo finish, and the same place in the 4 × 100 m relay. It is said that the disappointment over the Olympic fourth place was so great, that from that moment on she turned her



Bolt at the 25th Laureus World Sports Awards in April 2024



Claudia Testoni

back to her friend and rival Ondina; other sources, however, report letters in which the two friends showed renewed demonstrations of affection.She was the world record holder in the 80 m hurdles event, until in 1942 it was taken away by Fanny Blankers-Koen.Her son-in-law, Claudio Velluti, was a professional basketball player of Olimpia Milano.