

In Brief

NFR announces one-way special trains for passenger convenience

Northeast Frontier Railway is launching five one-way special trains to enhance connectivity based on passenger demand. The schedules are as follows: Train No. 05483 will depart from Alipurduar Jn. to Delhi on December 13, 2025, at 10:30 hours with multiple stoppages. Train No. 05936 from Dibrugarh to Kolkata departs on the same day at 17:20 hours. Additionally, Train No. 05653 (Agartala to Kolkata) will leave on December 15 at 07:35 hours, and Train No. 05650 (Silchar to Kolkata) departs on December 18 at 05:00 hours. Lastly, Train No. 05958 will run from New Tinsukia to Chennai Central, leaving at 18:45 hours on December 18. Detailed schedules can be found on the IRCTC website and social media platforms of N. F. Railway, and passengers are advised to verify timings before traveling.

Nagaland CM opens Police Mess, Urges Vigor

Dimapur: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Friday called upon the police officers of the state to continue their journey of service with renewed vigour, discipline, and determination. Speaking at the police conference hall after inaugurating the Nagaland Police Officers' Mess at New Police Reserve, Phe sema, in Kohima, Rio also urged the officers to bring greater pride, honour, and laurels to the state. He exhorted them to move forward with unity, integrity, and unwavering dedication while in service. Calling the new police officers' mess a significant milestone in the progress

Nagaon starts Deworming Programme

Nagaon: The Nagaon district administration initiated the District-Level National Deworming Day 2025 to enhance child health by distributing WHO-approved albendazole tablets to children and teenagers aged 1 to 19 from December 11 to December 18. District Commissioner Devashish Sharma emphasized preventive healthcare and community support during the launch at the Nagaon Rural Library. School-enrolled children will receive tablets at institutions, while those not in school will be reached through home visits by Anganwadi workers and ASHA staff. Health officials highlighted the importance of deworming in preventing anemia, malnutrition, and learning difficulties. The District Health Society urged parents to cooperate with field workers to ensure every eligible child is covered. The event was attended by key officials and community members, showcasing Nagaon's commitment to a healthier future for its youth.

Assam CM Inaugurates TVS Credit Technology Centre in Guwahati

Dispur: Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated the TVS Credit Technology Centre in Guwahati, part of the Advantage Assam 2.0 initiative, following a MoU signed on February 25, 2025. The centre aims to enhance Assam's digital ecosystem and create opportunities for local youth in technology sectors. It will serve as a hub for AI development and automation, preparing over 200 locals for specialized roles. The facilities will manage key technology functions for TVS Credit, including advanced loan management platforms. In its first phase, 25 technology professionals will be hired, aiming to expand to over 200 roles in three years, thereby creating high-value employment opportunities in Assam. Dr. Sarma expressed gratitude to TVS Credit for their collaboration and investment in the region.

Grand Winter Festival

Aizawl: Mizoram is set to host a winter festival in Aizawl from December 15–20 and again on December 23, aiming to attract domestic and international tourists. The festival, held at Lammual ground, will showcase Mizo culture through traditional music, dances, and crafts, culminating in Christmas-themed events on the final day. Key attractions include a costume parade, community carols, charity stalls, children's zones, and live performances by local artists and notable acts like DJ Avanie and Reble. Last year's festival attracted around 80,000 visitors. Additionally, tourism initiatives such as a New Year's Eve sunset celebration and a Cherry Blossom Festival are planned to enhance destination-based tourism in the region. Minister Hmar emphasized the importance of community involvement in promoting Mizoram's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

President Murmu to visit Nupee Lal Memorial in Imphal today to pay her respect to women warriors of Manipur

Imphal, Dec 12: President Droupadi Murmu is set to visit the Nupee Lal Memorial complex in Imphal today to honour the brave women of Manipur who fought during the historic Nupi Lal movement. Her visit to the memorial is being seen as an important gesture that recognises the strength, resilience and role of Manipuri women in shaping the state's history. After paying her respects, the President will travel to Senapati district, where she will address a public gathering and take part in a series of foundation-laying and inauguration programmes aimed at supporting development in the region. The President arrived in Imphal yesterday afternoon on a two-day visit. Soon after her arrival, she inaugurated and laid the foundation stones of projects worth ₹1,387 crore at a programme in the state capital. These projects cover a wide range of areas including health services, education, road connectivity, tribal welfare, agriculture, electricity supply and drinking water. Officials said the initiatives are expected to improve daily life, create new employment opportunities and support economic activities across various districts of Manipur. At the civic reception held at the City Convention Centre, the President said the newly launched projects reflect the government's commitment to inclusive development in Manipur. She added that the aim is to ensure that the benefits of growth reach people in both

hill and valley areas. "These projects will generate employment, improve infrastructure and accelerate economic activities," she said while addressing the gathering. During her speech, the President also spoke about the difficult months the state has gone through due to the ongoing violence. She expressed sadness over the pain experienced by families affected by the conflict and said the central government considers their concerns a top priority. "I am aware of the pain of the people of Manipur who have gone through the unfortunate violence. My government stands with every affected family," she said. She assured that the government is fully committed to healing, supporting and rebuilding the lives of people who have been impacted. Before the evening programme, President Murmu met families displaced by the violence at Lok Bhavan in Imphal. Many of these families have been living in relief camps for months, with their homes and livelihoods severely affected. The President told them that the government would continue to stand by them and work to restore their homes, livelihoods and children's futures. Her office later said she stressed the need to create an environment of peace and long-term stability in the state. Her visit, however, has also seen some tension. Several Kuki civil society groups in Kangpokpi district announced that they would not take part in the welcome ceremony



planned in Senapati today. Groups such as Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills said they were disappointed that the President's schedule focused on Senapati, which is dominated by the Naga community, while areas heavily affected by the conflict in Kangpokpi district were not included. They said the conflict-affected Kuki-Zo population felt overlooked and wanted more direct engagement from the central government. The announcement of the boycott highlights the deep divisions that remain in Manipur even as the government continues efforts to restore peace. Many civil groups

have been calling for more targeted relief, more visible presence from national leaders, and stronger steps towards reconciliation. Before her civic address yesterday, the President also attended a polo event at Mapal Kangjeibung, organised by the Youth Affairs and Sports Department. The event was attended by ministers, MLAs and senior officials. In her remarks, President Murmu described Manipur as a land known for its courage, resilience and rich cultural traditions. She praised the state's achievements in fields such as sports, arts and public ser-

vice. She also recalled the historic Nupi Lal struggle, saying that the women of Manipur continue to inspire people across the country. Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla welcomed the President's visit and said it reflects the strong connection between the state and the highest office of the country. He said the people of Manipur have shown patience and unity despite the challenges of the past several months. He added that the administration remains focused on building confidence, promoting healing and ensuring dignity and security for all communities.

NFR announces one-way special trains for passenger convenience

Guwahati, Dec 12: Northeast Frontier Railway has decided to operate five one-way special trains based on passenger demand to ensure smoother travel and better connectivity across the region.

Accordingly, Train No. 05483 (Alipurduar Jn. – Delhi) One way Special will depart from Alipurduar Jn. at 10:30 hours on December 13, 2025 to reach Delhi at 21:45 hours on Sunday. The train will have stoppages at Hasimara, Dalgaoon, Binnaguri, New Mal Jn., Sili-guri Jn. Bagdogra, Aluabari Road, Kishanganj, Barsoi, Katihar, New Barauni Jn., Panta Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Prayagraj Jn., Kanpur Central, Etawah Jn., Aligarh Jn., Ghaziabad etc.

Train No. 05936 (Dibrugarh – Kolkata) One way Special will depart from Dibrugarh at 17:20 hours on December 13, 2025 to reach Kolkata at 00:30 hours on Monday. The train will have stoppages at Dhemaji, North Lakhimpur, Harmuti Jn., Rangapara North, Rangiya, New Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, New Alipurduar, New Coochbehar, New Jalpaiguri, Aluabari Road, Kishanganj, Barsoi, Malda Town etc. Train No. 05653 (Agartala – Kolkata) One way Special will depart from Agartala at 07:35 hours on December 15, 2025 to reach Kolkata at 16:40 hours on next day. Train will have stoppages at New Karimganj, Badarpur Jn., Guwaha-

ti, Goalpara Town, New Bongaigaon, New Alipurduar, New Jalpaiguri, Kishanganj etc.

Train No. 05650 (Silchar – Kolkata) One way Special will depart from Silchar at 05:00 hours on December 18, 2025 to reach Kolkata at 12:05 hours on next day. The train will have stoppages at Badarpur, Lumding, Guwahati, Goalpara Town, New Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, New Alipurduar, New Coochbehar, Dhupguri, New Jalpaiguri, Aluabari Road, Kishanganj, Barsoi, Kumedpur, Malda Town etc.

Train No. 05958 (New Tinsukia – Chennai Central) One way Special will depart from New Tinsukia at 18:45 hours on December 18, 2025 to reach Chennai Central at 04:30 hours on Sunday. The train will have stoppages at Dibrugarh, Dhemaji, North Lakhimpur, Harmuti, Rangapara North, Rangiya Jn., Barpeta Road, New Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, New Coochbehar, New Jalpaiguri, Aluabari Road, Kishanganj, Malda Town, Bardhaman, Kharagpur, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Vizianagram Jn., Vijayawada Jn., Gudur Jn. etc.

The details of stoppages and timings of these trains are available in IRCTC website and are also being notified in various social media platforms of N. F. Railway. Passengers are requested to verify the details before undertaking their journey.

Nagaland CM Opens Police Mess, Urges Vigor



Dimapur, Dec 12: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Friday called upon the police officers of the state to continue their journey of service with renewed vigour, discipline, and determination. Speaking at the police conference hall after inaugurating the Nagaland Police Officers' Mess at New

Police Reserve, Phe sema, in Kohima, Rio also urged the officers to bring greater pride, honour, and laurels to the state. He exhorted them to move forward with unity, integrity, and unwavering dedication while in service. Calling the new police officers' mess a significant milestone in the progress

Roadmap for developing Assam's own satellite presented

Guwahati, Dec 12: Dhruva Space, a Hyderabad-based space tech firm has presented a roadmap for developing an integrated space ecosystem for Assam. The proposals included a dedicated satellite constellation for the State, a ground station, and improved access to high-quality satellite imagery for government departments.

Col Rajneesh Ralli (Retd.), Vice President- Growth Operations at Dhruva Space, met with Assam Chief Secretary Dr Ravi Kota in Guwahati and presented the roadmap.

The Assam government on March 10, 2025 announced that it would have its own satellite, which will help collect data for the implementation of critical socio-economic projects, besides keeping surveillance on its border. The Dhruva Space team briefed Dr Kota on the ASSAM SAT concept -- a three-satellite constellation in a 500 km inclined orbit with <2 m resolution, a revisit time of roughly 0.5 days, and the capability to cover the entire State in about 2.35 days. The proposed system would be supported by essential ground infrastructure to enable real-time, sovereign, and secure remote sensing data for departmental use. The Chief Secretary was apprised of the significant applications such a system that could bring across priority sectors, including flood and disaster management, water



resources, forestry, biodiversity mapping, land-use and urban planning, and border management. The initiative also has the potential to support local capacity building, strengthen research, and enable departments to access customised, accurate, and timely spatial information for decision-making.

A brief demonstration of their imagery platform was also shared, highlighting its ability to draw high-resolution data from multiple global sources and maintain reliable coverage even during monsoon months -- a critical requirement for Assam

for flood management. Dr Kota appreciated the detailed presentation and discussed how these capabilities could enhance governance, improve preparedness, and support long-term planning for the State. Further consultations will be undertaken to examine the proposals in detail. Dr Kota said that he will place the matter before the Chief Minister for consideration.

Dhruva Space is an Indian private aerospace company based in Hyderabad that provides full-stack space solutions, including small satellites (CubeSats), ground stations, solar panels, and launch services.

Manipur: President Droupadi Murmu engages with Maram tribe, unveils PM JANMAN plan

Imphal, Dec 12: President Droupadi Murmu interacted with the leaders of the Maram Tribe, the only tribe in Manipur classified under the category of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), during her second-leg visit to the Senapati district headquarters on Friday. A short film on the Maram tribe and the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN) initiative of the district was also screened at the event. Under PM JANMAN, the Centre has sanctioned a Rs 9 crore development program for the Maram Naga tribe of Manipur, which has a population of around 50,000. The Marams primarily inhabit the Senapati and Kangpokpi



districts of Manipur. There are over 33 government-recognised tribes in the state. Addressing the gathering, President Murmu said that under PM JANMAN, a series of initiatives have been launched to uplift the tribal community, especially PVTGs, which will further improve their lives. She emphasised that dignity, security, and growth opportunities for the tribals of Mani-

pur, along with ensuring their greater participation in the country's progress, are national priorities. The PM JANMAN scheme is a major initiative of the Indian government, launched in 2023 to uplift 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) by providing essential services such as safe housing, water, electricity, health, education, and road/mobile connectivity through

11 core interventions by nine ministries, focusing on bridging development gaps in their remote habitations. The scheme aims to achieve saturation of essential services for these marginalised communities by 2026. Officials reported that the annual amount of Rs 9 crore was sanctioned to support a range of welfare projects, including the implementation of PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana), PM Ayushman Bharat, and the construction of Anganwadi centres, community halls, and water storage facilities. The funds have also been earmarked for the preservation of the Maram community's traditional Morungs, cultural heritage, and ancestral practices.

Medicines
manufactured
without license
seized

Una, Dec 12: Medicines valued at ₹six lakh were confiscated from an unlicensed pharmaceutical unit in Bathu, Una district, during a raid conducted by police and the drug department. The unit, which had been closed for 14 years, was found to be manufacturing drugs illegally despite having its license revoked in 2011 due to serious deficiencies. The raid followed a tip-off and uncovered illicitly manufactured tablets. The Drug Inspector stated that the drugs seized were not banned and were intended for general use. The owner of the facility is facing action under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, and investigations are ongoing to trace the distribution of the drugs and identify other potential accomplices. Superintendent of Police Amit Yadav emphasized the administration's commitment to preventing regulatory violations. Additionally, another pharmaceutical unit on Karmapur-Laldi Road was inspected and found inactive. Reports indicate that approximately 50 pharmaceutical units in the region have ceased operations, yet some are still illegally producing drugs. A recent incident involved a company in Baddi that manufactured drugs under the guise of an inactive Assamese factory. The operator was detained, but the supplier remains free. In response, the Drug Control Administration's Anti-Narcotics Task Force conducted extensive raids, inspecting 20 industries across Sirmour, Una, Kangra, and Solan districts, resulting in the discovery of ongoing production activities at four sites despite their closure.

Pawan Kalyan's personality rights
Delhi High Court grants social media companies
seven days to respond to his request

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Delhi High Court has instructed social media intermediaries to address a plea from Andhra Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan regarding the protection of his personality rights within seven days. Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora noted that Kalyan, associated with the Janasena Party (JSP), had previously raised concerns about artificial intelligence-generated videos and impersonation on platforms like Google and Meta. The court emphasized that complaints regarding such grievances should be initially directed to the intermediaries, referencing a similar case involving actor Ajay Devgn, who was granted interim relief by the court.



The Delhi High Court (HC) mandated that social media platforms respond to Pawan Kalyan's request for the protection of his personality rights within a week, categorizing it as a formal complaint.

The court categorized Kalyan's complaint under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics

Code) Rules, 2021, and mandated that he provide the relevant URLs for the content he wants removed within 48 hours. The matter is scheduled for further hearing on December 22. Kalyan's action aims to safeguard his personality rights, which encompass the right to control and profit from one's own image, name, and likeness, amid rising cases of unauthorized exploitation of these rights. This case is part of a larger trend, as several other prominent figures from the film industry, including Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Hrithik Roshan, and Salman Khan, have also sought legal protection of their personality rights from the high court, which has granted them interim relief in similar circumstances. These developments highlight the increasing concern over the misuse of individual identity in the digital landscape.

Drone surveys of the areas affected by the gas leak from
the Dhanbad mine are started by the Coal India arm

Dhanbad, Dec 12: A team from CMPDIL, a subsidiary of Coal India, has initiated a drone survey to investigate gas emissions in areas affected by gas leakage from underground mines in Bharat Coking Coal Ltd's colliery regions of Jharkhand.

Reports of gas leakage have surfaced from locations including Rajput Basti, Masjid Muhalla, and Area No. 5, leading to the decision to relocate around 1,000 residents due to health concerns. Recent incidents included a woman's death and illness among 12 individuals attributed to carbon monoxide exposure in Kenduadih Basti earlier this month. Bhubnesh Kumar Gupta, the official leading the survey, emphasized that the purpose of the drone operation is to identify the causes of the gas emissions, pinpoint leakage sites, and develop strategies to address these issues. The survey covers a 400-metre radius around the impacted areas. The collected data will be submitted to the Ranchi office for further analysis, where experts will work on identifying solutions. Gupta indicated that data analysis is expected to take between 15 to 20 days. Additionally, the survey aims to ascertain the number of homes and residents affected by the gas emissions. Alongside the drone survey, a thermal gun as-



Additionally, a thermal gun survey is being conducted to record temperature, with a maximum temperature of 22 degrees Celsius noted as normal for winter.

assessment is also underway to record temperatures in the affected areas, which were noted to be around 22 degrees Celsius, considered normal for the winter season in that region. Prior assessments had failed to evaluate the number of houses and individuals impacted by the gas emissions over the past 11 days.

As directed by the Supreme Court, a former
Telangana intelligence head surrenders before police

Hyderabad, Dec 12: Former Telangana intelligence chief T Prabhakar Rao, involved in a phone-tapping scandal, surrendered to authorities at the Jubilee Hills police station on Friday, adhering to a Supreme Court (SC) directive. Rao, who previously led the Telangana Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB), reported to the investigating officer at 11 AM as mandated by the apex court. This case has seen the arrest of four police officials, including a suspended Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) from the SIB, since March 2024. They are accused of illegally deleting intelligence data from various electronic devices and engaging in phone-tapping during the previous Bharat Rashtara Samithi (BRS) administration, with all accused subsequently granted bail.

The police accused these officials of partaking in a conspiracy that involved misappropriating SIB resources for political gain,



placing various citizens under surveillance without authorization. They allegedly created unauthorized profiles of individuals, monitored them illegally, and used the gathered intelligence to support a particular political

party. Additionally, these officials faced charges for conspiring to destroy documents to eliminate evidence of their illicit activities.

Rao's surrender was prompted by the SC's

The accused are involved in a conspiracy to misuse SIB resources for political surveillance, monitoring citizens unlawfully and developing unauthorized profiles of individuals.

desire for further investigation into these allegations. A bench comprised of Justices B V Nagarathna and R Mahadevan ordered Rao to present himself by 11 AM for custodial interrogation, ensuring his rights to regular food and medication were preserved. The court acknowledged Rao's previous request for anticipatory bail, which had been dismissed by the Telangana High Court. Moreover, a proclamation order against him was issued by a Hyderabad court on May 22, warning that he could be designated a "proclaimed offender" if he failed to appear by June 20, enabling the court to initiate property attachment procedures against him.

'Landowner'
claims officials
quietly changed
property status

Panaji, Dec 12: A man named Pradeep Ghadi Amonkar has asserted that he is the rightful owner of land in Arpora, North Goa, where the nightclub 'Birch by Romeo Lane' was located before it was devastated by a fire on December 6, resulting in the loss of 25 lives. Amonkar claims that part of his property, originally classified as a salt pan, was converted to a settlement zone without his consent to facilitate the benefit of the nightclub. He signed a sale agreement with Surinder Kumar Khosla in 2004, which was later rescinded when payment was not made. Following this, Khosla established a nightclub on the land, which has since been operated by Saurabh and Gaurav Luthra. For over two decades, Amonkar has been involved in legal battles to reclaim his land, which he insists has been unlawfully occupied. Recently, during preparations to appeal to the high court regarding the fire incident, Amonkar discovered that the zoning status of his land had been altered by the government without prior notice to him. He expressed his disbelief at how a salt pan could be reclassified as a settlement zone. A senior official from Goa's Town and Country Planning department stated that they cannot comment on Amonkar's claims due to an ongoing inquiry into the situation.

Due to technological difficulties, more than 44,000 farmers
affected by the flood have not received compensation

Belagavi, Dec 12: Karnataka's Revenue Minister, Krishna Byre Gowda, addressed the issue of compensation for farmers affected by rain and flood-related crop losses, revealing that 44,208 farmers have not yet received their compensation due to technical mismatches in official records. This statement was made in response to a query from MLC Thippannappa Kamakanur during a Legislative Council session, highlighting the plight of flood-hit individuals in Kalaburagi district.

Gowda acknowledged that approximately three percent of farmers are impacted by the compen-

The total compensation provided by the Karnataka government during the monsoon season amounts to ₹2,300 crore, including for crop loss, loss of lives, livestock, and house damages.

sation delays, attributing this to discrepancies between the names registered in the Aadhaar system and those recorded in the agriculture department. He urged affected farmers to correct these mismatches to facilitate the transfer of funds, stating that payments have already been initiated but require these corrections to proceed.

In terms of financial aid, Gowda

reported that Kalaburagi district experienced crop loss across 3.23 lakh hectares, with ₹250.97 crore allocated according to State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) standards, and an additional relief of ₹247.75 crore provided. Overall, a total of ₹498.76 crore has been disbursed to farmers in this district for crop-related damages.

On a broader scale, the minister noted that 14.21 lakh farmers across the state have been affected, with the government allocating ₹1,216 crore under SDRF guidelines, alongside an additional ₹1,033 crore from the government, cumulatively amounting to ₹2,249

crore in assistance for farmers affected by the floods.

Furthermore, Gowda detailed compensation measures beyond crop losses, stating that ₹1.99 crore was provided for livestock losses, ₹40.86 crore for house damages, and ₹5.79 crore for minor household damages during the recent monsoon season. In total, the Karnataka government has disbursed approximately ₹2,300 crore in compensation for crop losses, livestock, human lives, and property damages. He concluded by mentioning ongoing efforts to expedite crop insurance payments for affected farmers.

4 inspectors who oversee IndiGo
flight ops sacked from DGCA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Four Flight Operations Inspectors (FOIs) have been dismissed from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) amid the ongoing IndiGo flight cancellations crisis, as stated in an order dated December 11. The terminated FOIs include Rishi Raj Chatterjee, Seema Jhamnani, Anil Kumar Pokhariyal, and Priyam Kaushik. These inspectors are responsible for overseeing airline safety, pilot training, and operational compliance. In connection with the investigation, the DGCA has summoned IndiGo's COO, Isidro Porqueras, and CEO, Pieter Elbers. The summons follows significant operational disruptions, as IndiGo cancelled approximately 1,580 flights on December 5 alone and a total of 4,290 domestic and 64 international flights from December 1 to 9.

The cancellations were largely attributed to IndiGo's inadequate adaptation to the new Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) established on November 1, which contributed to the airline's operational mismanagement and issues with crew roster management. As a result, the government mandated IndiGo to reduce its daily flight operations by 10% to address the ongoing disruptions.

The Lokayukta Act has been amended to
include IAS officers under its jurisdiction

Nagpur, Dec 12: The Maharashtra legislative assembly has passed amendments to the Lokayukta Act, extending the anti-corruption watchdog's jurisdiction to include Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers and various state-appointed officials. This amendment, introduced by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, aims to clarify earlier ambiguities regarding officials subject to scrutiny under the Lokayukta. The revisions specify that

IAS officers appointed under state-created authorities based on Central Acts are now included, while those solely appointed by the Union government remain under the Lokpal's jurisdiction.

The amendments also update references to outdated Central Acts, replacing the Indian Penal Code with the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita and other current statutes. The bill was approved without debate, having been drafted

with input from the President's office, indicating it does not require further approval.

The original Act stipulated that a two-thirds assembly majority is needed for inquiries against a sitting or former chief minister, with similar consent requirements for ministers and municipal officials. Overall, the amendments strive to eliminate jurisdictional confusion between Lokayukta and Lokpal authorities.

Half-baked running commentary on
ongoing cases is flagged by the SC

New Delhi, Dec 12: On Friday, the Supreme Court emphasized its independence from media narratives while discussing the repatriation of individuals deported to Bangladesh, asserting its immunity from publicity impacts. The court addressed a case concerning Sunali Khatun, a pregnant woman, and her son, who had returned to India and received medical care in West Bengal. During the proceedings, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta criticized a media report for its "tabloid-like" commentary, stating it aimed to shape narratives that could influence judicial outcomes. Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Bagchi echoed concerns about the adverse effects of misrepresented facts on public

perception, highlighting the need for factual and impartial reporting. Amid these discussions, Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal pointed out the global context of immigration debates and distinguished opinion expression from attributing motives in reporting. The court also considered the case of another deportee. The court promised a time-bound approach for considering the return of families deported after an alleged lack of due process, as indicated by the Calcutta High Court's ruling criticizing the Union Home Ministry's protocols. The debate highlighted the importance of thorough inquiries before deportation as a safeguard against judicial disturbances.

20 injured as bus plunges
into gorge in Andhra Pradesh
10 passengers killed

Amaravati, Dec 12: At least 10 passengers lost their lives and 20 others sustained injuries when a bus transporting them plunged into a gorge in Tulasiipakalu, located in the Alluri Sitarama Raju district of Andhra Pradesh, on Friday morning. According to police reports, the bus driver seems to have lost control of the vehicle, leading to the tragic incident, which occurred after 1 AM; however, the information was delayed due to poor communication facilities in the forested area. The Vigneswara Travels bus was en route from Bhadrachalam in Telangana to the temple town of Annavaram in Andhra Pradesh, carrying 37 passengers primarily from Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh. Emergency responders were promptly dispatched to the scene following alerts from local residents.

Injured passengers were transferred to Chinturu and Rampachodavaram hospitals, with those suffering from severe injuries being sent to larger medical centers for more comprehensive care.

Andhra Pradesh's Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu, expressed deep concern regarding the tragedy and released a statement noting that the private bus, filled with pilgrims, had fallen into the valley, resulting in numerous casualties. He promptly convened a review with officials to receive detailed updates about rescue operations and medical treatment for the injured, urging immediate action at the accident site to ensure efficient relief measures. Naidu highlighted the importance of coordinated efforts among all relevant departments to provide optimal care for the victims and their families.

An investigation has been initiated to determine the accident's cause, with authorities assessing potential factors such as mechanical failure, driver negligence, or poor road conditions. Andhra Pradesh's Home Minister, Vangalapudi Anitha, along with Tribal Welfare Minister G. Sandhya Rani, quickly made their way to the scene to oversee the situation.

The Madras High Court's handling of the Karur
stampede case, according to the SC, "is wrong"

Chennai, Dec 12: The Supreme Court conducted a detailed examination of the Madras High Court's handling of the Karur stampede case, which resulted in 41 fatalities during a political event.

The justices raised concerns about the high court's process, particularly questioning the Chennai Bench's jurisdiction in a matter arising from Karur, which falls under the Madurai Bench's

jurisdiction, and its decision to form a Special Investigation Team (SIT) comprised solely of Tamil Nadu police officers despite the petition requesting general guidelines for political rallies.

The bench expressed dissatisfaction with conflicting orders from the high court's two benches and noted that the registrar general's report suggested procedural irregularities in the high

court.

Legal representatives from the Tamil Nadu government conveyed their apprehension regarding the Supreme Court's previous order, which mandated that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) investigate the incident, supervised by a committee led by former Supreme Court judge Ajay Rastogi, including two non-native senior IPS officers from Tamil Nadu. The government argued

that this approach contravened principles of natural justice as it limited their right to present crucial information before the transfer of the investigation.

They deemed the designation of "non-native" as unconstitutional and biased, a point vocally opposed in the Tamil Nadu assembly as well.

Rejecting requests to amend the October 13 order and to lift a stay on a state-appointed Com-

mission of Inquiry, the Supreme Court emphasized the need for an impartial investigation amid concerns regarding the political implications of the case, including potential biases from local police officials.

The ongoing litigation highlights significant tensions surrounding investigative authority and the alleged influence of political contexts on judicial processes.

Mizoram gears up for grand Winter Festival at Aizawl's Lammual Ground to boost culture and tourism

Aizawl, Dec 12: Mizoram is preparing to host a grand winter festival in Aizawl this month, with the state government positioning the event as a major cultural attraction aimed at drawing both domestic and international tourists. The week-long celebration, scheduled for December 15-20 and again on December 23, will take place at the historic Lammual ground, which is being transformed into a vibrant cultural hub for the occasion. Tourism Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar said the festival will place Mizo culture at its heart, with traditional music, dances, and indigenous crafts forming the central attractions. The concluding

Gauhati High Court Bar Association rejects Rangmahal shift, insists court remain in Guwahati

Guwahati, Dec 12: The members of the Gauhati High Court Bar Association have overwhelmingly voted against the proposal to shift the principal seat of the Gauhati High Court from its present location to Rangmahal in Assam's North Guwahati. The much-anticipated referendum, held over five days from December 8 to 12, concluded with a decisive verdict, reflecting growing unease within the legal fraternity over the longstanding relocation plan. According to the official result sheet issued by the Returning Officer of the Gauhati High Court Bar Association on December 12, a total of 1,358 votes were cast in the referendum. Of these, only 154 advocates voted in favour of shifting the High Court to Rangmahal. In stark contrast, an overwhelming 1,164 members voted against the proposal. Twenty-seven voters opted for NOTA, while 13 votes were cancelled during scrutiny. The figures indicate a clear and overwhelming rejection of the plan, signalling that a majority of practising advocates remain unconvinced of



the need or practicality of relocating the principal judicial institution of the region. The referendum itself was the outcome of weeks of discussion, internal deliberation, and visible dissent among the legal community. The decision to hold a vote arose from an Emergent Extra-Ordinary General Meeting convened on December 3, following a resolution adopted at the Association's Emergent Executive Meeting held on December 1. These meetings were prompted by the announcement that the foundation stone for a new High Court complex at Rangmahal was scheduled to be laid on January 17, 2026. Senior advocates, juniors, and daily

practitioners expressed that, before any irreversible step was taken, it was essential for the Bar to determine its collective position democratically and transparently. The wider debate over the proposed shift has been building steadily over recent months. A large section of the Bar has repeatedly voiced concerns that relocating the High Court across the Brahmaputra could disrupt the daily functioning of thousands of advocates, litigants, and staff who depend on the existing, well-connected legal ecosystem. Many lawyers argue that Rangmahal lacks the essential transport links, infrastructure, and institutional surroundings that

have developed organically around the current High Court complex over several decades. Chambers, lower courts, administrative buildings, and legal service offices all operate in proximity to the present High Court, enabling efficient movement of case files, clients, and officers. Moving the institution, they say, would fracture this integrated system and create new barriers for those seeking justice. Protests led by several groups of advocates have been taking place intermittently since the relocation proposal gained momentum. Demonstrations, written representations to authorities, and awareness campaigns have highlighted the apprehensions within the fraternity. Opposing lawyers have repeatedly stressed that the shift could place an unfair burden on litigants, particularly those arriving from neighbouring districts and Northeastern states who already navigate long travel schedules to reach the High Court. For many, the present location remains the most practical and accessible option.

Northeast hip-hop artists Reble and Kim are expected to be major crowd-pullers. Officials recall that last year's edition saw nearly 80,000 visitors, including tourists from neighbouring countries, pointing to the growing appeal of the event. Minister Hmar announced two more tourism initiatives planned for the season — a New Year's Eve sunset celebration at the scenic Sakawrhmtui hills, about 21 km from Aizawl, and a Cherry Blossom Festival at Phuabuang village in Saitual district on January 6-7. Both events are expected to add momentum to the government's push for destination-based tourism.

Akhil Gogoi Questions 'Political Motive' Behind Zubeen Garg Chargesheet

Sivasagar, Dec 12: MLA Akhil Gogoi on Friday, December 12, cast serious doubts on the credibility and intent behind the chargesheet filed in connection with the death of iconic Assamese singer Zubeen Garg, alleging that the investigation was driven by political motives rather than a genuine search for truth. Gogoi accused Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of "orchestrating a narrative" over the past 84 days to serve his own political interests, instead of responding to the concerns raised by the people of Assam. He claimed that the chargesheet prepared by

the Assam CID "does not establish Zubeen Garg's death as murder," despite widespread public speculation. Raising procedural objections, the MLA questioned how the investigating officer could file a chargesheet without visiting Singapore, where the incident occurred. "How can an officer prepare a chargesheet sitting in Assam without even travelling to Singapore?" he asked. "This is not a chargesheet—it is the Chief Minister's election manifesto." Gogoi further alleged that the government rushed the chargesheet to avoid a situation similar to the an-

ti-CAA movement, during which BJP workers were reportedly prevented from entering villages. Citing legal precedents, he reiterated his reference to the Madras High Court's verdict in the Jayalalithaa case, arguing that any investigation into an incident outside India must follow international protocols—a requirement he claims was ignored by the authorities. He also dismissed the government's claims of having collected 3,500 documents and 7,000 statements, calling them "meaningless" without adequate on-ground verification. "They haven't even examined the water where

Zubeen Da supposedly drowned, yet they rushed a chargesheet. If it were up to me, I would have torn it apart," he said. Gogoi criticised the Chief Minister for suggesting that the matter now lies with the court. "How can the court deliver justice when the very foundation of the case is flawed? Even if you beat your head against a wall, justice won't happen this way," he remarked. Drawing parallels with past political unrest, Gogoi concluded that the chargesheet was filed strategically—primarily to ensure that BJP workers can freely enter villages during the upcoming elections.

Child Health Initiative: Nagaon Starts Deworming Programme

Nagaon, Dec 12: The Nagaon district administration launched the District-Level National Deworming Day 2025, a significant step toward improving child health. Under the auspices of the District Health Society, the program was launched in the Nagaon Rural Library's auditorium. The campaign's goal is to give WHO-approved albendazole tablets to kids and teenagers aged 1 to 19 between December 11 and December 18. The week-long program was officially launched by District Commissioner Devashish Sharma, IAS. Speaking to the crowd, he emphasized the importance of preventive healthcare and called on local communities to actively support the initiative to shield the district's youth from parasitic infections. Children enrolled in school will receive the tablets at their respective institutions as part of the campaign. Children who do not attend school will be covered by Anganwadi workers and ASHA staff through home visits and Anganwadi centers. Deworming is essential



for preventing anemia, malnutrition, stunted growth, and diminished learning capacity, according to health officials. In order to guarantee that every eligible kid gets covered, the District Health Society has urged all parents and guardians to collaborate with field workers. Additional District Commissioner Sudeep Nath, District Immunization Officer Dr. Mukut Deka, Child Health Nodal Officer Dr. Girindra Kumar Nath, Urban Family Welfare in-

charge Dr. Moon Saikia, NHM District Program Manager Arniban Barthakur, and Rural Library Secretary Khagendra Chandra Nath were among the important officials who attended the inaugural event. Many children and guardians attended the ceremony, as did DCMs, DCIOs, DPAs, BPMs, ANMs, and ASHA employees. Nagaon's ongoing dedication to creating a worm-free, healthier future for its youth is reflected in this project.

CUTS International Organises Mega Cybersecurity Capacity-Building Event for MSMEs in Guwahati

Guwahati, Dec 12: CUTS International on Friday organised a mega cybersecurity capacity-building programme for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Guwahati under the APAC Cybersecurity Fund (ACF), an initiative led by The Asia Foundation with support from Google.org. The event aimed to strengthen digital safety practices among small businesses amid rising cyber threats. The programme saw participation from over 300 MSMEs from Kamrup Metro district, with women entrepreneurs accounting for nearly half of the attendees. The initiative forms part of a wider cybersecurity capacity-building effort being undertaken by CUTS across ten states between 2024 and 2026. In Assam, it is being implemented under Advantage Assam 2.0, based on a memorandum of understand-

ing with the state's Department of Industries & Commerce. CUTS has so far conducted workshops in 25 districts, training more than 3,000 MSMEs on cyber hygiene and risk mitigation. In his opening remarks, Bipul Chattopadhyay, Executive Director of CUTS International, said the rapid expansion of digital technologies has increased the vulnerability of small businesses. He emphasised that unlike large organisations, MSMEs are less capable of absorbing financial losses resulting from cyberattacks. Chattopadhyay added that CUTS intends to strengthen collaboration with state governments to extend the programme's reach. Addressing participants, Nandita Baruah, Country Representative of The Asia Foundation, highlighted the unique legacy of MSMEs in the Northeast and warned of

growing threats from AI-driven fraud and pattern theft. She stressed the need for urgent action to equip small businesses with tools to protect their digital operations. Manju Rani Gogoi Talukdar, Joint Director-cum-President at the Commissioner of Industries & Commerce, Assam, spoke about increasing cyber risks such as phishing and malicious links targeting small enterprises. She called on MSMEs to adopt stronger data-protection practices. Echoing similar concerns, Umesh Kumar, General Manager of DICC, Kamrup Metro, noted that the rapid uptake of digital tools has heightened MSMEs' exposure to cyberattacks. He stressed the importance of sustained awareness-building and proactive security measures. In a technical address, cybersecurity expert



Subimal Bhattacharjee discussed the growing use of digital payments and urged businesses to adopt strong passwords and practise digital literacy. He warned that data mining increases

the risk of password cracking and advised participants to report cyber incidents immediately via the National Cybercrime Helpline at 1930. The event included an interactive training session covering the basics of cybersecurity, password management, IT asset protection, phishing detection, and the importance of data backups and software updates. Participants also completed pre- and post-training assessments, and certificates were distributed. Organisers said insights from the session would guide the next phase of cybersecurity preparedness in Assam. With cybercrime cases rising nationwide, speakers underscored the need for closer coordination between government agencies, civil society organisations and businesses to build a safer digital environment for MSMEs.

Jal Shakti Secretary chairs review meet on water resources development in NE



Aizawl, Dec 12: Secretary, Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation (DoWR, RD & GR), Ministry of Jal Shakti, Shri V. L. Kantha Rao chaired a high-level review meeting at the Brahmaputra Board Headquarters in Guwahati today to assess the progress of water resources projects across the Brahmaputra and Barak Basin States. The meeting saw partici-

pation of senior officials of the Water Resources Departments of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim and West Bengal, along with officials from the Ministry and regional organisations of DoWR, RD & GR, as well as officers of the Brahmaputra Board. The discussions focused on the implementation status of river basin Master Plan

recommendations by all nine basin states, progress of works undertaken by the Brahmaputra Board, physical and financial progress of ongoing projects under the Ministry, and the review of state proposals submitted to DoWR, RD & GR. State officials provided updates on actions taken toward implementing Master Plan recommendations, while the Secretary emphasised the importance of robust

inter-state coordination for integrated basin-level water management. He urged timely completion of ongoing projects, proactive resolution of bottlenecks, and adherence to priority timelines for all works supported under central sector and centrally sponsored schemes. Concluding the meeting, Shri Kantha Rao highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration to ensure sustainable and effective development of water resources in the Brahmaputra and Barak Basin. He assured full support for the region's water resource development initiatives and directed central agency officers to assist North Eastern states in preparing project proposals to avail benefits under various Ministry schemes. Earlier in the day, the Secretary toured the Brahmaputra Board complex at Basistha and inaugurated the newly constructed meeting hall designed to enhance collaborative deliberations.

Assam CM Inaugurates TVS Credit Technology Centre in Guwahati



Dispur, Dec 12: Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday inaugurated the TVS Credit Technology Centre at Nexia Tower in Guwahati, marking a major step forward under the Advantage Assam 2.0 initiative. The centre has been established as a follow-up to the MoU signed between the Government of Assam and TVS Credit on 25 February 2025. The new Technology Centre aligns with the State government's goal of strengthening Assam's digital ecosystem and expanding opportunities for youth in high-demand technology domains. Speaking at the inauguration, Dr. Sarma said the centre is expected to play a crucial role in enhancing technology capabilities not only in Assam but across the Northeast. Designed as a

hub for AI development, automation, and advanced digital workflows, the facility aims to prepare over 200 local youths for specialised technology roles. The Chief Minister added that the Guwahati centre will handle several of TVS Credit's critical technology functions. These include next-generation tech-driven collection systems, advanced AI models, loan origination and management platforms, and intelligent automation solutions—contributing to technology-led transformation at a national scale. Dr. Sarma further informed that in the first phase, 25 technology professionals will be hired, of whom 21 have already joined and are receiving training while working on high-end digital projects. He noted that young profes-

sionals at the centre are already contributing to complex initiatives capable of serving customers across India. Looking ahead, he said TVS Credit plans to expand the centre to over 200 highly skilled roles within the next three years, creating sustainable, high-value employment opportunities in Assam. This expansion, he added, would help retain talent within the state by providing competitive career pathways locally. The Chief Minister thanked TVS Credit for establishing the centre in Guwahati, expressing confidence that the move would further strengthen collaboration between the company and the state. Chief Secretary Dr. Ravi Kota and senior officials of TVS Credit were present at the event.

Equity mutual fund inflows jump 21% to Rs 29,911 crore

New Delhi: Equity mutual funds attracted Rs 29,911 crore in November, marking a 21 per cent increase from the preceding month, according to data released by industry body Amfi on Thursday. This rise in inflows comes after three consecutive months of decline, signalling an improvement in investor sentiment. The positive momentum in equity flows also boosted the broader industry's asset base with total assets under management (AUM) rising to Rs 80.80 lakh crore, up from Rs 79.87 lakh crore in October. Retail participation through Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) showed a slight softening. SIP inflows edged down to Rs 29,445 crore, compared with Rs 29,631 crore in the previous month. According to the data, net flows in equity mutual funds rose to Rs 29,911



crore in November, up from Rs 24,690 crore in October. The net inflow in equities stood at Rs 30,421 crore in September and Rs 33,430 crore in August. Most sub-categories saw positive traction, except for dividend yield and ELSS funds during the month under review. Flexi-cap funds, which remained a preferred choice, recorded the highest inflows at Rs 8,135 crore, though this was a 9 per cent dip from October's Rs 8,929 crore. In contrast, debt mutual funds saw an outflow of Rs 25,692 crore in November after witnessing a hefty inflow of Rs 1.6 lakh crore in the preceding month.

Also, gold Exchange-traded Funds (ETFs) witnessed a sharp slowdown, with net inflows falling to Rs 3,742 crore from Rs 7,743 crore in October, pointing to a shift in investor appetite for safe-haven assets.

Rupee hits all-time low of 90.56 amid trade deal uncertainty and FII outflows

New Delhi: The rupee depreciated 24 paise to a new record low of 90.56 against US dollar in early trade on Friday, as uncertainty over the India-US trade deal and persistent foreign fund outflows dented investors' sentiments. Forex traders said rupee is under pressure largely due to aggressive dollar purchases from importers amid surging global prices for precious metals. "For the day the range of 90 to 90.60 should be honored with a close watch on RBI. Today is also the last day of the talks between the Indian and visiting American delegation and we hope a deal is announced after that," said Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent higher at 98.37. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 0.67 per cent at USD 61.69 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity mar-



ket front, the 30-share benchmark index Sensex was trading higher by 170.40 points at 84,988.53, while the Nifty was up 98.40 points at 25,996.95. "For the day the range of 90 to 90.60 should be honored with a close watch on RBI. Today is also the last day of the talks between Indian and visiting American del-

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the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 0.67 per cent at USD 61.69 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share benchmark index Sensex was trading higher by 170.40 points at 84,988.53, while the Nifty was up 98.40 points at 25,996.95.

Equity mutual fund inflows rise in November as AUM grows on strong market sentiment

New Delhi: Equity mutual funds staged a strong comeback in November after three months of easing contributions, with net inflows rising 21 per cent to ₹29,911 crore, supported by stable macroeconomy and steady corporate earnings. This improvement in inflows also lifted the broader industry's asset base, with total assets under management rising to ₹80.80 lakh crore in November from ₹79.87 lakh crore in October, according to data released by industry body Amfi on Thursday. Equity-oriented schemes continued to drive growth, supported by sustained inflows. Hybrid and passive funds also saw healthy traction, with multi-asset and arbitrage funds to gether accounting for over 70 per cent of hybrid category flows," Venkat N Chalasani, CEO of Amfi, said. However, retail participation via systematic investment plans (SIPs) showed marginal softness, with SIP



inflows easing to ₹29,445 crore from ₹29,631 crore in October. Despite this dip, overall equity inflows strengthened, rising to ₹29,911 crore in November from ₹24,690 crore in the previous month, the data showed. Flows, however, remain about 17 per

cent lower year-on-year and well below ₹30,421 crore registered in September, ₹33,430 crore in August and ₹42,702 crore in July. Market experts caution that while the month-on-month improvement signals firmer investor sentiment, sustaining the

momentum will be important. The growth reflected sustained "investor confidence amid a supportive macro environment, resilient corporate earnings and improving clarity around the global interest-rate trajectory", Himanshu Srivastava, principal research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

"The overall trend for November reflects a stabilising risk appetite and stronger, broad-based net inflows across core equity categories," said Akhil Chaturvedi, ED and CBO, Motilal Oswal Asset Management Company.

Flexi-cap funds continued to dominate with ₹8,135 crore in inflows, though slightly lower than October's ₹8,929 crore. Large & mid-cap funds followed at ₹4,503 crore, while dividend yield and ELSS funds were the only categories to record net outflows of ₹278 crore and ₹570 crore, respectively.

Microsoft announces USD 17.5 billion

New Delhi: Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella on Thursday said the company is deepening its commitment to India's artificial intelligence ecosystem with massive infrastructure investments. Microsoft is also strengthening its cloud footprint and focusing on skilling millions of Indians for an AI-driven future, he said. Speaking at a Microsoft event here, Nadella said, "We are very excited about investing in India to make sure that we're able to bring the best in class infrastructure here, the USD 17.5 billion investment," calling it Microsoft's largest investment in Asia. "We're building on Azure as the world's computer and we have 70 plus data centre regions all over the world. In India, the footprint continues to grow. We now have central India, West India, South India, and we have a partnership with Jio as well," he said. He further said that a new data centre region would become operational in 2026. "We are very



excited that in 2026, we will have a new DC in south central and then the most exciting part for me is that it's 100 per cent sustainable," he said. Nadella also emphasised the importance of digital sovereignty and cybersecurity in an era of expanding AI deployment. "We are taking sovereignty and making sure that there's a portfolio of options for sovereignty. So you have the public cloud, you have sovereign controls in public cloud..." he noted.

Sensex surges 232 Nifty near 25,600



New Delhi: Indian equity benchmark indices, the Sensex and Nifty, started the session in green on Friday, December 12, 2025, after US stocks hit a record high, even as the dollar headed for its third straight weekly drop. While the 30-share BSE Sensex surged 232.9 points to start the session at 85,051.03, the Nifty gained 72.65 points to open at 25,971.20. In the last trading session, the Sensex closed at 84,818.13 and the Nifty 50 at 25,898.55. The broader indices also traded in the green in the opening session. While the BSE Midcap added 102.58 points, or 0.22 per cent, in the early trading session, the BSE Smallcap index was up by 95.60 points or 0.19 per cent, to trade at 50,658.93. From the Sensex pack, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, Axis Bank and Bajaj Finance were among the major gainers, with L&T leading the pack by gaining around 1.92 per cent in the early trade today. On the other hand, Eternal, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever, and ITC were among the laggards, with Eternal shedding 0.38 per cent in the opening trade. Meanwhile, Asian markets traded mostly in green after US stock markets hit a record high. While Japan's Nikkei 225 surged 460.18 points or 0.92 per cent to trade at 50,609, Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 361.49 points. Similarly, South Korea's Kospi traded in the green with a gain of 27.92 points. However, Shanghai's SSE Composite index was down by 1.54 points or 0.04 per cent. On December 12, 2025, Indian markets opened strong with the Sensex up over 230 points (around 85,051) and the Nifty nearing 25,600 (around 25,971), driven by positive global cues like record US stocks and strong domestic buying, with Larsen & Toubro (L&T), Tata Steel, and other heavyweights leading gains, while broader indices also showed strength. Surged by 232.9 points to open at 85,051.03, a positive start was supported by record highs in US stocks and strong Asian markets.

Institutional Activity: Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) were net buyers, while Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) continued selling on the previous day.

NBFC stock trades in green unveiling AI-driven profilin

New Delhi: Shares of Paisalo Digital, a non-banking financial company, are on investors' radar today as the company has shared details about the launch of an advanced AI-powered customer profiling and fraud detection framework. The stock started the trading session in the green at Rs 37.90 against the previous close of Rs 37.89 on the BSE.

It later rose to a high of Rs 38.26. Last seen, the counter was trading at Rs 38.07 with a gain of 0.48 per cent. The market cap of the company stood at Rs 3,462.55. On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), the stock opened at Rs 38 and later touched the intraday high of Rs 38.24 and intraday low of Rs 37.87. The stock has been gaining for the last four days and has risen 4.89

per cent in the period. Paisalo Digital is trading higher than the 5-day, 20-day, 50-day, 100-day and 200-day moving averages. The company said in its exchange filing after market hours on Thursday that it has launched its advanced AI-based customer profiling and fraud detection framework, aimed at further strengthening credit risk management.

The company has also launched a GenAI-based calling system, which will improve loan recovery and customer communication.

According to the filing, this framework will be implemented across all major loan segments of Paisalo – such as micro LAP, income generation loans and MSME financing.

Sebi defers third phase of nomination framework amid operational hurdles

New Delhi: Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday announced the deferment of the third phase of its nomination framework for the securities market, which was earlier scheduled to take effect on December 15. In January, Sebi issued guidelines to revamp the nomination process for mutual fund folios and demat accounts to enhance transparency and minimise unclaimed assets in the securities market. Following representations from various industry bodies, the regulator decided to adopt a phased implementation approach through a subsequent circular in February 2025. However, depositories, depository participants, and industry bodies have again expressed operational challenges and requested more time to update their systems and processes. "In view of the foregoing, it has been decided to defer the timeline for implementing the aforesaid circular from 15 December, 2025, to a further date to be notified separately," Sebi

said. Under the circular, if one or more joint account holders pass away, the assets will be transferred to the surviving holder or holders without the need for additional KYC unless it was requested earlier and not provided. The guidelines are addressed to entities like AMCs, depositories, and other market participants and introduce significant changes to the rule of survivorship, mandatory nomination for single holdings, and enhanced safeguards for authenticity. Under the rule of survivorship, assets in joint accounts will be transferred to surviving holders without affecting prior nominations or operational modes.

The market watchdog also introduced robust measures to verify and validate nominations. The new implementation date will be announced later, the Securities and Exchange Board of India said in its circular. The deferment comes in response to operational challenges faced by depositories and other stakeholders. Sebi highlighted new rules al-



lowing investors to nominate up to 10 persons in the account or folio, with an option to specify percentage allocations for each.

In the absence of any such specification, assets will be equally distributed among all nominees. In case of the demise of the investor and any one of the nominees, regulated entities will distribute the assets on a pro rata basis to the remaining nominees.

IT stock remains as board approves

The stock's 14-day relative strength index (RSI) is 62.13. For the uninitiated, a level above 70 is considered overbought or overvalued, and below 30 is defined as oversold or undervalued.

New Delhi: The stock has fallen after four days of consecutive gains and technically, the counter trades higher than the 5-day and 20-day moving averages but lower than the 50-day, 100-day and 200-day moving averages.

OnePlus 15R Ace Edition India launch confirmed

Mumbai: OnePlus is hosting another big launch with the OnePlus 15R and the OnePlus Pad Go 2 debuting on December 17. Alongside these two major launches, the company will also be introducing the Ace Edition of the OnePlus 15R. This model will be offered as a third colour variant of the phone. Hence, the OnePlus 15R will be launching in three colourways, with the Ace Edition coming in the Electric Violet option. The OnePlus 15R Ace Edition will launch on December 17, 2025, alongside the standard OnePlus 15R and e phone a gaming vibe. It also has a special textured coating that has an "Ace" branding. OnePlus 15R Ace Edition: What's coming

The OnePlus 15R Ace Edition is revealed to feature a 1.5K AMOLED display with a 165Hz refresh rate. The display could offer 450PPI pixel density and up to 1,800 nits of peak brightness. The smartphone will be powered by the new Snapdragon 8 Gen 5 chipset, which is co-designed with OnePlus. It will also include a G2 Wi-Fi chip and Touch Response Chip. OnePlus 15R Ace Edition is also confirmed to feature DetailMax En-



gine, which is an in-house imaging technology for advanced photography. The smartphone is also revealed to be backed by a massive 7,400mAh battery. In terms of pricing, the OnePlus 15R se-

ries will likely be announced between Rs 35,000 to Rs 45,000 in India. Now, we will have to wait until launch to confirm what the new mid-ranger will look like.

Controversy Hits Aryan Khan's Show: SRK's Co-Star Criticizes Dialogues

Mumbai: Since Aryan Khan's debut show The Ba***ds of Bollywood dropped on Netflix, it has become the subject of wide-spread discussion. While the series received glowing reactions from many viewers, a significant portion of the audience remained unimpressed, with some criticizing its frequent use of crude and abusive language. Recently, British-Pakistani actor Alyy Khan, who has appeared in major Hindi films and shows, including Shah Rukh Khan's Don 2, shared his candid opinion about Aryan's work at ARY Podcast.

"Recently maine Aryan ka kaam dekha The Ba***ds of Bollywood mein, mujhe bohot ajeeb laga. Ek toh family ke saath aap dekh nahi sakte hain kyunki language itni ajeeb hai. Aur uss language ki koi justification bhi nahi thi, aur jiss level ke log dekh rahe thay aap,



kya woh aise sadak chap language use karte hai? Mujhe kabhi kabhi lagta hai ki eyeballs ke liye, ratings ke liye, iss tarah ke informed decisions liye jaate hai? Wohi cheez kehne ki bohot tareeke hote hai. Aur agar gaali dene bhi hai, toh closeup ki tarah honi chahiye na. Ki jab chahiye tab bolo aap, that's when you get the impact. Agar har jumle mein woh aa rahi hai toh cringe hai woh, boriyat ho jaati hai." Alyy Khan is not the first actor to openly criticize the show. Recently, Vivek Vaswani, some-

one who helped Shah Rukh Khan navigate his early struggling days, shared his honest disappointment with its depiction of the film industry: "What I felt was that when Shah Rukh came into the industry, the amount of love and respect that Aziz Mirza and Nirmala gave him, and that me and my mother gave him, and Saeed Mirza gave him... All of them gave him so much love, so much affection. So when did he come to the conclusion that Bollywood is a gutter and everyone in it is bad people? He is the

one person who was treated with kid gloves as a rank outsider."

He added that Shah Rukh Khan was welcomed with open arms by the industry, yet the show mocked it relentlessly: "Everyone treated him so well, so warmly, without a single rift. So for me, and maybe I am the only one in this whole country who may have felt like this, but I am also the only one in the country whose house he lived in for two years. Toh haq banta hai to say: Why did you think we were a bad industry? Why did you personally think that everyone was bad? I can understand you showing whatever you showed. But why was there not one redeeming character in the show? Someone who says: Yes, maybe everything is bad, but there are also some good, decent human beings here. And he is living proof of that."

Simhadri: New cast, big reunion coming for Percy Jackson 2

Agency: The second season of Percy Jackson and the Olympians jumps straight into adventure, with the main trio, Percy Jackson, Annabeth Chase and Grover Underwood, played by Walker Scobell, Leah Sava Jeffries and Aryan Simhadri, taking separate paths. Grover sets off on his own mission, while Percy and Annabeth try to find him. Simhadri, who plays Grover, explained that this season shows how their bond has grown and changed since the first season.

one that we're all back together, except we're not. Like, I'm not even really there. It's hard to talk about the trio's main bond without talking about how our family has expanded, because the only way that we're all still kind of connected is through these other members that have joined our quest. It's through Clar-



isse. It's through Daniel, even through Luke, even though he's not really part of our quest. And then we'll finally get that moment back at the end when we're all together!"I think it's just this moment of, like, we never want that to happen ever again. We made this promise in season one to meet under the tree. And we finally get to make it happen. And it's a huge moment for all of us," the young star added. Aryan Simhadri shared that there are other characters on the show he would like to try playing. He thinks Luke will be fun, even though he feels Charlie Bushnell plays him best. He also finds characters like Ethan Nakamura and Nico interesting because they are complex and exciting to portray.

Alia Bhatt Reveals Raha Is 'Glued' to Paparazzi, Shares Sweet Details at Red Sea Event

Mumbai: Alia Bhatt recently opened up about life with her daughter Raha at the Red Sea Film Festival in Jeddah. This conversation offered fans a rare and heart-melting glimpse into the toddler's growing curiosity. Speaking during a special conversation session honouring her cinematic journey, Alia revealed that Raha has become increasingly inquisitive and expressive about her world.

Reflecting on how much has changed since her last visit to the festival, Alia shared, "The last time I was here, Raha was one and now she is three. 'Where are you, how far away, what are you bringing me when you come back?'" she laughed, revealing how her daughter now questions her travel, work commitments, and day-to-day absence. The Raazi actress added that Raha has even developed "her own relationship with the paparazzi." She went on to say that Raha is 'super chill' when it comes to the paps. This marks her growing awareness of the attention surrounding her family. Fans were in for a



treat as in a warm moment, Alia sang Raha's favourite lullaby on stage. The actor revealed that her daughter now makes specific song requests, choosing between "this or that song" depending on her mood. Alia emphasised that motherhood has reshaped her perspective on work. While discussing how she chooses her projects, she answered, saying, "My priorities are my daughter and my family, so I have to focus on what really matters."

The conversation also touched upon her upcoming action film Alpha, the first female-led movie in the YRF Spy Universe. Starring alongside Sharvari

Script overlap killed Rajinikanth, Bachchan, Dixit film instantly

Mumbai: As Rajinikanth celebrates his 75th birthday, Tinnu Anand has opened up about his shelved film, Shanaakht (1988), which also starred Amitabh Bachchan and Madhuri Dixit. In a recent chat with The Fress Press Journal, the actor-director praised the veteran star and also opened up about why Shanaakht got shelved.

Tinnu Anand said, "I mean, I just don't have enough words to praise this man. Yes, I was supposed to do a film with him called Shanaakht, directed by me. He had come down for the Mahurat with Amitabh, Madhavi, and Madhuri Dixit. I shot for five days with Amitabh in RK Studios, and then I went off to see Ganga Jamunaa Saraswathi (1988), first day, first show." He continued, "And then I found out that the story was very similar to mine. Mine was full of action, but the



romantic part of the film with Amitabh was the same. So I went to Amitabh and said, 'What is this? How come the story is the same? And you never told me?' He said, 'But yours is action.' I said, 'No, but the romantic angle is exactly the same. A man has lost his memory, a girl falls in love with him, but he's already married; he doesn't know. I said, it's the same. I'm not going to make this film.'"

Tinnu Anand continued, "I lost a lot of money. But one day, both Rajinikanth Garu and I were shooting for

different films at the same studio. He sent word that he'd like to meet me. I said, 'Don't tell him to come, I'll come to his makeup room.' We met, and he asked me, 'What happened to that film? You have never come back for dates.' I had given him a signing amount. I said, 'I've dropped the film, sir.' He was shocked. He said, 'Why? How come you spent so much money on your shoot?' I said, 'Yes, that's a loss. But anyway, I can't carry on losing money on a script which has already been made.'"

Aamir, Gauri Spratt stole the show at KKPK 2 premiere

Mumbai: Aamir Khan's love life has been the talk of the town ever since he made his relationship with Gauri Spratt official. The two are often spotted together at events, outings and airports, and the internet simply can't get enough of their chemistry.

Recently, the couple attended the screening of Kapil Sharma's film Kis KisKo Pyaar Karoon 2, and once again, it was their effortless charm and connection that stole the spotlight at the event. Aamir Khan and Gauri kept it simple with their looks for the evening. The Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak actor opted for track pants, a basic T-shirt, and a jacket layered on top. Gauri, on the other hand, sported a casual outfit featuring jeans and a T-shirt, which she elevated with a chic velvet blazer. The duo walked hand-in-hand and posed for the paparazzi with warm smiles. Towards the end of the video, Aamir can be heard thanking the photographers, while Gauri looked at him with a soft, loving expression.

A user commented on the video, "Cute couple." An-



other user called Gauri a "Decent lady." Someone wrote, "Cuties." An individual remarked, "Lovely". In an interview with Hindustan Times, Aamir Khan opened up about his personal life and admitted that he never imagined he would fall in love at 60. He explained that he had reached a stage where he felt he might never meet someone who could truly be his partner, so finding love again came as a surprise. He described Gauri as someone who brings peace and stability into his life, calling her an incredible person and saying he feels extremely lucky to have met her. Aamir added that even though his marriages didn't last, he remains grateful for having Reena, Kiran, and now Gauri in his life, as each of them has played a significant role in shaping who he is and continues to inspire him in many ways.

Shivangi Joshi shines, Single Papa event

Mumbai: Netflix's latest series Single Papa began streaming on the platform on December 12 and early reactions from viewers have been overwhelmingly positive. Audiences are praising its heartfelt storytelling, relatable humour, and engaging performances, making it one of the most talked-about new releases of the week.

A special premiere for the show was held last night, drawing a crowd of well-known celebrities who arrived to show their support. Among the notable attendees was television star Shivangi Joshi, whose appearance quickly became a highlight of the evening. In a video from the event, Shivangi Joshi is seen posing gracefully for



the cameras before making her way inside the venue. She opted for a stylish light-blue, pinstriped shirt dress featuring a classic collar. Her outfit was tastefully accessorised with gold hoop earrings and a gold-toned watch or bracelet on her left wrist.

Her hair was styled sleekly in a pulled-back ponytail, and her makeup remained soft and natural—perfectly complementing the understated elegance of her ensemble. Along with Shivangi, several cast members from the show marked their presence. Prajakta Koli, lead actor Kunal Kemmu, and his wife Soha Ali Khan were also spotted at the premiere, adding to the star power of the night. Single Papa features an impressive ensemble cast, including Manoj Pahwa, Ayesha Raza and Prajakta Koli, among others. Together, they bring depth, humour and warmth to a story that celebrates the true essence of family. It highlights that family isn't defined by blood alone, it's about love, laughter and standing by one another when it matters the most. At the center of the series is Kunal Kemmu, who plays Gaurav Gehlot, an impulsive and emotionally immature young man whose life is a chaotic mix of unfulfilled ambitions and avoidance.

Radhika Apte Anchors Tisca Chopra's Gripping Directorial, Saali Mohabbat



Mumbai: Tisca Chopra's directorial debut, Saali Mohabbat, has finally been released. It is now streaming on ZEE5, and boasts a powerful ensemble featuring Radhika Apte, Divyendru, Anshumaan Pushkar and Sauraseni Maitra – apart from a few other special appearances. Interestingly, the film also marks famous fashion designer Manish Malhotra's digital debut as a producer. But is it worth watching? Let's find out.

Saali Mohabbat follows Smita, a small-town housewife whose quiet, orderly world slowly unravels as long-buried secrets surface. Through Smita's journey, the story delves into the tangled layers of infidelity, deceit and self-discovery, offering an intimate, distinctly female perspective on how trust is broken, rebuilt and ultimately redefined. Saali

Mohabbat will remind you of gripping thrillers like Drishyam and Andhadhun, blending sharp twists, emotional tension and constant suspense. The story pulls you in from the very first moment and keeps you alert, guessing and questioning every character's intention. Its fast pace and unexpected turns make it difficult to look away, even for a second. With every scene, the film tightens its grip, delivering a thrilling experience that stays with you long after it ends.

One good highlight of the movie is how it builds up the audience's interest without any dramatisation. With a calm and measured tone, it skillfully builds anticipation and tension, keeping the audience engaged. There is no over-dramatisation of the plot. Makers do not create any hype with the use of

music. The story unfolds naturally, allowing the plot to breathe and the characters to shine. In this regard, Tisca Chopra, as a director, has done a very good job. In the second half of the movie, you might start to feel that the story is heading towards a predictable conclusion. You might believe that you have already guessed the next twist. But just when you are confident that you know exactly how events will unfold, the film takes an unexpected turn. It surprises and shocks you. As far as performances are concerned, Radhika Apte is mind-blowing in the film. She plays her part with utmost diligence and impresses everyone. Divyendru also brings back his charm and plays his part perfectly. His character is witty and even tries to be over-smart, until you reach the climax of the movie. Kusha Kapila also makes a special appearance in the movie but leaves no lasting impact. Anurag Kashyap, on the other hand, lights up the atmosphere with his portrayal of Gajendra, a man who runs a local casino. Overall, Tisca Chopra's directorial debut, Saali Mohabbat, is an interesting thriller, which surely deserves praise.

Darshan's The Devil First Day Collections



Bengaluru: The opening day box office performance of the Kannada action-drama film The Devil was reportedly impressive. Starring 'Challenging Star' Darshan Thoogudeepa as an anti-hero, the film mopped up approximately Rs 10 crore net in India on Day 1.

While the talk on the ground is mixed, Darshan's "vintage" performance and stylish entry scenes are being liked by the audience. Also featuring Rachana Rai, Mahesh Manjrekar, Achyuth Kumar, and Sharmila Mandre, the film's political drama elements are said to be run-of-the-mill. The film features Darshan as a master of disguises whose real appearance is not seen by many. Composed by B. Ajaneesh Loknath and ABBS Studios Bangalore, its cinematography is done by Sudhakarr S. Raj. Edited by Harish Komme, its dialogues are written by Kanthraj S. S. The Ram-Lakshman duo, who have also choreographed Akhanda 2's stunts, are behind the action direction for The Devil.

Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar Hits ₹200 Crore Mark in Record-Breaking Week 1

Dhurandhar Box Office

Mumbai: Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar, directed by Aditya Dhar, has set the Indian box office ablaze, achieving a historic milestone within its first week. The highly anticipated spy thriller received widespread acclaim for its gripping storyline, star-studded cast, and thrilling action sequences, making it the talk of social media.

On its seventh day, Dhurandhar earned Rs 27 crore, bringing its total domestic collection to an impressive Rs 207.25 crore, according to Sacnilk. The film had previously collected Rs 29.20 crore on Thursday, signaling a strong and consistent performance throughout the week. With this monumental haul, Dhurandhar has surpassed the lifetime collections of major Bollywood releases like Sikandar (Rs 109.83 crore), Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani (Rs 153.55 crore), and Raid 2 (Rs 173.05 crore), cementing its place as one of the biggest hits of the year. Veteran filmmaker Madhur Bhan-



dakar praised Dhurandhar's success, stating on X, "Post Dhurandhar's super success, there will be a big paradigm shift in the Mumbai film industry, driven by strong content, diverse casting, and production houses backing scripts that resonate with audiences on a large scale. This one film is set to redefine the dynamics of Hindi cinema & shift how stories, talent, and conviction come

together."The film follows Ranveer Singh's character, an Indian spy infiltrating terror networks in Lyari, Pakistan. His mission unfolds amid high-octane action and tense espionage sequences. The ensemble cast also includes Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun, and R Madhavan in pivotal roles, adding depth and gravitas to the narrative. With audiences eagerly awaiting

the next installment, Dhurandhar 2 is scheduled for release on March 19, 2026, promising to take the story and scale even further. The first installment of Dhurandhar not only showcases Ranveer Singh's dynamic performance but also marks a turning point in Indian spy thrillers, proving that strong content, combined with star power, can dominate box office records.

Eight of the world’s most extraordinary tiny hotel rooms



From Colombia’s upcycled sewer pipes to spheres suspended in the sky in Canada, capsule hotels have been reinvented for a new generation of travellers. By night, the world’s first capsule hotel (founded in Osaka, Japan in 1979) must have looked like a morgue, with neat rows of narrow sleeping capsules each containing a recumbent body. But the following day, the occupants – mostly businessmen who had worked late - would rise up and head back to the office, grateful for this efficient sleep solution that had saved them a commute home in the early hours. As the concept spread, tourists happy to sleep in a room no bigger than its bed began to bunk up alongside them, eager to sample this unusual aspect of Japanese culture. Fast-forward to today, and high hotel room rates, fuelled by years of rising real estate prices, have supercharged this typically low-cost concept, which offers budget travel-

lers priced out of traditional hotels more privacy than a hostel dormitory and more comfort and connectivity than camping. The capsules, which are predominantly single-occupancy, also answer the current boom in solo travel, with single-sex capsule hotels providing additional security. With the global capsule hotel market projected to reach \$327m by 2031, curious hybrids have emerged to sustain the trend and attract new customers. They’re tempting the TikTok generation with increasingly outlandish forms, from upcycled sewer pipes in the Colombian desert to space-age pods with a dashboard of ambient controls in downtown Sydney, Australia – all promising a unique experience and shareable stories for social media. Meanwhile capsule-cum-bookstores invite book lovers to snooze among the shelves, and boutique versions bring luxury to a traditionally no-frills market with fancy decor or promis-

es of fluffy duck-feather duvets. As the concept continues to reinvent itself, here are eight of the most extraordinary examples.

A sleep laboratory

Nine Hours, a chain of 13 hotels across Japan, from Fukuoka in the west to the north-east island of Hokkaido, has an unusual by-product: sleep data. In the Shinagawa Station (men only) and Akasaka branches, guests can sign up for a “9h sleep fitscan” service, where sensors detect everything from breathing to facial expressions to generate a sleep report that tracks their heart rate, identifies sleep apnea and even monitors snoring. In a sector where a novel or low-budget stay is often prioritised over comfort, Nine Hours’ interest in how well its guests are sleeping sets it apart. Across the franchise, the white, minimalist decor continues this clinical theme, while its rows of sleek, shiny sleeping pods would not look out of place on the set of a science-fiction movie. The name refers to the hotel’s cost-cutting concept that reduces room rental to the essential nine hours, allowing seven hours for sleep and an hour on either side for washing and dressing. Just need a nap? Hourly rates are also available.

Climb to the sky

A night in a transparent sleeping pod clinging to a cliff face above Peru’s Sacred Valley is not everyone’s idea of a relaxing stay, but for adrenaline-lovers, it’s hard to beat – not least for the incredible 300-degree views of the surrounding mountains and the formidable condors that inhabit them. A near-vertical climb of 400m is the only way to reach the Skyledge Adventure Suites, but climbing experience is not necessary – only good health and a head for heights – and descending is speedier thanks to a series of zip wires. Each capsule includes a private bathroom ensuring that night trips to the toilet are not life-threatening, and when the

sun rises, you can enjoy a cup of tea on your private deck. Looking for a little more luxury? A little further down the Urubamba river, sister site, Starlodge, adds hillside hot tubs to the capsule hotel experience.

A desert oasis

The Tubo Hotel, La Tatacoa is just a 10-minute drive from Colombia’s second-largest desert, the eponymous Tatacoa, famous for its clear starry skies. When you’ve taken in the giant cacti and curious rock formations of the Tatacoa’s cinnamon-coloured sands, this rainbow of tiny, air-conditioned rooms with a shared swimming pool offers a welcome oasis. The 37 capsules are fashioned from concrete sewer pipes painted in candy colours, providing just enough room for a double bed. Almost

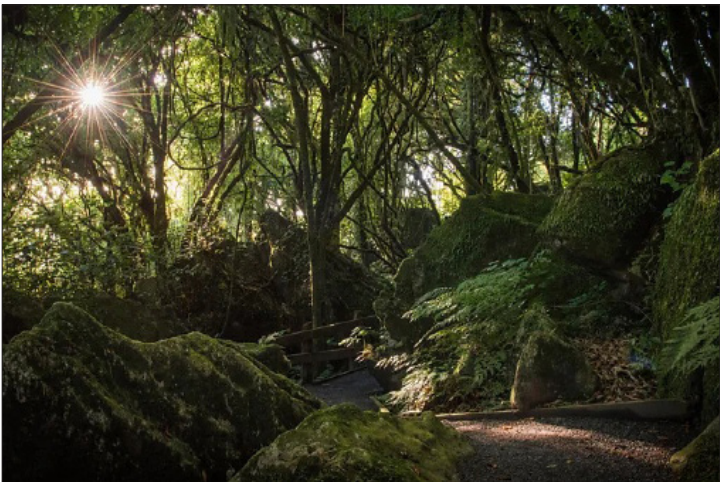
half of the rooms have a shared bathroom, but the room rate is a snip and you’ve a shady garden, bar and restaurant on your doorstep. “This innovative and colourful place offers you a unique experience,” says Ambar Quintana, the hotel’s administrator. “It has everything you need to rest in a natural environment of fresh air and vegetation.”

Immerse in nature

Suspended among the conifers like oversized Christmas baubles, the Free Spirit Spheres on Vancouver Island, Canada, feel “like you are floating in the canopy among the sleeping birds”, according to owner Tom Chudleigh. The first sphere was introduced 25 years ago, driven by a desire to promote ecotourism and preserve Canada’s ancient forests.



A Tolkien trail: Where to find the real-life Middle-earth



While Tolkien’s stories take place in the fictional realm of Middle-earth, the awe-inspiring landscapes of the books, films and TV shows are closer than you might imagine. The first book in J R R Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings trilogy, The Fellowship of the Ring, was released 70 years ago, in the summer of 1954. However, that’s not the only recent milestone for Tolkien’s legendarium: the second season of the epic TV series, The Rings of Power, was released on 29 August 2024. As befits the ultimate epic fantasy series, the settings are gorgeous, ranging from bucolic, rolling countryside to plunging valleys and desolate deserts. And while Tolkien’s stories take place in the fictional realm of Middle-earth, the awe-inspiring landscapes of the books, films and TV shows are not as otherworldly as you might imagine. Many of them are based on real-world locations and visiting them brings to life both the landscapes themselves and the imaginary worlds they inspired Tolkien to create.

The Tolkien Trail: Lancashire, England

While writing The Lord of the Rings in the 1940s, Tolkien lived for a while at Stonyhurst College, a prestigious boarding school in Lancashire where his son was a teacher. The elder Tolkien was known to walk often through the woodlands and rolling hills of the surrounding Ribble Valley, and is thought to have taken inspiration from the place while creating the Shire, the rural homeland of the hobbits. Today, fans can explore the area on the Tolkien Trail, which opened in 2002 and takes hikers through the very landscapes that inspired the author. The route starts in the village of Hurst Green at the atmospheric 17th-Century Shireburn Arms pub, where Tolkien was a regular.

It then winds for around seven easy miles through undulating farmland, past the grand buildings of Stonyhurst College, and across historic landmarks like Cromwell’s Bridge, an overgrown packhorse bridge once used by Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil War. Although Tolkien didn’t directly document the influence of places along the trail, there are several sources of likely inspiration. The route passes the stately home Hacking Hall where, during Tolkien’s time, there was a wooden ferry barge, the Hacking Ferry, that carried people across the River Ribble. In The Fellowship of the Ring, the Bucklebury Ferry (also outside a stately home, Brandy Hall) carries the hobbits across the Brandywine River in similar fashion while they are fleeing a fearsome spectral horseman. The local landowning family near Stonyhurst, meanwhile, were called the Shireburns – and the similarly named River Shirebourne appears in Tolkien’s geography of Middle-earth. Tolkien’s maps, meanwhile, depict the convergence of three rivers – the Shirebourne, Withywindle and Brandywine – in a way that exactly mirrors the meeting of the Hoddle, Ribble and Calder rivers here in Lancashire. In addition, St Mary’s Church in the nearby village of Newchurch-in-Pendle bears an unusual feature: an eye-shaped carving halfway up the tower, known as the Eye of God, which resembles the all-seeing Eye of Sauron from the Lord of the Rings books and movies.

Cheddar Gorge: Somerset, England

Most of the real-life places associated with Tolkien’s imaginings of Mid-

dle-earth are based on educated guesswork, but there is one place that the writer himself confirmed as a real-life inspiration for The Lord of the Rings. Tolkien and his wife Edith married in 1916, and honeymooned in the Somerset village of Clevedon. While they were there, they paid a visit to one of the most jaw-dropping landscapes in Britain: Cheddar Gorge, a sheer limestone valley, pockmarked with caves whose walls are bejewelled with intricate rock formations, stalagmites and stalactites.

The honeymooning author – always married, at least in part, to his work – was taking notes, and in 1971 he confirmed in a private letter (published in 1981 as part of The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien) that the caves of Cheddar Gorge inspired the Glittering Caves of Helm’s Deep in The Lord of the Rings.

Visit Gough Cave, the most famous of the caves at Cheddar, and you’ll likely recognise elements of Tolkien’s description of the Glittering Caves: “columns of white and saffron and dawn-rose ... fluted and twisted into dreamlike forms”.

Denize Bluffs: Waitomo, New Zealand

LOTR mega-fans will instantly recognise Denize Bluffs, an area of soaring rock formations and wild bush on New Zealand’s North Island. In the films, this landscape features in the prequel movie The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey as the Trollshaws, a hillside forest where Bilbo Baggins encounters some hostile trolls. In the TV show, meanwhile, Denize Bluffs serves as part of the highland home of the Harfoots, the series’ hobbit protagonists. In reality, Denize Bluffs sits on a privately owned sheep and cattle farm that has been in the same family for three generations. Current stewards Warrick and Suzie Denize are very proud of the Lord of the Rings association, and now run Hairy Feet Waitomo: tours of the property that take in the various locations seen in the films and TV shows and bring them to life with showbiz tales from the production. Tours must be booked in advance. The farm can be found around eight miles west of the town of Piopio.

Stow-on-the-Wold: Gloucestershire, England

Tolkien was a deeply religious man, and although he always refuted the theory that The Lord of the Rings was a Christian allegory, the work is infused with spirituality. Tolkien spent his professional life as a professor at the University of Oxford, and he was known to have often visited the nearby Cotswolds, a picturesque area of golden-stone villages, gently rolling hills and seriously photogenic churches. One of those churches, St Edward’s Church in the market town of Stow-on-the-Wold, has long been earmarked as a likely source of inspiration for Tolkien. Its north door is among the most photographed doors in the country: carved from heavy, studded wood, crowned with an arching architrave and hung with an oil lamp.

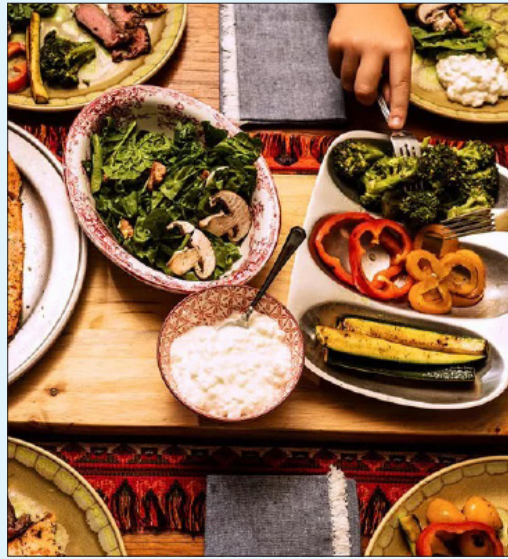
Its most striking feature is the two yew trees that flank the doorway, planted three centuries ago and now huge, twisted and gnarled, having grown into the structure of the church itself. Tolkien accompanied his writings with beautiful hand-drawn artworks, one of which depicts the Doors of Durin, a hidden entrance to the inside of a mountain that harbours the Dwarf city of Khazad-dûm. Tolkien’s drawing, although stylised, is almost identical to the north door of St Edward’s Church, from the trees that bookmark the entrance to the lamp that hangs above it – giving rise to the longstanding rumour that this is where he found inspiration for his mythical mountain doors.

Teide National Park: Tenerife, Spain

The moon-like deserts of Tenerife feature prominently in the new series of The Rings of Power, as a barren wasteland through which the mysterious Stranger, a wizard who has lost his memory, is travelling with two hobbits. Tenerife’s Indigenous Guanche people traditionally believed that Teide was the gateway to the underworld domain of malevolent deity Guayota – and it’s not hard to see why, with its fierce winds, searing heat and dusty plains dotted with gnarled, skeletal trees. It’s unsurprising that Teide was chosen as the real-life setting for the realm of Rhûn, which, in Tolkien’s works, is a mysterious region of moral corruption and dark sorcery.

Low carb diet may improve cholesterol levels in people with type 2 diabetes

People with type 2 diabetes are at a higher risk of developing high cholesterol, which is a risk factor for heart disease. Traditionally, a high carbohydrate and low fat diet was considered best for people with type 2 diabetes. Over the past few years, some studies have shown that following a low-carbohydrate, high-fat diet may be beneficial for those with type 2 diabetes. A new study says that replacing some dietary carbohydrates with protein and fat in the diet of people with type 2 diabetes may help improve their cholesterol levels. People with type 2 diabetes — a condition where the body struggles to manage its blood sugar levels — are at a higher risk for cardiovascular disease. Previous studies also show that those with type 2 diabetes have a heightened risk of developing high cholesterol, which is a risk factor for heart disease. Both type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol often can be managed by changes in diet and lifestyle. Traditionally, a high low fat diet with carbohydrates and fiber-rich foods was considered best for diabetes. Over the past few years, some studies have shown that replacing some dietary carbohydrates with protein and fat in the diet of people with type 2 diabetes may help improve their cholesterol levels. A study published in January 2023 found that 51% of participants achieved remission following a low-carbohydrate diet. Research published in October 2024 reported that following a low-carbohydrate diet may improve beta-cell function in people with type 2 diabetes, making the disease easier to manage. Now, a new study recently published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition adds to this body of research, stating that replacing a portion of dietary carbohydrates with protein and fat in the diet of people with type 2 diabetes may help improve their cholesterol levels. Reduced carb, high protein diet linked to lower ‘bad’ cholesterol. This new research consists of findings from two different studies completed at Copenhagen University Hospital Bispebjerg in Denmark. The first Isoenergetic (Iso) study included 30 participants with type 2 diabetes focused on maintaining their current weight, while the second Hypoenergetic (Hypo) Study consisted of 72 participants with type 2 diabetes aimed at losing weight. For both studies, participants were provided with all meals for either a carbohydrate-reduced high-protein (CRHP) diet or a conventional diabetes diet over a six-week period. After the Iso Study, researchers found that while weight was maintained in both diet groups, those following the CRHP diet reduced their triacylglycerol-rich lipoproteins, apolipoprotein B, and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol — also known as “bad” cholesterol — while increasing their amount of “good” high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, compared to those following the conventional diabetes diet. When analyzing the Hypo Study, weight loss caused by following the CRHP diet tended to reduce TRL and LDL levels and increase HDL, compared to those who lost the same amount of weight following the conventional diabetes diet. However, in the Hypo Study, the metabolic effects of the CRHP diet compared to the conventional diabetes diet were less noticeable. The researchers suggest that this is because the weight loss in both diet groups effectively improved cholesterol and lipoprotein levels, likely outweighing the impact of macronutrient differences in the diets. In both studies, researchers also found that following the CRHP diet was linked to decreased intrahepatic triacylglycerol (IHTG). Trusted Source - which when heightened can be a sign of fatty acid imbalance in the liver - than the conventional diabetes diet. “We know that patients with type 2 diabetes have higher risk for cardiovascular disease, regardless of the cholesterol levels, because the glucose in the blood can damage the lining of the blood vessels - we call it vascular injury,” he continued. “And when the blood vessels get injured, there is a higher chance for inflammation of the area, for cholesterol plaque to form in that area, and to result in a heart attack or a stroke from that.” “It’s always important to do research on dietary patterns because what you eat is exceptionally important for your health,” Ni said. “You would think that for something as important that we do every single day of our lives, multiple times a day, that we’d have clarity on what sort of a healthy diet to pursue, but there are actually still some questions outstanding, just because of challenges in doing research in this area. So any research studies that help us to determine what exactly is considered the best heart-healthy diet are appreciated,” he added.



What are the best carbs for type 2 diabetes?
MNT also spoke with Monique Richard, MS, RDN, LDN, a registered dietitian nutritionist and owner of Nutrition-In-Sight to get her top tips on the best carbohydrates for readers who have type 2 diabetes or are prediabetic. “Often the first-line of addressing glucose control when working with those who have prediabetes or diabetes is adjusting carbohydrate intake as well as educating about why it matters (hint, carbohydrates break down to glucose which in turn affects blood glucose regulation), the quality, the variation among carbohydrate food groups (the carbohydrate profile of a donut is much different than the amount of carbohydrate in broccoli, or even a potato), and all the nuances in between,” Richard explained. “When educating my clients and patients on carbohydrates I let them know that “nothing is off the table” (pun intended). It is all about understanding portion sizes as well as how that food acts in your body. One individual with diabetes may have a very different blood glucose reaction from pizza compared to another individual with diabetes,” Richard said.

India Couture Week Kicks Off with Rahul Mishra’s Stunning Vision



Every year, the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) brings together the country’s best design talents, making India Couture Week (ICW) the pinnacle of craftsmanship and fashion. Needless to say, anyone viewing an ICW showcase is sure to be in for a visual treat. Of course, Indian couture is incomplete without the mention of Rahul Mishra, who opened this week-long fashion spectacle with his collection titled Becoming Love. With a set designed to imitate the craters of the Moon, the showcase was a marriage expressions of everlasting love, and technological marvels.

Keeping in mind the way artificial intelligence (AI) has permeated every aspect of everyday life, Mishra asked AI tools to define love, building his collection around those descriptions. The collection itself was an extension of the designer’s presentation at last month’s Paris Haute Couture Week, with an additional bridal line catered to his Indian clientele. Mishra’s bridal line in particular drew inspiration from Krishna’s Raas Leela, Mughal art, the works of Claude Monet and Gustav Klimt, as well as the cosmos for a collection that was romantic, evocative, with the right amount of gravitas.

7 Dietitian-Approved Foods for Lower Blood Sugar



Blood sugar control is crucial, especially with cases of diabetes increasing across India. Along with medication and lifestyle, a balanced diet plays a significant role in maintaining steady sugar levels. So, what are some common foods that can help manage blood sugar naturally? We turned to Dr Rajeshwari Panda, head of the dietetics department, Medicovert Hospital, Kharghar, Navi Mumbai. A well-known superfood in India, methi seeds contain soluble fibre that slows sugar absorption and improves insulin function, said Dr Panda. Soak one teaspoon overnight and drink the water in the morning, or add methi leaves/seeds to dals and sabzis.

These are low-carb, high-fibre vegetables rich in vitamins and minerals that support blood sugar balance and overall health. Berries like strawberries and blueberries, plus the Indian jamun, are rich in antioxidants and fibre and help reduce blood

sugar spikes, said Dr Panda. Eat fresh as snacks or add to curd and breakfast dishes. Flaxseeds, almonds, and walnuts provide healthy fats and fibre that slow digestion and keep blood sugar stable. Grind flaxseeds and add to buttermilk, curd, or roti dough. Snack on a small handful of nuts daily. Packed with protein and fibre, pulses digest slowly and prevent sugar spikes after meals, said Dr Panda. Regularly include dals and beans in your meals.

According to Dr Panda, cinnamon is a spice that can help lower fasting blood sugar and improve insulin sensitivity. Add a pinch to chai, oats, or curry dishes. Traditional Indian fermented foods, such as curd, buttermilk, idli, and dosa, promote gut health, which in turn supports blood sugar control. Include a serving of curd or buttermilk with meals and enjoy fermented snacks. Always combine carbs (rice, roti) with protein and fibre (dal, vegetables,

curd). Drink plenty of water during the day. Take a short walk after meals. Avoid sugary and processed foods. Eat small, balanced meals regularly to avoid sudden sugar spikes. Incorporating these everyday foods and Indian superfoods into your diet can help you manage blood sugar levels naturally. “From methi seeds and leafy greens to pulses, cinnamon, and fermented foods, these are easy to find and simple to add to your meals,” said Dr Panda.

Five free, easy ways to fight chronic inflammation

A growing number of products and routines – such as red light masks and de-puffing regimens – claim to fight the signs of inflammation. Many nutritional methods have proven to help chronic inflammation, too – such as eating a vegetable-heavy Mediterranean diet or more whole grains and omega-3-rich fish.

But cost and access issues can get in the way of these solutions. Plus, they may not address a major root cause, as increasing evidence says chronic stress can induce chronic inflammation. To prevent and manage chronic stress, more health professionals are offering “social prescriptions”, or referrals to non-medical, community-based, de-stressing activities. Often, these activities are free or the costs are covered by another party, like an insurer or local non-profit. Dr Alan Siegel, executive director of non-profit Social Prescribing USA and a family physician at Kaiser Permanente in Oakland, has prescribed community walks, painting classes and museum visits to his patients for over two decades. “Whether somebody walks into my office with type 2 diabetes or depression, I’ve seen how social prescriptions can help patients truly heal and adopt healthier lifestyles in the long-term.”

More than 30 countries and a dozen US states have social prescribing programs, which have led to improved health and reduced pressure on healthcare. But even without a doctor’s note or a thick wallet, anyone can engage in these scientifically backed anti-inflammatory activities.

What is inflammation?

Inflammation – the body’s evolutionary response to infection, injury, or other threats – has been a trending topic in the health world. Some scientists have even called inflammation “the cause of all diseases”. But what actually causes inflammation, and what fights it? In some contexts, inflammation is good. When the body faces an acute threat – say, an ear infection or a sprained ankle – it responds with acute inflammation, an immune system process marked by fever, swelling and pain in the affected area.

But in the face of chronic threats – say, from trauma or job stress – acute inflammation can also become chronic, and the immune, stress and cardiometabolic responses can become dysregulated. Research links chronic inflammation with low mood, cognitive impairment, cardiovascular risks and a range of mental health conditions including depression and dementia.

Spend time in nature

Forest-bathing – engaging in natural environments with all five senses – is a known wellbeing booster. But according to Dr Qing Li, professor of clinical medicine at Nippon Medical school in Tokyo, forest bathing can also help support healthy functioning of the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) axis, a key player in controlling the



stress and inflammation response. “Forest environments can promote relaxation and activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the ‘rest and digest’ functions,” says Dr Li. It can also reduce activity in the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the “fight or flight” responses. By helping to prevent and manage stress, forest bathing can also help prevent and manage chronic inflammation.

A series of Li’s studies show that forest bathing can reduce the stress hormones cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenaline. Other research similarly finds time in nature can reduce physiological markers of stress, like cortisol, and the perception of stress. One study found just 20 minutes of nature per day can make a difference in stress levels.

Engage with art and music

Art can also promote relief from chronic stress. In one study, healthy adults who participated in a 45-minute art-making session saw significantly lower levels of cortisol afterward. Feelings of stress are related to a loss of control, says Dr Girija Kaimal, professor of creative arts therapies at Drexel University, who co-authored the study. Creating art helps us feel like “there’s something we have a sense of agency over” and “lets us take charge of the distress”.

The study’s participants self-reported that they found art-making relaxing, enjoyable, “freeing from constraints”, and conducive to flow and self-discovery. “Distraction is a great initial coping mechanism to help us calm down after a stressful event, but art can help us dig deeper – it helps us pay attention to what distressed us, and it’ll help the next time something similar sets us off,” says Kaimal. It’s important to create “the kind of art that speaks to you,” says Kaimal – whether it’s writing, dancing, or drawing – and skill level doesn’t matter. “You want to get into a judgment-free

zone where you can play and have fun without consequences.”

A growing body of research suggests experiencing art, not just creating it, can also promote inflammation reduction. Some research has found listening to music, for instance, can reduce blood pressure and cortisol. Researchers at the University of Florida have been documenting the health benefits of engaging with the arts, with some studies suggesting just one to three hours of related activity per week can reduce risk of depression and cognitive decline.

Move your body

Beyond reducing stress, exercise is linked to a number of other anti-inflammatory benefits. This makes sense from an evolutionary perspective because bodily movement was often linked with fighting a predator or fighting for our lives, says Dr Michael Gleeson, emeritus professor of exercise biochemistry at Loughborough University. “The body puts its survival first,” and temporarily inhibits the inflammatory response so it can use energy more efficiently, he says. In his co-authored research, Gleeson suggests exercise not only induces an anti-inflammatory environment in the short-term, but may also reduce visceral fat mass in the long-term. The accumulation of visceral fat can drive and worsen chronic inflammation by promoting development of insulin resistance, atherosclerosis and other diseases linked to physical inactivity. Other research finds that exercise can significantly reduce production of pro-inflammatory proteins, such as CRP and IL-6, and increase anti-inflammatory proteins, such as IL-10.

To reap these and other benefits, the World Health Organization recommends adults spend at least 150 minutes each week on moderate aerobic activity, such as brisk walking and cycling, or 75 minutes on vigorous activity, such as running, Zumba or sports. A longitudinal study finds sports involving social interaction – such as tennis, badminton and soccer – are best at promoting health and longevity.

Support other people

Because cooperation with others has historically been essential for survival, our bodies have evolved to respond to the absence of social connections. The late neuroscientist Dr John Cacioppo compares this evolutionary response to hunger. Just as hunger signals the absence of energy and nutrients and cues the body to find food, loneliness signals the absence of social connections, and cues us to seek out or repair relationships. That’s why multiple studies link feelings of loneliness and social isolation to a range of stress responses, including increased pro-inflammatory proteins and dysregulated cortisol function. Conversely, studies link high levels of social support to lower cortisol, and link social activities like volunteering and giving social support to lower pro-inflammatory proteins.

Summer style updates and hacks

There is a very specific panic around summer dressing – all that flesh on show, for starters. So it always seems strange just how little thought we give to it. Obviously you care what you look like, but think how much time and energy you put into finding the perfect winter coat, or boots to see you through the post-Christmas doldrums. Some of you probably save up, or at least try on a few different styles to see what you like. Compare that to choosing a swimsuit or shorts. How often do you buy something the day before you go on holiday, or even at the airport? You’ll probably spend more time in your coat and boots but still, it’s a bit daft panic-buying some sandals before finding out, mid-hike, that the back strap rubs your heel and they slip off the moment your feet get sweaty. The truth is that aside from the fact that people equate wearing fewer clothes with being cooler – not true! – it’s very hard to know what to wear when the sun comes out. So we are here to help. How about a tank that needs no bra, a swimsuit that doubles as a top, and a quick-dry, no-towel towel? Or a T-shirt for the guys that’s cocktail-approved – and a hat the kids will actually wear?

The perfect summer look is a mythical unicorn, but there are things you can invest in now that will see you through until late September and, ideally, multiple summers to come. Counterintuitive though it is, the summer dress I wear most has long sleeves and is almost ankle length. A full-coverage but super-light dress is so much more useful than any number of itchy-bitsy sundresses. It keeps the rays off if it’s hot, the air conditioning off when you’re inside, and doesn’t leave you goosebumpy in the evening. Great for holiday days, office days, travelling days. Look for one you can wear with a bra – this one has a cut-out at the back, but above bra-strap height – and ensure it’s a generous fit.

A friend asked me the other day if she could borrow “that lovely Stella McCartney cami-sole”. Turns out she meant this, which is actually a silk camisole from M&S. So chic for a night out with jeans, blazer and kitten heels. Instead of striped trousers and a plain T-shirt, try clashing your prints. Think stripes and florals. Leopard and polka dots. Camo and gingham. The more unexpected, the better. If you have huge boobs, this isn’t going to work, so apologies, but for many women, a top with a built-in bra is ideal when you want that sleek, no-bra-strap vest-top look but also a bit of support. I love these Uniqlo ones because the support layer is totally invisible, and the tank isn’t too tight. Two years ago, I bought a black neoprene scallop-edged bikini from M&S. I love it so much that this year I added the one-piece version. I have it in emerald, which is now sold out, but the tomato red is possibly even nicer, and the white is very Talented Mr Ripley coded. It’s not so much that I’m too old to wear baggy knee-length shorts – no one is too old to wear anything – it’s more that I’m old enough to know I don’t have to wear anything that makes me feel ridiculous just because it’s fashionable. Same goes for tiny Daisy Dukes. A short that hits the mid-point of the thigh is the answer. This length can look a bit dowdy in linen, so I’d go with denim. And possibly a belt for added smarts.

Because sometimes you just really want something whimsical and holiday-fabulous. An embroidered boxy shirt is a good choice, because the laid-back silhouette offsets the cuteness. This one is just joyful. Maryrina? Ballet-Jane? The name needs work, but the style – a cross between a sturdy ballet flat and a Mary Jane – is a new staple. It looks great with baggy trousers, as it adds just enough femininity without sacrificing cool. My buy of the season is a secondhand leather belt with YSL hardware on the buckle, which I found for £30 on Depop. Charity shops are an excellent hunting ground too: you can get a leather belt for the price of something plastic on the high street that will age badly and end up in landfill. Alternatively, this Boden belt is a classic in a divine colour. Instead of trying to transport a sunhat in your suitcase, use a silk scarf to protect your scalp from the sun. You can also follow Alexa Chung’s lead and use it to add pizzazz to wardrobe basics such as jeans and a white T-shirt by knotting it around your waist. You will find the best versions on vintage sites. For bold, punchy prints, look for versions from the 1960s and 70s. I have tried on a lot of open-knit beach cover-ups over the past few summers, and these are my condensed thoughts: short and sweet is, surprisingly, easier and more flattering than full coverage. The string-vest ones make you look like a large fish caught in a net – an embroidered pattern, as here, is better. Black, brown or navy are most useful. I like this one.



SPORTS

Jacob Duffy takes 5-38 as New Zealand thrash West

New Delhi: Jacob Duffy took 5-38 as New Zealand cruised to a nine-wicket victory over the West Indies in the second Test in Wellington on Friday for a 1-0 series lead. Seamer Duffy bagged his second five-wicket haul in only his third Test to help roll the West Indies for 128 after lunch on day three, the hosts needing just 56 for victory. Devon Conway



(28) and Kane Williamson (16) guided New Zealand to an emphatic win just before tea at the Basin Reserve. Debutant Michael Rae took 3-45 for the home side while Kavem Hodge was the pick of the West Indian batters in their second innings, scoring 35. New Zealand lead the three-Test series 1-0, after the first match in Christchurch ended in a draw.

New Zealand skipper Tom Latham was delighted with how his inexperienced bowling unit took the fight to the visitors.

Like Duffy, Zak Foulkes was playing just his third Test match, Blair Tickner his fourth and Rae was on debut. "I think the way they stood up this week was outstanding," said Latham, whose options were depleted by injury.

A new ISL structure AIFF investigates using a club consortia to manage a league

Mumbai: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) is open to the idea of Indian Super League (ISL) clubs forming a consortium to host the league this season, after the lack of a timely resolution from the federation or the Sports Ministry on the Indian football impasse. The ISL has stayed in limbo this season after the AIFF failed to agree on a future Master Rights Agreement (MRA) with Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), the body that ran the league for 10 years. The existing MRA ended on December 8, and a Request for Proposal from the AIFF for a potential commercial partner has found no bidders.

As a result, there has been no men's premier division football in India for the first time since 1996, while several clubs have suspended first-team operations, including ISL champion Mohun Bagan Super Giant, Bengaluru FC and Odisha FC.

In such a scenario, the clubs met on Wednesday to discuss the next course of action: forming a consortium to host the league together, as suggested by all ISL clubs, except East Bengal, in a letter sent



to the AIFF on December 5.... should the revised tender not result in a suitable commercial partner, we respectfully request that the AIFF consider a framework under which the ISL Clubs may collectively form a consortium to own/operate the league (as majority owners), alongside the Federation and aligned commercial/broadcast/private investors. Such an approach is consistent

with global best practices and reflective of the long-term commitment of the Clubs to Indian football," the clubs had written.

The plan, initially proposed by Vinay Chopra, the CEO of Mohun Bagan Super Giant, was discussed at length, with at least nine sides of the mind to go with the consortium. Now, the Federation is also keen on exploring that option. "... we need

to discuss the matter and seek approval in the AIFF EXCO and the AIFF AGM scheduled on December 20, 2025," M. Satyanarayan, the Deputy Secretary General of AIFF, wrote in a letter to the CEOs of ISL clubs on Wednesday. The situation got so dire that the clubs ran from pillar to post, from the Supreme Court to the Sports Ministry, but a solution has yet to arrive. "We recall that when we met on November 12 and 18, 2025, we also discussed the possibility of organising this league jointly. We had expected that by November 19 or 20, 2025, we would receive a judgment on the IA (interim application) filed by the ISL clubs, but as we sit here on December 10, 2025, nothing has changed," Satyanarayan added. "Therefore, I suggest that a conference/virtual call may be arranged at the earliest between the undersigned and the club representatives to work towards a mutually agreeable solution." If and when the issue is listed for the AGM later this month, a vote could finally see an end to the impasse. However, the potential solution would be for the 2025-26 season only.

Meeting SRK, Celebrity Match Lionel Messi's GOAT



From Kolkata to Hyderabad, Mumbai to Delhi, Lionel Messi is set to turn India into one giant football festival.

New Delhi: If anyone feels the ground shake at 1:30 AM on Friday morning, the advisory says not to panic, because Lionel Messi will be touching down in India. The World Cup-winning captain, the eight-time Ballon d'Or magnet, the man who somehow bends physics for a living, is arriving for a whirlwind three-day GOAT Tour. This will be his second visit to India after 2011. Across four cities-Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and New Delhi-the tour promises to unfold like a glitter-dusted football carnival, equal parts madness and magic. Everywhere Messi goes, he will leave behind a trail of but in this city, sleep rarely stands a chance against football. The real madness will erupt the next morning, when fans gather around Lake expected to roar at full strength with more than 75,000 seats open, while the city's cultural universe will add its own stardust with Shah Rukh Khan joining the celebrations. Messi will also meet Sourav Ganguly and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee before hopping on a flight to Hyderabad to continue the frenzy. From the crowded streets of Kolkata to the royal charm of the Taj Falaknuma Palace, the GOAT Tour will slip into a more luxurious rhythm. and every spot has been sold out.

T20 World Cup 2026 tickets' sale goes live on December 11

Mumbai: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced that the ticket sales for the upcoming T20 World Cup 2026 will go live at 6:45pm IST on Thursday. Fans can purchase the same by visiting https://tickets.cricketworldcup.com/. The prices start at just ₹100 (approximately \$1.11) at some venues in India and LKR1000 (approximately \$3.26) in Sri Lanka. The 10th edition of the T20 tournament will be held in India and Sri Lanka between February 7 and March 8.

The Netherlands and Pakistan will open the competition on February 7 in Colombo, followed by Bangladesh's match against the West Indies and co-host India taking on the United States of America. India is the defending champion, having won the title in 2024 in the USA and West Indies. ICC CEO Sanjog Gupta said: "Phase 1 of ticket sales is an important milestone in our journey towards delivering the most accessible and global ICC event ever staged. Our vision for the ICC



Men's T20 World Cup 2026 is clear: every fan, regardless of background, geography or financial means, should have the chance to access an in-stadia experience of world-class marquee cricket.

"With tickets starting from just ₹100 and LKR1000, we are putting affordability at the centre of our strat-

egy. This is about opening the gates wide and inviting millions to be part of a global celebration of cricket, not as spectators from afar, but as active participants in the energy, emotion and magic that only a stadium can offer." The ICC has priced entry-level tickets at historic lows to drive accessibility for the pinnacle event.

Shubman Gill's Form A Big Ahead Of T20 World Cup

Mumbai: India batter Shubman Gill's woeful run in T20I cricket continues. The player was dismissed for a first-ball duck in the second match against South Africa in Mullanpur on Thursday, putting himself under further scrutiny. After staying out of the T20I team for more than a year, Gill returned to the format ahead of the Asia Cup 2025. He was named vice-captain of the squad. To include him, India pushed then-opener Sanju Samson down the order, and the wicketkeeper-batter was eventually replaced with Jitesh Sharma. Since his return to the T20I format, Gill has scored only 263 runs in 14 matches at an average of 23.90. His highest score during this phase is 47. Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan pointed out that Gill's poor form is a big worry for the team in the lead-up to the T20 World Cup 2026, which is set to take place in February-March next year.

"Shubman Gill's T20I form is a big worry ahead of the T20 World Cup. Hopefully he finds his touch soon, otherwise it could turn into a real catch-22 situation for Team India," wrote Pathan on X. Even though Samson and his Punjab teammate Abhishek Sharma were doing the job at the top of the order, the team management showed immense faith in Gill's abilities as a T20 opener. The batter from Kerala was displaced, and he has since then struggled to find a place in the playing eleven. The Test and ODI captain can seamlessly perform the role that Virat Kohli performed for India till the T20 World Cup last year, but the team, with batting options till number eight, has doubled down on its fearless approach since the triumph in Barbados, leaving little room for an anchor.

ICC media valuation puts off casters as RMG ban adds 2nd T20I: South Africa level series Quinton's special knock; India falters again

Mumbai: The International Cricket Council (ICC) and one of its broadcast partners, JioStar, continue to battle headwinds as the partners try to renegotiate the inflated \$3bn deal for the right to show the sport's biggest international events over a four-year cycle. The deal still has two years to run but JioStar, who were left with the rights following the merger with Star Sports last year, reportedly want out of the deal. The ICC, whose funding remains the lifeblood for over 97% of its members, sounded out other broadcast houses about the possibility of stepping in and picking up the remainder of the deal but they have shown no interest so far. "At those prices, it will make no business sense for the likes of Sony (Netflix and Amazon were among the others who were approached) to even show any interest," one industry insider told this daily. Sony has always run a tight ship around sports properties. It's kind of why they walked away after the initial Indian Premier League (IPL) years. To further illustrate that point, when the ICC decided to split the then existing arrangement of selling media rights in eight year cycles into two blocks of four, Sony only bid \$1.6bn, almost 50% less than the winning bid. Jio had



also shown interest but their bid was \$900mn. This is why there was a feeling that Star had grossly overpaid as soon as they had won the right. There were some discussions around recalibrating the deal a year or so ago but those discussions didn't go anywhere. What has complicated the situation is the policy change on real money gaming (RMG). With a blanket ban on RMG, the broadcaster has not been able to get as much in terms of advertising revenue. With ed tech — another big area when it comes to live sport — also suffering in the current climate, there maybe a shortfall.

Mumbai: South Africa produced a commanding performance to defeat India by 51 runs in the second T20 international at Mullanpur on Thursday, leveling the five-match series 1-1. The match was defined by Quinton de Kock's explosive batting display and India's continued struggles with the bat, particularly from Shubman Gill and Suryakumar Yadav, whose lean runs persisted.

Opting to field first, India were immediately put under pressure by de Kock's fluent strokeplay. The South African opener smashed 90 off just 46 balls, laced with seven towering sixes, most of which sailed over the deep square leg boundary. His innings set the tone for South Africa's imposing total of 213/4 in 20 overs. De Kock, who recently reversed his ODI retirement and remains uncertain about his T20 future, showcased renewed purpose and flair, reminding fans and franchises of his value ahead of the upcoming mini auction. India's bowlers struggled to contain the onslaught. Arshdeep Singh, who had dismissed de Kock in the series opener, endured a torrid outing,

conceding heavily and bowling seven wides in a single over. Jasprit Bumrah too was taken apart, giving away 16 runs in one over and 18 in the final over, with Donovan Ferreira and David Miller hammering him for towering sixes in the death overs. India leaked 123 runs in the last 10 overs, a phase that decisively tilted the contest in South Africa's favor. Apart from de Kock, Reeza Hendricks contributed with aggressive strokeplay, while Ferreira (30 not out off 16) and Miller (20 not out off 12) ensured the momentum never dipped after de Kock's dismissal. Chasing 214, India's batting faltered early. Local hopes Shubman Gill and Abhishek Sharma disappointed the home crowd, dismissed cheaply inside the powerplay. Gill fell first ball to a seaming delivery from Lungi Ngidi, while Abhishek was caught behind off Marco Jansen. Captain Suryakumar Yadav followed soon after, edging another Jansen delivery for just five runs. Axar Patel tried to stabilize the innings but was dismissed for 21, leaving India reeling.

Rylee Erisman Blasts Relay Splits of 21.64, 1:41.86 Junior Nationals Open in Indianapolis and Austin

Mumbai: Over the past several months, teenage sprinter Rylee Erisman has elevated her career to become one of the top sprinters in the United States. She won eight medals, five of them gold, at the World Junior Championships this summer, a performance that included a 52.79 clocking in the 100 freestyle. Erisman then took down the national high school record in the 100-yard freestyle, a mark previously belonging to Gretchen Walsh, and she then announced she would be finishing high school early to begin her college career at Cal-Berkeley in the fall of 2026. And in her first major competition since that declaration, Erisman has quickly returned to her typical speedy ways. Racing at USA Swimming's Junior Nationals-East meet in Indianapolis, Erisman fired off a fair of elite relay splits for Laker Swim on night one. Erisman anchored Laker's 200 medley relay in 21.64, more than a half-second quicker than any other swimmer at either the Indy



meet or the West meet in Austin, Texas. Shortly thereafter, Erisman brought Laker's 800 free relay home in 1:41.86, moving her team from well off the pace into second place at the finish. That time was more than 1.5 seconds ahead of her career-best mark of 1:43.51 in the individu-

al event. Of note, the 15-16 National Age Group record in the 200 free is 1:42.03, a mark set by Katie Ledecky 12 years ago, and Erisman will have a hance to surpass that time this week. And even though Erisman has not yet begun her college career, In those Indy relays, Mecklenburg Swim

Association's team of Karina Plaza, Eliza Wallace, Taylor Klein and Maddy Boland picked up the medley relay win in 1:37.29, with the TAC Titans taking second (1:38.40) and SwimMAC Carolina placing third (1:39.14). The TAC Titans' Finola Whelehan, Reina Liu, Carolin He and Sloane Whelehan got the win in the 800 free relay in 7:09.42, followed by Erisman's Laker team (7:10.46) and Bolles School (7:16.61). Further down in the rankings, Audrey Derivaux led off for the Jersey Wahoos in 7:19.21. On the boys' side, Central Ohio's team of Jack Mahaffey, Jake Lloyd, Caden Mahl and Austin Carpenter took the win in the 200 medley relay in 1:27.11, just edging out the Blazing Barracudas (1:27.27) and Bolles (1:27.29). Bolles won the 800 free relay in 6:26.74 behind George Dovellos, Liam Carrington, Camp Hartman and Noah Stotler, with Carmel (6:31.35) and Mecklenburg Swim Association (6:31.88) rounding out the top-three.

Roger Federer will be main attraction at the 2026 Australian Open

Mumbai: Roger Federer will return to the scene of some of his greatest triumphs in January when he headlines a "Battle of the World No. 1s" to officially launch the 2026 Australian Open, organisers said Friday. The Swiss great will be back on Rod Laver Arena for the first time since he retired in 2022 as the Grand Slam at Melbourne Park introduces an inaugural "opening ceremony". Held on the evening before the tournament starts on January 18, it will include a tribute to Federer, who won the Norman Brookes trophy



six times among his 20 major titles. He will also join four-time Australian Open winner

Andre Agassi and Australians Pat Rafter and Lleyton Hewitt for a star-studded match.