

Children Lead Digital Movement for Protection & Education Across Northeast India on World Children's Day

Guwahati, Nov 22: Children and adolescents across Assam and the Northeast states in India transformed World Children's Day into a powerful movement for their rights, leading digital advocacy and on-ground action to end child marriage, keep girls in school and make communities safer for every child. With UNICEF's mandate at the core — ensuring that every child survives, learns, is protected and can participate — the campaign placed young people at the forefront as creators, decision-makers and equal partners to government and civil society.

The observance of World Children's Day 2025 was anchored by "My Day. My Rights. My Game.", a new youth-generated digital storytelling series featuring adolescents from the Brahmaputra Volleyball League (BVL). Equipped with only mobile phones, young players documented their daily lives through video diaries and photo essays, capturing what their rights to education, protection and play look like at home, in school and on the volleyball court. The stories highlighted the gaps that still push children — especially girls — out of school and into early marriage. Amplified across social media and shared by influencers, the content reached more than one million people and



mobilised strong public support. The content, amplified by UNICEF and BVL, helped generate a digital reach of more than 1 million, with youth mobilising influencers across districts to speak out against child marriage. "When children tell their own stories, they do more than raise awareness — they shift social norms. Young people from Assam and the Northeast have demonstrated that they are not just recipients, but powerful partners in realising every child's right to learn, be safe and play," said Dr. Madhulika Jonathan, UNICEF Chief for Assam

and the Northeast.

Leaders unite behind Children's Voices

Senior leaders across governments and institutions publicly reinforced their commitment to children's rights.

Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma said ensuring girls' education and ending child marriage remain core state priorities. On World Children's Day, Dr Sarma reaffirmed Assam's commitment to nurturing safe, healthy and empowering spaces for every child to learn, play and grow. A future-ready Assam begins with

its children.

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu emphasised regional responsibility. "On World Children's Day, we celebrate the innocence, strength, and limitless potential of every child. This day reminds us of our collective responsibility to ensure that children grow up in an environment that is safe, inclusive, and full of opportunities.

Let us continue to invest in quality education, good health, emotional well-being, and the protection of every child's rights," he said.

Union Minister of Ports,

Shipping & Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal called young people a driving force in shaping policy directions. "Children's rights are human rights. On #WorldChildrensDay, let us resolve to protect every child, invest in their future and build a world where every young mind can grow with dignity, safety and opportunity," he said.

Olympic Champion Medalist Mirabai Chanu, widely regarded as a role model for girls across India, appealed directly to families through her social media channels. "In communities like those playing in local volleyball

and football leagues, young athletes are not just competing — they're leading team talks on safety, inclusion, child marriage, education and mental well-being. They show us that when children are given space, they become powerful advocates for their own rights and those of their peers," she said.

Musician Alobo Naga amplified the message through art and popular culture, noting, "Too often, adults talk about children instead of listening to them. This World Children's Day, I'm using my platform to share their words: what's the best part of their day, the hardest part, and what they'd change for every child. Our role is to listen without judgment and take their ideas seriously."

Actress Kripalaxmi Gurumayum lent her support to the cause and said, "When children run, jump, kick, serve and dance, they're not "wasting time" — they're living their right to play, to health, to joy and to safe spaces. No child should have to trade practice time for early marriage, hazardous work or violence. Sport is not a luxury; it's part of their rights."

Boxers Ankushita Boro and Barbi Gogoi also urged communities to support girls in sports and education, saying participation builds confidence and leadership among young women.

Assam BJP Sets Up Election Panel for Assembly Polls

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Guwahati, Nov 22: In view of the Assembly elections in Assam early next year, the state BJP unit has formed an election management committee with MP Pradan Barua as convener for smooth conduct of election. The co-convenors of the committee are MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, ex-MP Dr. Rajdeep Roy, State general secretary Anup Barman. The BJP today asserted that the forthcoming 2026 Assembly Elections will fundamentally be a decisive contest between the indigenous Assamese populace and the Miya Muslim community of East Bengal origin.

The party emphasised that the very future, security, and civilisational continuity of Assam is intrinsically linked with this electoral battle. In a strongly worded press communiqué issued by the State party headquarters, Assam Pradesh BJP Media Panellist Dilip Kumar Biswa stated that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has taken bold and historic measures to safeguard the indigenous identity of Assam.

3 held for car thefts in Arunachal

Itanagar, Nov 22: Three persons have been arrested for their alleged involvement in vehicle thefts on the Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHMS) premises at Naharlagun in Arunachal Pradesh. Naharlagun SP Neelam Nega said the arrests were made following written complaints on November 19, regarding multiple theft incidents at TRIHMS. Acting on CCTV footage, police identified one of the suspects involved in breaking into parked vehicles. The accused, identified as Md Anwar Hussain (29), a resident of Fatehpur village in Assam's Lakhimpur district, was apprehended. During interrogation, Hussan named two more accomplices identified as Md Sheikh (33), a resident of Dharmopur village in Assam's Lakhimpur district, and Jakir Hussain (20), a resident of Karunabari village in Assam's Lakhimpur district, from Panchayat Colony, the SP said.

Guwahati Comic Con makes a strong debut bringing pop-culture passion to the North East

Guwahati, Nov 22: Guwahati witnessed a grand opening day as Comic Con India made its much-awaited Northeast debut on November 22 at Arjun Bhogeswar Baruah Sports Complex (formerly known as Sarusajai Stadium). Presented by Maruti Suzuki Arena and powered by Crunchyroll, the maiden Guwahati Comic Con welcomed an enthusiastic wave of fans, creators, cosplayers and pop culture lovers from across the region, marking a landmark moment for the city's ever-growing creative community. Day 1 of maiden edition of Guwahati Comic Con was graced by Dr. Ravi Kota, Chief Secretary of Assam. It also saw a variant mix of creator sessions, performances, interactive experiences and several activities which kept the attendees engaged. Globally acclaimed comic book artist and writer Bill Golliher, best known for his iconic contributions to Archie Comics, was seen interacting with fans who shared their excitement with him. Joining him were 16 Indian creators as their booths were buzzing with fans who were curious and exploring and getting their hands on latest editions. Tadam Gyadu, the acclaimed illustrator from Arunachal Pradesh who has worked with leading Indian publishers as well as with Marvel on titles featuring Spider-Man, Wol-

verine, Iron Man, Ghost Rider and The Avengers, alongside Indian legends like Nagraj, Dhruva, Doga and Rakshak. Also, Debojyoti Choudhury, a digital artist and visual storyteller from Assam whose vibrant, culture-rich artworks have earned him several brand collaborations as well as a thriving online community across Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Day's highlights included a captivating storytelling session by Studio Kapi and an engaging interactive session with artist Rajesh Nagulakonda, both drawing strong interest from aspiring creators. Fans also attended the launch of Raj Rahman: The Weight We Carry by Bullseye Press, while a special Amar Chitra Katha session brought classic Indian tales back into focus. On stage, attendees enjoyed an interactive WingStar-inspired activity by Tinkle, followed by an electrifying performance from Unity One Crew. Comedian Krishnendu Paul kept the audience laughing with his signature relatable humour. Music lovers swayed to Kai RJ's soulful mix of English and Japanese tracks, before MC Headshot closed the evening with his powerful, high-energy set. Fans also witnessed Guwahati's biggest cosplay contest, with talented cosplayers participating and bringing their beloved characters to life. Cosplayers dressed as



popular characters like Deadpool, Ironman, Welma, hellboy, redhood characters from anime like Mitsuri from Demon Slayer, Quanxi from Chainsawman, similarly from gaming like Azir from League of legends, were seen clicking pictures with attendees and showcasing their creative bent as they compete for the title Guwahati Comic Con Cosplay Content with the chance to win a cash prize of ₹30,000.

The event also featured immersive experiences that thrilled visitors. Attendees enjoyed photo sessions at the Crunchyroll booth, which included a recreated Spy x Family room and a Demon Slayer-themed setup. Other attractions included the Maruti Suzuki Arena reflex zones, the NODWIN Gaming Challenger Arena, the RedBull Gaming Ground, the Logitech Race for Real simulator, Royal Challenge Packaged Drinking Water's Challenger Gaming Zone featuring VR cricket experience, and a PSP zone, all offering interactive activities and themed installations for fans. Additionally, unique pop-cul-

ture showcases, engaging contests, dedicated photo ops, and stellar live performances further amplified the excitement and enriched the overall experience. From immersive creator showcases to high-impact performances, Day 1 set a strong and promising tone for Guwahati's debut Comic Con, celebrating pop culture in all its vibrancy, creativity and imagination. To elevate the experience for gaming enthusiasts, Day 2 of Guwahati Comic Con, in association with Royal Challenge Packaged Drinking Water, will bring one of the country's leading gaming personalities, Scout (Tanmay Singh), to Guwahati Comic Con. Fans will get the chance to interact with him, participate in live challenges, and share his journey as part of India's growing esports and creator landscape. Shefali Johnson, CEO, Comic Con India, said, "Bringing Comic Con to Guwahati for the first time has been an exciting journey and a truly special milestone for us. The Northeast is full of energy, passion and creativity, and today's crowd has reaffirmed just how vibrant this community is. Our aim is to create a space where fans, artists and storytellers can come together to celebrate the worlds they love, while inspiring the next generation of creators in a region so rich in stories, talent and imagination."

Digital overhaul of ILP system in Arunachal on the cards

Itanagar, Nov 22: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has announced that the state government is set to implement a comprehensive digital overhaul of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system, calling it the "most significant step" in enhancing the monitoring of non-Arunachali movement into the state.

Speaking to the media at Koloriang, in Kurung Kumey district, Khandu said the digital integration process has been underway for nearly three years and the project has now entered its final stage.

Technology partners have already completed the backend integration, and the new ILP system is expected to go live within the coming months, he said.

Khandu was in Kurung Kumey district to attend the XIVth General Conference of the Nyishi Elite Society (NES). "Happy to be in the beautiful district of Kurung Kumey,



popularly known as the Kagaz-Kalam District, for the 14th General Conference of the Nyishi Elite Society. The Nyishi community has made an outstanding contribution to the unity and progress of Arunachal Pradesh. Your leadership, cultural wisdom

and community spirit continue to shape the social and cultural fabric of our state," he said. "I look forward to working together for greater socio-economic empowerment, youth advancement and preservation of our indigenous heritage," the CM said.

In Brief

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Two-day Comic Con kicks off in Guwahati

Guwahati, Nov 22: Guwahati immersed in Comic Con extravaganza as the event made its Northeast debut here today drawing fans, creators, cosplayers and pop culture lovers from across the region and marking a landmark moment for the city's creative community. The first day of the two-day event saw a mix of creator sessions, performances, interactive experiences and activities which kept the attendees engaged. The maiden edition featured celebrated comic book artist and writer Bill Golliher, who is known for his decades-long contribution to Archie Comics. Comic Con India is a series of annual comic-based conventions held in India. The first edition was held in New Delhi in 2011 and over the years has expanded to other major cities in India such as Mumbai, Bangalore, Pune, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad, with Guwahati being the latest addition.

Assam BJP Sets Up Election Panel for Assembly Polls

Guwahati: In view of the Assembly elections in Assam early next year, the state BJP unit has formed an election management committee with MP Pradan Barua as convener for smooth conduct of election. The co-convenors of the committee are MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, ex-MP Dr. Rajdeep Roy, State general secretary Anup Barman. The BJP today asserted that the forthcoming 2026 Assembly Elections will fundamentally be a decisive contest between the indigenous Assamese populace and the Miya Muslim community of East Bengal origin. The party emphasised that the very future, security, and civilisational continuity of Assam is intrinsically linked with this electoral battle. In a strongly worded press communiqué issued by the State party headquarters, Assam Pradesh BJP Media Panellist Dilip Kumar Biswa stated that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has taken bold and historic measures to safeguard the indigenous identity of Assam.

Illegal poppy cultivation destroyed in Manipur

Imphal: Security forces destroyed nearly 18 acres of illegal poppy cultivation in Manipur's Churachandpur and Tengnoupal districts. Police said a combined team of district police, Assam Rifles, forest department and Narcotics and Affairs of Border (NAB) conducted an operation in D. Lhangjoi village under the Sangaikot Police Station limits in Churachandpur on Friday. Around 8 acres of poppy cultivation, which is expected to yield about 40 kgs of opium, was destroyed during the operation, a source said. Security forces, in collaboration with the Tengnoupal district administration and the Machi forest division, also destroyed nearly 10 acres of poppy plantation on Friday in the Machi hill range, the source added.

Digital overhaul of ILP system in Arunachal on the cards

Itanagar: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu announced the upcoming digital overhaul of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system, describing it as a crucial advancement for monitoring non-Arunachali movement into the state. This integration, which has been in progress for nearly three years, is now nearing completion, with the new system set to launch soon.

NATIONAL

BJP, EC plan to delete over 50,000 votes in seats won by I.N.D.I.A. bloc, SP in 2024: Akhilesh Yadav

Akhilesh urges EC to delay SIR beyond wedding season

Lucknow: In a sharp political attack, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in collusion with the Election Commission (EC), is preparing to remove more than 50,000 voters from each Assembly segment across Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. He claimed the move specifically targets seats won by the I.N.D.I.A. alliance and the SP in the last general elections. The allegations were made during a press conference at the SP headquarters in Lucknow, coinciding with the birth anniversary of his father and party founder, Mulayam Singh Yadav. Akhilesh said his party had received information about "major preparations" being undertaken under the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. He argued that the exercise was being



misused to disenfranchise voters in opposition strongholds.

Yadav further criticized the timing of the voter roll revision, pointing out that it overlaps with the wedding season in Uttar Pradesh, which he said would make it difficult for citizens to

respond to verification processes. He demanded that the Election Commission extend the timeline for the cleanup exercise and ensure transparency in the procedure.

"This is not just about numbers; it is about democracy. The BJP and the

Election Commission are working together to weaken the opposition by deleting genuine voters," Yadav alleged. He described the SIR process as politically motivated and warned that such actions could undermine public trust in electoral institutions. The Election Commission has not yet issued a formal response to the charges. The voter roll revision is currently underway in Uttar Pradesh and 11 other states, with officials maintaining that the exercise is routine and aimed at ensuring accuracy in electoral rolls. Political observers note that Yadav's remarks reflect growing tensions between the ruling party and opposition groups ahead of upcoming Assembly elections. The issue of voter deletion has become a flashpoint, with opposition leaders framing it as an attempt to manipulate democratic processes.

Congress, DMK seal 2026 alliance; panel formed for talks

Committee formed after DMK sought alliance clarity

Chennai: The Congress party has formally reaffirmed its alliance with the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) for the upcoming 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, putting an end to weeks of speculation about possible shifts in the state's political landscape. To strengthen the alliance and finalize seat-sharing arrangements, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has constituted a five-member committee tasked with holding structured discussions with the DMK leadership.

The panel will be led by Girish Raya Chodankar, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge for Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Other members include Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K. Selvaperumthangai, legislature party leader S. Rajeshkumar, and Karnataka leaders Nivedith Alva and Suraj Hegde. The committee's mandate is to engage directly with the DMK on alliance modalities,



including seat distribution and campaign coordination. Senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram welcomed the move, describing it as a step that would strengthen the unity of the I.N.D.I.A. bloc. He noted that the announcement dispels rumors of Congress exploring ties with actor Vijay's Tamizhaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), which had fueled political speculation in recent weeks.

The DMK, which had sought clarity from the Congress high command regarding the alliance, is expected to begin formal

discussions with the newly appointed panel soon. Political observers view the decision as a reaffirmation of Congress's commitment to remain within the ruling coalition in Tamil Nadu, led by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin. The alliance between the DMK and Congress has historically played a significant role in Tamil Nadu politics, with the Congress often contesting a limited number of seats as part of the coalition. By constituting the panel well ahead of the polls, the Congress leadership aims to avoid ambiguity.

Delhi air stays 'very poor' as smog persists, AQI improves slightly

New Delhi: Delhi's air quality persisted in the 'very poor' category, recording an average AQI of 359 on Saturday morning, according to data from the Air Quality Early Warning System. Despite recording a slight improvement from the average of 364 AQI recorded on Friday, a layer of toxic smog continued to envelope parts of the city early in the morning. The ITO area, which recorded an AQI of 370 in the 'very poor category', saw commuters going about their day amid the smog. Meanwhile Noida area also continued to have its air remain in the 'severe' category, with Sector 125 recording an AQI of 434, with slight improvement seen since Friday.

Greater Noida area seemed to have comparatively better air quality; while the Knowledge Park 5 area recorded 393 AQI, the Knowledge Park 3 recorded 294 AQI in the 'poor' category. According to locals, the increased vehicular traffic has really affected the air quality in the area, "The buses, cars, which are increasing day by day, and that there is no way for the cars to fit on the roads, that's how many there are, so pollution is increasing. There should be some control on the vehicles," one of the residents from the Punjabi Bagh area said. Another local expressed that her daily life has become increasingly difficult due to the deteriorating air quality.

"What can I even say, coming out is becoming difficult, people are getting sick, it is difficult to go to the park, can't go to the market even. We are very troubled," she said.

IGI airport area saw some improvement in its AQI at 7 AM compared to other areas, recording an AQI of 296, in the 'poor' category. The India Gate area also saw a layer of thick smog envelope the monument, with an AQI recorded at 370. Meanwhile, Akshardham and the surrounding areas saw the 'severe' AQI at 422. Meanwhile, an average temperature of 13 degrees Celsius was recorded in the national capital, the minimum temperature recorded on Friday.

Parliament forms 31-member JPC; Congress brands move mere rubber stamp

JPC to examine Constitution removal bills

New Delhi: The Parliament constituted a 31-member Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to review the Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill that proposes the removal of jailed Prime Ministers, Chief Ministers, and ministers if they are under arrest on serious criminal charges for 30 days. The Constitution Amendment Bill provides for the removal of the Prime Minister, Chief Minister or any other Minister in the Central or a state government if he/she is arrested and detained in custody on account of serious criminal offences for 30 consecutive days. Two



more bills with similar provisions in Puducherry and Jammu and Kashmir were also introduced in the Lok Sabha. The three bills will be examined by a JPC.

Congress MP Manickam Tagore announced that the

liamentary committee but rather a "JPC of BJP and its B-Team." He stated that out of the 31 members, 21 are from the BJP and its allies, while 10 are from opposition parties that have allegedly aligned with the ruling party. "This is not a Joint Parliamentary Committee -- it's a JPC of BJP & its B-Team. Out of 31 members -- 21 are BJP & NDA allies (AGP, AIADMK, TDP, Pawan Party, UPPL). 10 are B-Team parties (BJD, TDP, YSRCP, SAD, NCP, AIMIM, etc.) Again Jagan proves he is with BJP/ RSS. 2 nominated members handpicked by the regime.

Namo Bharat opens for celebrations

New Delhi: The NCRTC has introduced a novel initiative allowing individuals, event organisers, and photography companies to book Nammo Bharat trains and stations for personal milestone events. The announcement, made on Saturday, marks a significant expansion of the utility of India's first regional rapid transit system beyond its regular commuter services. Under the policy, both static and running coaches can be reserved for private use. A mock-up coach at the Duhai Depot has also been made available for static shoots, providing a convenient option for those seeking a controlled environment. Bookings start at ₹5,000 per hour, with an additional 30 minutes allotted on either side for setting up and removing decorations or equipment.

The NCRTC has clarified that events will be permitted only between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m., and all activities will take place under the supervision of staff and security personnel to ensure safety and adherence to operational protocols. Simple decorations are allowed, subject to guidelines, ensuring that the trains' modern interiors remain protected. Officials said the initiative is designed to offer a distinctive experience, with Nammo Bharat's internationally designed coaches providing a visually appealing backdrop for photography and small gatherings. Initiative generates revenue, highlights infrastructure symbol, structure and lifestyle.

Dhankhar stresses duty first, flight later

New Delhi: Former Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar has said he puts duty above other things, and his "recent past" was proof of it. Dhankhar, who took the country by surprise four months ago when he stepped down from his post citing health reasons, made his first public speech after the resignation at the launch of a book written by senior RSS functionary Mannohan Vaidya here on Friday.

A man came up to him during the speech -- where he praised the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's philosophy and vision -- apparently to remind that he had to

catch a flight back to Delhi at 7.30 pm. The former vice president then informed the audience that he had a flight to catch, and added cryptically, "I can't skip my duty for catching a flight, and friends, my recent past is proof of it." The remark evoked peals of laughter from the audience. The book debunks propaganda which portrays the RSS as an ultra-right organisation and even seeks to link it to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi though it is a baseless charge, Dhankhar said. especially at a time when questions of accountability and responsibility remain central to public discourse.

Amit Shah Says, Nationwide SIR an Exercise To 'Protect Democracy'

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday called on citizens of the country to fully support the ongoing nationwide process of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, saying that the process is essential to protect the country and democracy itself, with the exercise ensuring that "every single infiltrator" will be removed from the electoral list.

"Mein aaj yeh yeh spasht karna chahta hu ki hum is desh mein se eke k ghuspetiye ko chun chun kar bahar nikalenge, yeh humara pran

nhai (today I want to make it clear that we will single-handedly remove all the infiltrators from this country. This is our pledge.) The SIR is a process to protect the country and our democracy," Shah said while addressing the Border Security Force's 61st Raising Day event at Haripur, Bhuj in Gujarat.

Without naming the parties in the INDIA bloc, Shah said that "certain political parties" are trying to weaken the campaign for eliminating the so-called infiltrators, while also warn-



ing that them that the Bihar elections have already given a mandate to the NDA. "Unfortunately, some political parties are trying to weaken the campaign to eliminate the infiltrators. These politi-

cal parties are opposing the SIR process and the Election Commission's voter list sanitisation," the Union Minister said. SIR is a process to protect nation, democracy: Shah.

Lobbying heats up for Bihar Speaker; BJP's Prem Kumar leads race

Damodar Rawat joins NDA Speaker race

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Jagannath temple to finish Ratna Bhandar inventory by April 2026

Bhubaneswar: The authorities of the Jagannath Temple in Puri decided that the inventory of jewellery and valuables stored in the refurbished 'Ratna Bhandar' (treasury) of the shrine will be completed before April next year, an official said. He said that the authorities will also attempt to bring back silver ingots worth Rs 90 crore, which were recovered from the Emar mutt, a 1500-year-old monastery located just outside the Jagannath temple in Puri, in 2011, and are now kept in the district armoury.

Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) and the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee held a crucial meeting chaired by

Gajapati Maharaja Dibyas-ingha Deb, the titular king of Puri, on Friday.

SJTA Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee told reporters after the meeting that all the jewellery and valuables of the 12th-century shrine in Puri are stored at their original place, the Ratha Bhandar, after its repair. The SJTA had, on July 7, announced that the ASI, the custodian of the temple, had completed repair of the Ratna Bhandar, which was opened in 2024 after four decades for the renovation work and inventory-related matters. "It has been decided that the inventory of the Ratna Bhandar items will be held in phases, keeping an eye on the rituals of the tem-

Air quality remains 'very poor' in Delhi

New Delhi: The national capital remained shrouded in toxic smog on Saturday, as the city's overall Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 359, firmly in the 'very poor' category, according to data from the Air Quality Early Warning System. While this marked a marginal improvement from Friday's average AQI of 364, the situation on the ground showed little respite for residents. Several monitoring stations across Delhi recorded alarming levels. The ITO area reported an AQI of 370, while parts of Noida continued to register 'severe' readings, with Sector 125 touching 434. Greater Noida showed mixed results, with Knowledge Park 5 at 393 ('very poor') and Knowledge Park 3 at 294 ('poor'). The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) confirmed that out of Delhi's 39 continuous monitoring stations, 11 recorded AQI above 400, placing them in the 'severe' category. Mundka was the worst affected with 442, followed by Bawana (429) and Jahangirpuri (428).

BLO death linked to SIR stress

Krishnanagar: A 54-year-old woman, identified as Rinku Tarafdar, who worked as a Booth Level Officer and was also a teacher at Bangali Swami Vivekananda School, was discovered dead at her residence in the Bangalji area of Chapra in Nadia district on Saturday morning. Police said she was found hanging from the ceiling of her room. A suicide note was reportedly recovered from the scene, and her body has been sent for postmortem examination. Family members claimed that Tarafdar had been under immense pressure due to the workload associated with the SIR exercise, which involves verification and revision of voter rolls. They alleged that the stress of the assignment had taken a toll on her mental health. This incident has sparked controversy in West Bengal, as it comes just days after another BLO, Shanti Muni Ekka, was found dead in Jalpaiguri district under similar circumstances. The back-to-back deaths have raised serious concerns about the conditions faced by BLOs during the intensive electoral revision drive. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed shock over the incident, calling the situation "truly alarming." She has urged Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar to immediately halt the ongoing SIR in the state, describing it as an "unplanned and coercive drive" that is placing unbearable pressure on grassroots.

Mizoram reverses decision, state university's main centre to be set up in Lunglei

● On November 20, Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma announced a shift in policy, establishing the proposed state university's main center in Lunglei instead of Aizawl, responding to public demand from local residents.



state university in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The original blueprint placed the main centre in Aizawl, but the latest revision aims to balance regional development and create broader academic opportunities for students in the southern part of the state. Higher and Technical Education Minister Vanlalhlana, while introducing the bill in the assembly, had explained that the proposed university would operate under a cluster model, integrating colleges and institutions into a unified academic framework. This structure is designed to help all colleges secure affiliation within the 15-year timeline mandated by the NEP. Under the new policy, Mizoram University (MZU)—currently the only central university in the state—will become a research-intensive institution by 2035.

Consequently, it will no longer be able to offer affiliation to the state's 21 colleges. Vanlalhlana pointed out that only three colleges in Mizoram currently qualify for autonomous degree-granting status, while the remaining institutions would have no choice but to seek affiliation from universities outside the state. Such a situation, he warned, would be an administrative setback and a matter of embarrassment for Mizoram. The creation of the state university is therefore vital to ensure seamless affiliation for existing colleges and avoid disruptions in higher education. Officials believe the new institution will also help boost the Gross Enrolment Ratio in both regular and vocational courses, expand postgraduate options and ensure students across the state gain better access to advanced learning pathways.

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal Launches Underwater Welding, Offshore Repair & Additive Manufacturing Program at IIT Guwahati

Guwahati, Nov 22: Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal attended the inaugural ceremony of the Underwater Welding, Offshore Repair and Additive Manufacturing (3D Printing) initiative at IIT Guwahati. During the event, he distributed certificates to seven youth who successfully completed the Underwater Welding Certification Program at the Technology Innovation Hub (TIH) of IIT Guwahati, supported by the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS). Sarbananda Sonowal lauded the collaborative effort between IIT Guwahati and IRS and observed a live demonstration of 3D metal printing-based repair of a marine propeller undertaken by the IIT Guwahati team. Speaking on the occasion, Sarbananda Sonowal said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "strong and visionary leadership has rapidly strengthened India's maritime capacity and skilled



workforce, modernised port connectivity, expanded inland waterways and accelerated the growth of the blue economy. Assam and the Northeast continue to play an important role in this national advancement." Sonowal said the skill development and innovation initiatives underway at IIT Guwahati have opened a "practical and result-oriented pathway" for building advanced capabilities in underwater welding, offshore repair and next-generation manufacturing. "Assam has the potential to become a leading hub for underwater repair and advanced manufacturing, and TIH at IIT Guwahati is poised to become the epicentre of this

future," Sonowal said. Highlighting the strategic importance of the Northeast, the minister said the region's natural waterways and geographical advantages give it a crucial role in shaping an advanced maritime ecosystem. "Technologies such as underwater welding, offshore repair and 3D printing are essential for building a faster, reliable and cost-effective maritime and ship repair network," Sonowal said. "Traditional dependence on dry docking and imported components increases costs and delays operations. The solution being developed at IIT Guwahati paves the way for practical alternatives that strengthen self-reliance."

Sonowal expressed satisfaction at the successful completion of the certification program by the first batch of seven candidates, who now hold globally applicable qualifications. He urged major shipyards, dockyards, inland waterways authorities and maritime industries to collaborate closely with IIT Guwahati to build a robust ecosystem. "We remain committed to fostering innovation, strengthening maritime infrastructure and creating skilled employment opportunities for our youth," Sonowal added. "The ministry will respond positively to outcome-oriented proposals from IIT Guwahati and its partners under existing policy and financial frameworks." The event was attended by IIT Guwahati Director Prof. Devendra Jaliha, researchers and domain experts, leaders from the maritime industry, invited dignitaries and students.

TMC Levels Explosive Allegations Over "Doctorate for Sponsorship" at Gauhati University

Guwahati, Nov 22: Guwahati has been gripped by a fresh controversy after the Assam unit of the Trinamool Congress alleged that a doctorate degree awarded during Gauhati University's recent convocation was granted in exchange for financial sponsorship for a cultural event. Senior vice-president of the Assam Pradesh Trinamool Congress Committee, Dulu Ahmed, made the accusation on Wednesday, demanding a high-level investigation into what he termed a "degree-for-money" scandal. According to Ahmed, during the convocation held on 25 April in the presence of the Governor and Chief Minister, Arunachal Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister received an honorary doctorate from Vice-Chancellor Dr. Nani Gopal Mahanta. Shortly after this event, the Arunachal Pradesh government allegedly offered a substantial

amount as sponsorship for the 'North-East Festival', which was later held in Singapore. Ahmed further claimed that a major share of the funds was misappropriated by cultural organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Mahanta. He questioned why Shyamkanu Mahanta's wife, Anita Deka Mahanta—also a director in multiple private companies—has not yet been interrogated by investigating agencies, despite her alleged involvement. Drawing comparisons with the ongoing investigation into the death of renowned Assamese musician Zubeen Garg, Ahmed said that while numerous artists, organisers and even family members have been questioned, those with political proximity remain untouched. He demanded that if the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has indeed registered a case against Shyamkanu Mah-

anta, then both Anita Deka Mahanta and Dr. Nani Gopal Mahanta must immediately be brought under the purview of the probe. In a separate development, a Jorhat court on the same day acquitted Rajior Dal chief and Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi along with three others in a case dating back to the 2011 anti-corruption movement. The accused had faced multiple charges including obstruction, damage to public property and incitement. Ahmed concluded by urging Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to clarify his government's position, questioning whether the silence amounts to complicity. He reiterated the demand for a transparent and impartial investigation and asserted that justice must be delivered in the Zubeen Garg case without political influence.

Vrindavani Vastra reflects centuries of devotion and Assamese heritage: Pijush Hazarika

Guwahati, Nov 22: Cabinet Minister Pijush Hazarika today spoke about the return of the iconic Vrindavani Vastra, a 16th-century silk masterpiece, to Assam. He said that the Vastra, which has been away from its place of origin for more than four centuries, represents a significant part of Assam's cultural and spiritual heritage. The return of this priceless artifact comes after decades of effort by the Assam government to bring it back home. Hazarika described the Vrindavani Vastra as a work crafted under Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev's vision, which "threads together the divine life of Lord Krishna, echoing centuries of devotion, art, and Assamese heritage." He emphasized that its return is a matter of pride for Assam and reconnects the state with a treasured piece of its historical and spiritual legacy. The Vrindavani Vastra, over nine metres long, was woven for King Naranarayan between 1567 and 1569. Twelve skilled weavers, guided by Mathura Das Burha Ata, a disciple of Srimanta Sankardev, created this extraordinary textile. The Vastra depicts scenes from Lord Krishna's childhood, along with episodes from the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana. Its intricate designs and vibrant colors make it a rare and treasured example of Assamese craftsmanship. This masterpiece is not just a religious artifact but also a living testimony to Assam's artistic tradition. It reflects the spiritual devotion and creative skill that have been hallmarks of Assamese culture for centuries. Its return is a significant cultural moment for As-



sam, offering residents and visitors alike a chance to reconnect with a unique part of the state's heritage. The Vrindavani Vastra's history is as remarkable as its artistry. After its creation in Assam, it traveled through Bhutan and Tibet before eventually reaching Europe. Over the years, fragments of the Vastra were housed in museums in London, Paris, and Philadelphia. The textile was collected by Percival Landon, a journalist for The Times in Tibet, and donated to the British Museum in 1904. It was displayed in Room 91 as "Krishna in the Garden of Assam" and attracted scholars, historians, and art enthusiasts from across the world. Attempts to bring the Vastra back to India, including a notable effort

in 2013, were unsuccessful. The artifact remained abroad for more than a century, becoming a symbol of Assam's lost cultural heritage that the state sought to reclaim. Minister Hazarika credited the return of the Vrindavani Vastra to persistent diplomacy led by the Assam government and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. "Through continuous efforts and international dialogue, we have been able to break the long deadlock and bring the Vastra home for public viewing," he said. The Assam government signed a Letter of Intent in London with the British Museum, which allows the Vastra to be displayed in Assam for six months while discussions continue for its permanent return. Hazarika said that the exhibition at

the Assam Museum will give the public a rare opportunity to see this masterpiece in person. The temporary display of the Vrindavani Vastra aims to attract a diverse audience, including scholars and tourists, to appreciate its intricate artistry and historical significance. This textile narrates stories from Lord Krishna's life and embodies the teachings of Srimanta Sankardev, a key figure in Assamese culture. Initially displayed for six months, the Assam government is working for its permanent return while ensuring proper preservation and educational use, highlighting its importance for future generations. As stated by Hazarika, the Vastra symbolizes the region's heritage and cultural legacy.

Tripura set for waterway upgrade, cruise tourism on Dumbur Lake

Agartala, Nov 22: Tripura is poised for a major leap in connectivity and tourism as the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) advances two key initiatives — the development of the Gomati River for cross-border navigation and a proposal to introduce a cruise ship service on the scenic Dumbur Lake in Dhalai district. The progress was revealed after Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal chaired an extensive review meeting with officials of the ministry and IWAI. The meeting assessed inland water transport projects across the Northeast, covering Assam, Mizoram,

Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya. According to the minister, IWAI is currently executing a ₹24.53-crore project aimed at transforming the Gomati River into a viable waterway that will connect with Bangladesh's Meghna river system. The work involves developing a navigational channel, strengthening riverbanks, setting up nine floating pontoon terminals, and installing navigational aids to ensure smooth and safe vessel movement. Once completed, the corridor is expected to enhance bilateral trade and open new routes for cargo movement. Sonowal also confirmed that the authority is conducting a detailed study

on the feasibility of launching a cruise service on Dumbur Lake, one of Tripura's most prominent water bodies. If implemented, the project is likely to reshape the state's tourism profile by offering water-based recreational opportunities and promoting eco-tourism in Dhalai district. The minister said these initiatives reflect the central government's broader vision to upgrade inland water transport infrastructure across the Northeast. He stressed that improved river connectivity, new tourist circuits and strengthened trade corridors will help the region integrate more closely with national and international markets. "The Northeast is entering a new era



of connectivity and economic resurgence powered by the revitalisation of our rivers. We aim to invest more than ₹5,000 crore in inland waterways development in the region in

the coming years," Sonowal said, adding that new partnerships are being explored to increase cargo movement, encourage river tourism and support cross-border trade.

Illegal poppy cultivation destroyed in Manipur

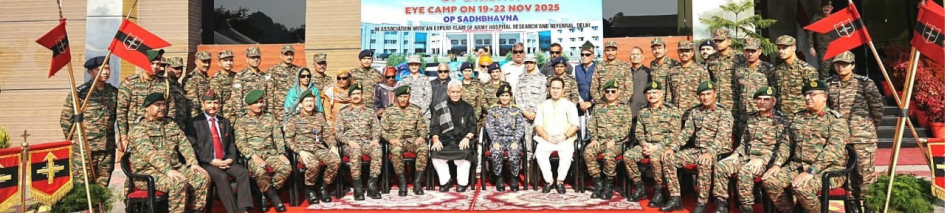
Imphal, Nov 22: Security forces destroyed nearly 18 acres of illegal poppy cultivation in Manipur's Churachandpur and Tengenoupal districts. Police said a combined team of district police, Assam Rifles, forest department and Narcotics and Affairs of Border (NAB) conducted an operation in D. Lhangjol village under the Sangaikot Police Station limits in Churachandpur on Friday. Around 8 acres of poppy cultivation, which is expected to yield about 40 kgs of opium, was destroyed during the operation, a source said. Security forces, in collaboration with the Tengenoupal district administration and the Machi forest division, also destroyed nearly 10 acres of poppy plantation on Friday in the Machi hill range, the source added.

2,000 Screened, 400 Surgeries Done at Advanced Eye Camp in J&K Command Hospital

Udhampur, Nov 22: A first-of-its-kind advanced surgical eye camp named 'Op Drishti' was held by Command Hospital, Northern Command, Udhampur from November 18-22, 2025, in collaboration with the Army Hospital (Research and Referral), New Delhi. Over 2,000 people were screened and more than 400 surgeries performed, including complex procedures like cataracts and glaucoma. Beneficiaries

included serving personnel, dependents, Veer Naris, and local civilians from remote areas of Jammu & Kashmir. The surgical team was led by Brigadier SK Mishra. During the closing ceremony, Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh and Chief of Army Staff Gen Upendra Dwivedi praised the efforts of the Armed Forces Medical Services in providing critical healthcare. Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh highlighted

the Army's dual role in wartime and in offering dedicated humanitarian services during peacetime. Personal stories reflected the camp's transformative impact, such as 72-year-old Surinder Singh, who became an advocate for others after regaining his sight, and 96-year-old Rajkumari Devi, who celebrated the ability to see clearly again. The success of the camp stemmed from a collaborative initiative to enhance healthcare



outreach, driven by requests from local authorities and military leadership.

Toyota recalls 11.5k Urban Cruiser Hyryder units to replace dashboard component

Mumbai: Toyota Kirloskar Motor is recalling 11,529 units of its mid-sized SUV Urban Cruiser Hyryder to inspect and replace a dashboard component.

The voluntary recall campaign is to inspect and replace the Combination Meter, if found faulty, in 11,529 units manufactured between December 9, 2024, and April 29, 2025. In line with its customer first philosophy and unwavering commitment to the highest quality standards, the automaker will continue to promptly address customer concerns and aim to deliver peace of mind by resolving issues quickly and conveniently, TKM said in a post on its Website. In October, the company recalled Camry, Vellfire



and Land Cruiser to reprogramme the Parking Assist ECU software.

‘We didn’t even know we owned it’ Air India sells plane forgotten 13 years

Mumbai: Air India sold an old Boeing 737-200 cargo aircraft last week — having forgotten its existence for more than a decade. CEO Campbell Wilson told employees that the airline did not even know that it owned the plane until the issue of removal came up. The Boeing jet was decommissioned in 2012 and remained at a remote parking bay within Kolkata airport for nearly two decades.

“Though disposal of an old aircraft is not unusual, this one is — for it’s an aircraft that we didn’t even know we owned until recently! Over time, it was lost from memory and only came to

light when our friends at Kolkata Airport informed us of its presence in a (very) remote parking bay and asked us to remove it! After verifying that it was indeed ours, we’ve now done so — and in so doing removed another old cobweb from our closet,” Wilson said in a message to the staff. The cargo aircraft surfaced nearly three years after the privatisation of Air India as officials asked the Tata Group company to remove it from Kolkata airport premises. Wilson said this aircraft had been decommissioned in 2012 in order to operate for India Post. But it was omitted from many documents during the lengthy

privatisation process — ultimately leaving Air India completely unaware of its existence. According to reports, it had then remained parked at a “very remote” bay of Kolkata Airport for approximately 13 years. Air India was recently asked to remove the plane — leading to its ‘discovery’ and eventual sale. The airline completed the transfer of aircraft 43.2 years old and was delivered to Indian Airlines in September 1982. The plane was leased by Alliance Air in February 1998 and returned to Indian Airlines as a freighter in July 2007. It came to Air India later that year as the two airlines merged.

Sensex drops 400 points to settle at 85,231, Nifty falls 124 points to 26,068

Mumbai: Snapping the two-day rally, benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed lower on Friday mainly due to weak global trends and fading hopes of a rate cut by the US Federal Reserve in December. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 400.76 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 85,231.92. During the day, it tanked 444.84 points or 0.51 per cent to 85,187.84. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 124 points or 0.47 per cent to 26,068.15. The index had rallied over 1 per cent or 282 points to trade above 26,000 in the previous two sessions. On Thursday, the Sensex jumped 446.21 points or 0.52 per cent to settle at 85,632.68. During the day, it surged 615.23 points or 0.72 per cent to hit a 52-week high of 85,801.70. The Nifty also hit its 52-week high of 26,246.65 during the day before closing at 26,192.15, reflecting a gain of 139.50 points or 0.54 per cent. Among Sensex firms, Tata Steel, HCL Tech, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Bharat Electronics and Eternal were the major laggards. However, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles and ITC were among the gainers. Analysts said better-than-expected US non-farm payroll data dampened expectations of a December rate cut by the US Federal Reserve. Worries about a bubble in AI-related shares also dampened



investor sentiment across global markets. Asian markets ended sharply lower. South Korea’s Kospi tanked 3.79 per cent, Shanghai’s SSE Composite Index lost 2.45 per cent, Japan’s Nikkei 225 index dropped 2.40 per cent. Hong Kong’s Hang Seng Index fell by 2.38 per cent. European markets were trading in the red. US markets ended in negative territory on Thursday. The Nasdaq Composite tanked 2.15 per cent, S&P 500 declined 1.56 per cent, and Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.84 per cent. “Indian markets turned volatile and settled lower, reflecting the broader decline seen across Asian equities after bet-

ter-than-expected US non-farm payroll data dampened the expectation of a December rate cut. Profit-booking after a brief two-day uptrend added to the cautious tone, pulling all key indices into the red, with mid and small-caps facing sharper corrections,” Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 283.65 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) also bought stocks worth Rs 824.46 crore. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dropped 1.51 per cent to USD 62.42 per barrel.

V2 Retail, Vishal Mega Mart NLC India & Hitachi Energy

New Delhi: Mayuresh Joshi, Head of Equity Research at William O’Neil India, said on Friday that the Q2 FY26 earnings season has supported market sentiment and raised expectations for an even better performance in the second half of the ongoing financial year (H2 FY26). “Looking forward in FY27, the base case estimates that were getting drawn out for a single-digit growth are now slowly turning into a double-digit growth, the base case scenario being 12 to 13 per cent earnings growth in FY27,” he told Business Today. He added that mapping a 13 per cent earnings growth outlook to FY27 exit valuations suggests that markets may not appear overly expensive. According to him, the slight premium to long-term mean valuations is in line with India’s resilient earnings profile, strong liquidity conditions and lower corporate debt-to-GDP ratio. He also highlighted the government’s ongoing thrust on both private and public capex as a continued support for growth. Commenting on stock-specific trends, Joshi pointed to retail players such as V2 Retail Ltd and Vishal Mega Mart Ltd. “Clearly, I think the domestic capital makers uh I think have



posted decent set of numbers so whether you talk about V2 Retail or Vishal Mega Mart, I think they’re appropriately placed both in terms of their average realisations that they’ve got for their apparel business but they’ve also got the FMCG and the gross grocery business as well,” Energy India Ltd into focus. With private capital expenditure expected to pick up and a combination of thermal and renewable additions underway, he believes the broader power ecosystem could perform well over the longer term.

Engineers worst hit despite push for ‘faster innovation’

New Delhi: Amazon had announced plans to lay off 14,000 employees in October — outlining plans to invest in its “biggest bets” and hailing the transformative powers of artificial intelligence. New data indicates that engineers bore the brunt of these cost-cutting measures with more than 1,800 losing their jobs over the past few weeks. The development came in spite of official assertions that Amazon needed to ‘innovate faster’. According to documents accessed by CNBC, nearly 40% of the 4,700 jobs cut by Amazon in New York, California, New Jersey

and Washington were engineering roles. The company reported these details in Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification documents filed with state agencies. The e-commerce giant had announced its steepest-ever round of cuts last month — joining a growing list of tech companies that have slashed jobs this year while cash piles expanded and profits soared. A memo sent out to employees confirmed that Amazon would be “reducing in some areas and hiring in others” — triggering an overall reduction of 14,000 roles. The company had released a lengthy

memo outlining the decision in late October — while highlighting its recent strong performances. Amazon has been trimming smaller numbers of jobs over the past two years across multiple divisions, including devices, communications and podcasting. “Some may ask why we’re reducing roles when the company is performing well. Across our businesses, we’re delivering great customer experiences every day, innovating at a rapid rate, and producing strong business results. What we need to remember is that the world is changing quickly.

U.S. FDA issues seven observations to Natco Pharma’s Chennai plant

New Delhi: Natco Pharma’s active pharmaceutical ingredients unit in Chennai has received seven observations from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Natco Pharma on Friday said the US health regulator has issued seven observations following an inspection of its Chennai-based API unit. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted an inspection at the API manufacturing plant located in Manali, Chennai, India, from November 17-21, 2025, the

drug maker said in a regulatory filing. “The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had conducted an inspection at the API manufacturing plant located in Manali, Chennai, India, from November 17th to 21st, 2025. On conclusion of the inspection, the Company received seven observations in the Form-483,” Natco Pharma said in a release on Friday. The observations are procedural in nature. The Company is confident to address these observations comprehensively.

Fear gauge India VIX jumps 11% as global weakness drags domestic indices

Mumbai: India’s volatility gauge, the India VIX, climbed sharply in Friday’s trade, signalling rising uncertainty in the equity markets amid broad-based weakness across global indices. The fear index surged 11.02 per cent to 13.47 level, according to NSE data. India VIX reflects the market’s expectation of volatility over the next 30 days based on Nifty50 options, and an uptick typically indicates heightened caution among investors. Domestic benchmarks retreated after a two-day rally, tracking global risk-off sentiment. A steep sell-off in artificial intelligence (AI)

stocks in the US, along with mixed labour market indicators, weighed on investor sentiment. The Nasdaq Composite dropped 2.15 per cent overnight, triggering concerns about further volatility across markets. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, noted that the spike in volatility mirrors global nervousness. He said the sharp pullback in AI-linked stocks has intensified worries over elevated valuations. While several market participants have raised caution over a potential bubble, Nvidia’s CEO played down such fears, pointing to

sustained demand for advanced AI systems. Vijayakumar added that any meaningful correction could attract renewed buying interest, particularly if valuations turn favourable. However, he cautioned that the current market phase may remain volatile as investors reassess global growth signals and sector-specific risks. On the domestic front, Vijayakumar flagged excessive speculative activity in certain newly listed stocks, urging retail investors to stay disciplined. He advised focusing on fairly valued, high-quality companies and using market dips as buying opportunities.

JP Power shares slump 9% after two-day rally technical charts signal now

Mumbai: Shares of Jaiprakash Power Ventures Ltd (JP Power) slipped in Friday’s trade, pausing their two-day sharp upward movement. The stock declined 8.51 per cent to hit a day low of Rs 19.79. The counter was buzzing recently following an update indicating that creditors of its associate company, Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JP Associates), unanimously voted in favour of Adani Enterprises Ltd’s resolution plan. The decision came after an electronic auction held in September, where Vedanta had initially emerged as the highest bidder with a Rs 17,000 crore offer for the debt-laden JP Associates. However, lenders reportedly opted for Adani Enterprises, with higher upfront payments cited as the key factor behind the selection. In a separate exchange filing, the company recently disclosed that its Non-Executive Chairman, Manoj Gaur, has been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.



JP Power clarified that the alleged offence is unrelated to JP Power and pertains instead to Jaypee Infratech Ltd (JIL) -- now acquired by Suraksha Realty under an NCLT-approved resolution plan -- and JP Associates, which has been under CIRP since June 3, 2024.

AI chatbots fail to spot fake images, raising over misinformation

New Delhi: Artificial intelligence chatbots, increasingly used by internet users to verify viral images, are struggling to accurately detect fabricated visuals, even when these images are created by the same AI systems, according to multiple instances documented by AFP. In one case from the supposedly in Portugal, Google’s new AI mode incorrectly labelled the image as genuine. AFP later traced the photo to its creator, who confirmed it was generated using Google’s AI image tool. Experts told AFP that these failures highlight the limitations of current AI models, which are primarily trained on text rather than nuanced visual analysis. “These models are trained primarily on language patterns and lack the specialised visual understanding needed to accurately identify AI-generated or manipulated imagery,” Alon Yamin, chief executive of AI content detection platform Copyleaks, told AFP. The issue is compounded by the scaling back of human fact-checking efforts. Meta recently ended its third-party fact-check-



ing programme in the US, shifting towards a crowd-based system called ‘Community Notes’. However, with programs like Nano Banana and ChatGPT being used routinely, the dilemma would not be access to technology but accountability. Researchers warn that as users increasingly depend on AI chatbots instead of traditional search engines for verification, the risk of misinformation intensifies. A Columbia University study cited by AFP found that seven AI models, including ChatGPT and Gemini, failed to correctly identify the origins of real journalistic photographs.

India leads Asia-Pacific real estate with estimated investment of \$5-7 bn in 2025

Mumbai: India has emerged as a leading destination for real estate investment in the Asia-Pacific region. Global investors are attracted by the country’s steady economic performance, favourable demographics, and stable policy environment. Investors are increasingly deploying capital into land and developmental assets, as well as alternatives, anticipating higher returns and scalable opportunities, says a survey by Colliers. The positive outlook is underpinned by robust demand-supply dynamics and a growing pipeline of institutional-grade stock, supporting long-term market potential. Equity markets are facilitating greater liquidity and cross-border participation through Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and initial public offerings



(IPOs), further broadening the scope for alternate investment in the sector. Institutional investments in Indian real estate totalled USD 4.3 billion during the first nine months of 2025, main-

taining resilience despite global trade uncertainties, finds Colliers in its 2026 Colliers Global Investor Outlook.

The office and residential segments are expected to account for nearly

60% of the year’s total investments, driven by ongoing occupier activity and a healthy supply pipeline. Projected overall investment volumes for 2025 are estimated at USD 5-7 billion, reflecting continued depth and stability in the market. Market participants are actively evaluating both core and emerging asset classes. Recent trends suggest that momentum in transaction closures is likely to accelerate in the final quarter of the year, especially within the office and residential segments. This continued inflow of capital is expected to support further development and diversification of India’s real estate sector, solidifying its position among the most attractive markets for global institutional investors.



Indian actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan (born November 1, 1973, Mangalore [now Mangaluru], Karnataka, India) is an Indian actress and internationally acclaimed model who has established herself as one of Bollywood’s premier stars. Before embarking on an acting career, she achieved significant success in modeling, attracting international praise and often featuring in lists for the world’s most beautiful women. Trained in the Indian classical dance form bharata natyam, Rai has also received critical acclaim for her dancing abilities. She won the Miss World pageant in 1994. Her notable movies include Devdas, Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam (“Straight from the Heart”), Dhoom 2, Bride and Prejudice, and Jodhaa Akbar. Since 2002 she has been a regular presence at the Cannes film festival and is regarded as one of the most popular celebrities to attend.

Early life and education
Rai was born into a Tulu-speaking family to Krishnaraj Rai and Vrinda Rai. She attended Arya Vidya Mandir High School in Mumbai (Bombay), where she excelled academically. She later completed her intermediate studies at Jai Hind College before transferring to D.G. Ruparel College at Matunga in Mumbai. She intended to become an architect and enrolled in the Rachana Sansad Academy of Architecture, but she proceeded to pursue a career in modeling instead. Rai received formal training in the Indian dance form bharata natyam.

Modeling career
Rai participated in an international supermodel contest sponsored by Ford Motor Company in 1991, which led to her being featured in the American edition of Vogue. In 1993 she appeared in a memorable PepsiCo ad alongside the Indian actors Amir Khan and Mahima Chaudhry. Her character in the ad was named Sanjana, and she became known for the line “Hi, I’m Sanjana. Got another Pepsi?” This character is believed to have had such a cultural impact that many parents in India named their daughters Sanjana in the year following the ad’s release. After finishing as the first runner-up at the Miss India pageant, Rai won the Miss World pageant in 1994. When asked about the qualities befitting Miss World in the final round, she replied, Rai made her Cannes film festival debut in 2002, during the premiere of the film Devdas, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and starring Rai. In 2003 she became the first Indian actress to serve as a jury member at Cannes. That same year, Rai was named a global ambassador for L’Oréal, a French cosmetics manufacturer, occasioning several more appearances at Cannes. Over the years, she has walked the red carpet in creations by renowned designers such as Roberto Cavalli and Sabyasachi Mukherjee, blending traditional Indian elegance with contemporary high style. Rai has also been the face of international brands such as



watchmaker Longines, Cadbury chocolate, and Revlon cosmetics as well as Indian ones such as Lakmé cosmetics and Titan accessories.

Acting career
Since 1997 Rai has appeared in more than 40 films in Hindi, Bengali, and Tamil cinema. Her performances have spanned multiple languages. Notably, she has also acted in international films, such as Bride and Prejudice (2004), a British adaptation of Jane Austen’s novel Pride and Prejudice. This diverse filmography highlights Rai Bachchan’s ability to connect with audiences across different cultures and regions. Rai made her big-screen debut in the 1997 Tamil film Iruvar (“The Duo”), directed by Mani Ratnam. She entered Bollywood with ...Aur Pyaar Ho Gaya (“And Love Happened”) that same year. The 1998 Tamil comedy Jeans proved to be her breakthrough. In the 1999 movie Taal (“Rhythm”), directed by Subhash Ghai, Rai played Mansi, an aspiring singer caught in a love triangle with characters played by Akshaye Khanna and Anil Kapoor. Music director A.R. Rahman’s evocative score helped shape the characters and their journeys in the film. Rai received the Filmfare Award for best actress for her performance in Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam (1999; released internationally in 2000 as Straight from the Heart), directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. She was lauded for her acting prowess in the film, and, with that work, she cemented her position as one of the top Bollywood actresses of the time. In the 2000 Tamil film Kandukondain Kandukondain, Rai portrayed the character Meenakshi, inspired by Marianne Dashwood in Austen’s Sense and Sensibility. The movie costarred other stalwart actors, such as Tabu and Ajith Kumar. In Bhansali’s 2002 movie Devdas, a remake of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay’s film of the same name, Rai’s portrayal of the jilted lover, Paro, blended seamlessly into the lavish visual and auditory tapestry. The film featured opulent set designs, including an intricately crafted mansion with stained glass and an artificial lake. The extravagant production also included meticulously color-coded costumes and a rich musical score. Rai’s dancing skills and versatility have been conducive to her acting success, enabling her to bring depth and dynamism to a wide range of characters across cinematic genres. Her standout performance in the iconic song “Kajra Re” from the Bollywood film Bunty Aur Babli (2005) not only captivated audiences with its vibrant choreography but also featured Rai alongside her future father-in-law, Amitabh Bachchan. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated her ability to adapt to various dance styles. In the movie Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam she performed a Garba, a Gujarati folk dance, for the song “Dholi Taro Dhol Baaje.” With her performance in the number “Dola Re Dola” in the movie Devdas, involving classical dance forms composed by the choreographer Saroj Khan, she showcased her classical training. The film Taal (1999) featured choreographer Shiamak Davar’s contemporary style, in which Rai integrated modern dance moves with traditional elements.

Rai successfully collaborated with director Rituparno Ghosh in the family drama Chokher Bali (2003; Choker Bali: A Passion Play), based on the eponymous novel by Rabindranath Tagore. Her portrayal of the young Bengali widow Binodini was beset with challenges: Rai had to suffuse her character with the specific linguistic, behavioral, and social attributes of the Bengali community. Moreover, the character she played demanded immense emotional investment, which she made with the help of



Ghosh. Rai also starred in Ghosh’s romantic drama Raincoat, opposite Ajay Devgn, in 2004. Later that year she appeared in Bride and Prejudice, a modern adaptation of Austen’s Pride and Prejudice directed by Gurinder Chadha. As Lalita Bakshi, Rai encapsulated the Indian equivalent of the strong-willed Elizabeth Bennet in her first major English-language film. Rai’s next Bollywood blockbuster was Dhoom 2 (2006), in which she starred opposite Hrithik Roshan. In the 2007 film Guru, she played Sujata Desai, the devoted wife of the ambitious Gurukant Desai, played by Abhishek Bachchan, who would become Rai’s husband. Directed by Mani Ratnam, the film draws inspiration from the life of Indian business magnate Dhirubhai Ambani, delving into themes of ambition, entrepreneurship, and the ensuing challenges on the path to success. In April 2007 Rai married Abhishek Bachchan, her frequent costar and the son of Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan. She then starred in the Arthurian tale The Last Legion (2007), as a warrior alongside Colin Firth and Ben Kingsley. Rai Bachchan’s next groundbreaking success came with Ashutosh Gowariker’s Jodhaa Akbar (2008), a lush historical romance that recounts the love story of Akbar, the greatest Mughal emperor, and Jodhaa Bai, a Rajput princess. Rai Bachchan’s other films of the time include The Pink Panther 2 (2009), in which she performed alongside the comedian Steve Martin, and the action romance Enthiran (2010; Robot), in which she performed opposite Rajinikanth. In Guzaarish (2010), she portrayed the nurse of a quadriplegic magician who wishes to legally end his life. After giving birth to a daughter in 2011, Rai Bachchan took a hiatus from acting. Rai Bachchan returned to work in 2015, appearing in Jazbaa (“Passion”), a crime drama in which she played a criminal attorney whose daughter is kidnapped. The following year, she starred in the biopic Sarbjit, about Sarabjit Singh, an Indian man held in a Pakistani prison on charges of terrorism and espionage. Rai Bachchan’s career came full circle when she reunited with Mani Ratnam for Ponnin Selvan: Part I (2022; “The Son of Ponni”) and Ponnin Selvan: Part Two (2023). She won the 2024 South Indian International Movie Award (SIIMA) for best actress in a leading role for her dual performances as Nandini and Mandakini in the latter film. The two films are adaptations of Kalki Krishnamurthy’s classic Tamil novel of the same name, set during the Chola dynasty. Ponnin Selvan: Part I achieved momentous box office success, with worldwide receipts of \$21.89 million. Rai Bachchan’s performances in these works has reaffirmed her standing as a leading actress in the industry.

Jacqueline Fernandez



Jacqueline Genevieve Fernandez (born 11 August 1985) is a Sri Lankan actress based in India. She has worked in Indian films, predominantly in Hindi, besides appearing in reality shows and music videos. Fernandez was born and raised in Bahrain. After graduating in mass communication from the University of Sydney and working as a television reporter in Sri Lanka, she joined the modelling industry. She was crowned Miss Universe Sri Lanka in 2006, and represented her country at Miss Universe 2006. While on a modelling assignment in India in 2009, Fernandez successfully auditioned for Sujoy Ghosh’s fantasy drama Aladin, which marked her acting debut and won her the IIFA Award for Star Debut of the Year – Female. Fernandez had her breakthrough role with the psychological thriller Murder 2 (2011), her first commercial success. This was followed by glamorous roles in the commercially successful ensemble-comedy Housefull 2 (2012) and the action thriller Race 2 (2013), the former garnered her an IIFA Award for Best Supporting Actress nomination. Fernandez went on to star in the top-grossing action films Kick (2014) and Vikrant Rona (2022), and the

Early life and modelling career

Jacqueline Fernandez was born on 11 August 1985, in Manama, Bahrain, and was raised in a multi-ethnic family. Her father, Elroy Fernandez, is a Sri Lankan Burgher, and her mother, Kim, is of Malaysian and Canadian descent. Her maternal grandfather is Canadian and her great-grandparents were from Goa, then part of Portuguese India (now in India). Her father, who was a musician in Sri Lanka, moved to Bahrain in the 1980s to escape civil unrest between the Sinhalese and Tamils and subsequently met her mother, who was an air hostess. She is the youngest of four children with one elder sister and two elder brothers. After receiving her early education in Bahrain at Sacred Heart School, she studied mass communication at the University of Sydney

in Australia. After graduating she did a couple of television shows in Sri Lanka. She also attended the Berlitz school of languages, where she learned Spanish and improved her French and Arabic. According to Fernandez, she had aspired to become an actress at a young age and fantasized about becoming a Hollywood movie star. She received some training at the John School of Acting. Although, she was a television reporter, she accepted offers in the modelling industry,



which came as a result of her pageant success. In 2006, she was crowned the winner of the Miss Universe Sri Lanka pageant and represented Sri Lanka at the world Miss Universe 2006 pageant held in Los Angeles. In a 2015 interview, Fernandez described the modelling industry as “a good training ground” and said: “It is a medium that is about shedding your inhibitions, knowing your body, confidence”. In 2006, she appeared in a music video for the song “O Sathi” by music duo Bathiya and Santhush and young female singer Umariya Sinhawansa.

Acting career
In 2009, Fernandez travelled to India for a modelling assignment. She successfully auditioned for Sujoy Ghosh’s fantasy film Aladin (2009) her acting debut. She played the love interest of Riteish Deshmukh’s character, a role based on the character

Parineeti Chopra

Parineeti Chopra (born 22 October 1988) is an Indian actress who primarily works in Hindi films. Chopra is a recipient of several accolades, including a Filmfare and a National Film Award. Chopra has appeared in Forbes India’s Celebrity 100 list since 2013. After obtaining a triple honours degree in business, finance and economics from Manchester Business School, Chopra made her acting debut with the 2011 romantic comedy Ladies vs Ricky Bahl, winning the Filmfare Award for Best Female Debut. She followed it by garnering acclaim for her starring roles in the box-office hits Ish-zaade (2012), Shuddh Desi Romance (2013) and Hasee Toh Phasee Kill Dil(2014). The first of these won her the National Film Award – Special Mention. This success was followed by a three-year hiatus and several poorly received films, with the exception of the horror-comedy Golmaal Again (2017) and the war drama Kesari (2019), in which she had a brief role. Chopra has since earned praise for her roles in the black comedy Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar (2021) and the biographical drama Amar Singh Chamkila (2024), and had a supporting role in the ensemble film Uunchai (2022).

In addition to her acting career, Chopra is a prominent celebrity endorser for brands and products. She has sung some of her film songs, including “Maana Ke Hum Yaar Nahin” and “Teri Mitti”. In 2022, Chopra ventured into television by judging the reality show Hunarbaaz: Desh Ki Shaan on Colors TV. Chopra is married to politician Raghav Chadha.

Early life and work
Chopra was born on 22 October 1988 in Amba-

la, Haryana into a Punjabi Hindu family. Her father, Pawan Chopra, is a businessman and supplier to the Indian Army at Ambala Cantonment and her mother is Reena Chopra. She has two brothers: Shivang and Sahaj; actresses Priyanka Chopra, Meera Chopra and Mannara Chopra are her cousins. Chopra was educated at Convent of Jesus and Mary, Ambala. In an interview published in The Hindu, she revealed that she was a very good student and had always wanted to become an investment banker. At the age of 17, Chopra moved to England, where she received a triple honours degree in business, finance and economics from Manchester Business School. She used to take orientation classes for new students at the university. While studying, she

worked part-time for the Manchester United Football Club as the team leader of the catering department. Chopra is also a trained Hindustani classical singer with a B.A. Honours in music. She used to perform on stage with her cousin, Priyanka, and their fathers in her childhood. In 2009, she returned to India in the wake of the economic recession and moved to Mumbai. Chopra obtained an internship in the marketing department of Yash Raj Films, joining the production company as a public-relations consultant. She considered it a perfect job, because she could use what she had learned and work in films. While working on promotions for Band Baaja Baraat (2010), Chopra realized that she wanted to become an actress and decided to resign from her executive



of Princess Jasmine. and Rajeev Masand of CNN-IBN felt that she was: “easy on the eyes and appears confident but has precious little to do”. Although the film was a critical and commercial failure, she won the IIFA Award for Star Debut of the Year – Female. In 2010, Fernandez appeared opposite Deshmukh in the science fiction romantic comedy Jaane Kahan Se Aayi Hai. She was cast as a girl from Venus, who lands on Earth in search of love. The film, along with Fernandez’s performance, received poor reviews; Rediff.com’s Sukanya Verma noted: “She gamely makes a fool of herself whilst aping the actions of movie stars, ranging from Sridevi’s Naagin dance, Mithun Chakravarty’s Disco Dancer moves, to Big B’s violent headshake in Hum. Her Tara could be a keeper if only Jaane Kahan Se Aayi Hai wasn’t so intent on turning her into a love-struck Barbie.” Critic Anupama Chopra also criticised Fernandez, calling her “a pinprick on a balloon”. Later that year, she made a special appearance in the song “Dhanno” for Sajid Khan’s comedy Housefull. Mahesh Bhatt’s thriller Murder 2 was Fernandez’s first commercial success and marked a turning point in her career. She took on the role of Priya, a lonely model who is in a confused relationship with Arjun Bhagwat (played by Emraan Hashmi). Fernandez was praised for her performance, and for the boldness and sex appeal she displayed in the film. Gaurav Malani of The Times of India stated that she was “tastefully tempting” but noted that her romance with Hashmi was “literally half-baked”. The following year, Fernandez appeared in the ensemble comedy Housefull 2 alongside Akshay Kumar, John Abraham, and Asin. It became one of the top grossing productions of India that year and earned ₹1.86 billion (US\$22 million) worldwide.

position with Yash Raj Films to attend acting school. After meeting the company’s casting director, she was asked to do a “dummy audition for fun”. Chopra remembered “fooling around with a camera” and delivering lines by the character Geet from the film Jab We Met (2007). When YRF producer Aditya Chopra saw the tape he was impressed with her acting. Chopra was then signed to a 3-film deal.

Acting career
In 2011, Chopra made her screen debut in a supporting role in debutant Maneesh Sharma’s romantic comedy Ladies vs Ricky Bahl starring Ranveer Singh and Anushka Sharma in lead roles[23]. The film describes how three girls who are tricked by a con artist take revenge on him by plotting the same trick for him. Chopra played the Delhi-based “rich and spoiled brat” Dimple Chadda, who is betrayed by the film’s central character. The film emerged as a moderate commercial success at the box-office, and received mixed reviews from critics; however, Chopra’s performance received high praise. Komal Nahta said, “Of the three other girls, Chopra is undoubtedly the best. She has the best role, the best lines and hers is the best performance among the three.” Priyanka Roy of The Telegraph described Chopra as “natural” and wrote “Among the ladies, debutante Chopra almost steals the show from Sharma.” It earned her several Best Debut awards at various award ceremonies including Filmfare, Screen, IIFA Producers Guild Film Awards. Chopra also received Best Supporting Actress nominations at several ceremonies, including Filmfare, and won the Producers Guild and IIFA Awards in the same category.

5 Decadent & Easy Homemade Treats to Win Over Your Partner’s Heart

World Chocolate Day 2025

Chocolate Day is celebrated on February 9, marking the third day of Valentine’s Week, which begins on February 7 and culminates on February 14 with Valentine’s Day. On this special day, chocolates are exchanged as a sweet token of love, affection, and gratitude among friends, family, and loved ones. It’s also the perfect excuse to forget your diet and indulge in some decadent, chocolicious treats. Not sure what to make? Don’t worry, we’ve got you covered. Here’s our special guide to delicious and easy-to-make chocolate recipes that are sure to melt hearts. So, grab your apron, put on your chef’s hat, and let’s get cooking.

Chocolate Walnut Fudge
Ingredients: 15-20 walnuts, 4 tbsps butter,¾ cup chopped dark chocolate,1 cup condensed milk,¾ cup grated mawa/khoya.

Chop walnuts. Heat a nonstick pan. Add butter and dark chocolate and cook on low heat till chocolate melts. Add condensed milk and cook on medium heat for 2-3 minutes. Add khoya, half of the chopped walnuts and mix well. Cook for 5-6 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a lined glass tin, sprinkle remaining walnuts and set aside for 2-3 hours. Cut into squares and serve.

Chocolate Mousse
Ingredients: 1½ cups dark chocolate,½ cup cream,1½ cups whipping cream,4 tsp fine-grain sugar,Few drops of



vanilla extract,Grated chocolate for garnish.
Melt chocolate and 100ml cream in a double boiler and remove when it dissolves completely. Mix whipping cream, sugar and vanilla extract and thick it till it froths. Now fold in the melted chocolate and pour it into cups. Garnish with some grated chocolate. Refrigerate and once chilled serve.

Chocolate Brownie
Ingredients: 1/2 cup plain flour (maida),4 tsp cocoa powder,2 tsp sour curds (khatta dahi),1/4 tsp soda bi-carb,1/4 cup melted butter,5 tsp powdered sugar,1/2 tsp vanilla essence,1/4 cup roughly chopped walnuts (akhrot),1 tsp butter for greasing. Sift together the flour

and cocoa powder using a sieve. Keep aside. Combine the curds and soda-bi-carb in a bowl, mix well and keep aside. Combine the curds and soda-bi-carb in a bowl, mix well and keep aside. Combine the melted butter, powdered sugar, vanilla essence and ½ cup of hot water in another bowl and whisk well. Add the curds-soda mixture and mix well.

Add the flour mixture and walnuts and mix gently to make a smooth batter of dropping consistency. Grease a 150 mm. (6”) diameter shallow microwave safe dish using butter. Line it with a piece of greaseproof paper at the bottom of the dish and again grease it using a little butter. 7. Pour the batter into the greased and lined microwave safe dish, spread it evenly using a spoon and microwave on high for 4 minutes. 8. Cool slightly and unmould by turning upside down on a plate. Remove and discard the grease proof paper and serve hot.

1. Boil water in a pot. Then put 1 bowl of chocolate and 1 bowl of butter in glass bowl which is kept on the pot with boiling water and melt it with butter. 2. Whisk 3 nos. eggs in this, add 1 tsp. Sugar and whisk again. Now add 1 tsp refined white flour and whisk it again. Coat the small oven-proof bowls with butter and then dust it off with dry refined flour to line it with dry refined flour. Pour this mixture into these small bowls. Just fill the cups till 3/4th of the bowl as it rises.

Marwar meets the world

Perched against the backdrop of the Aravalli range, Taraksh—Sanskrit for ‘starry-eyed’—stands as the culinary home of Sayaji Udaipur resort. The restaurant pays homage to Rajasthan’s rich artisanal legacy. With over two decades of experience, its Executive Chef Rajendra Singh blends local Rajasthani ingredients with global flavours, shaping dishes that delight both adventurous and traditional palates alike.

Food: The appetisers are nothing short of a culinary revelation. The Keema Kaleji Potli Samosa is a must-try, where spiced mutton mince and earthy mutton liver melds within a crisp, golden shell. For those with a penchant for robust flavours, Thai Kai Pani Poori brilliantly marries the street food charm of the Indian subcontinent with Thai flavours. Perhaps the most intriguing offering is the Ker Sangri Cappuccino, a clever play on presentation that transforms this Rajasthani delicacy into an elegant broth. The Rajasthani Murg Mathania ka Shorba balances tender chicken with Mathania chilli. Maas ka Sula, slow-cooked with dry kaachri, exudes irresistible smokiness, and Safed Maas (White mutton) in a velvety yogurt gravy is pure indulgence. The standout Gulab Jamun ki subzi surprises with its sweet-savoury contrast. For desserts, the chilled rabdi cannelloni offers a creamy contrast of textures, while the tri-colour dessert dome layers carrot, lauki and moong halwas with crunchy nuts.



Too much vitamin B6 can be toxic 3 symptoms to watch out for

Side effects from taking too much vitamin B6 – including nerve damage – may be more widespread than we think, Australia’s medicines regulator says. In an ABC report earlier this week, a spokesperson for the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) says it may have underestimated the extent of the side effects from vitamin B6 supplements.

However, there are proposals to limit sales of high-dose versions due to safety concerns. A pathologist who runs a clinic that tests vitamin B6 in blood samples from across Australia also appeared on the program. He told the ABC that data from May suggests 4.5 per cent of samples tested had returned results “very likely” indicating nerve damage. So what are vitamin B6 supplements? How can they be toxic? And which symptoms do you need to watch out for?Vitamin B6, also known as pyridoxine, plays



an important role in keeping the body healthy. It is involved in the metabolism of proteins, carbohydrates and fats in food. It is also important for the production of neurotransmitters – chemical messengers in the brain that maintain its function and regulate your mood. Vitamin B6 also supports the immune system by helping to make antibodies, which fight off infections. And it is needed to produce haemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen around the body. Some women take a vitamin B6 supplement when pregnant. It is thought this helps

reduce the nausea associated with the early stages of pregnancy. Some women also take it to help with premenstrual syndrome.

However, most people don’t need, and won’t benefit from, a vitamin B6 supplement. That’s because you get enough vitamin B6 from your diet through meat, breakfast cereal, fruit and vegetables. You don’t need much. A dose of 1.3–1.7 milligrams a day is enough for most adults. Currently, vitamin B6 supplements with a daily dose of 5–200mg can be sold over the counter at health food stores, supermarkets and pharmacies.

Chef Deepti Jadhav says ‘modernising South Indian food is about reimagining it, not changing its identity’

South Indian food has evolved and modernised over the years, incorporating new flavours, ingredients, and cooking techniques while still retaining its traditional roots. “Modernising South Indian cuisine, for me, is not about changing its identity — it’s about reimagining how it’s experienced. I believe in taking the soul of traditional ingredients and reinterpret them using modern techniques, refined presentation, and a deeper understanding of core memories. The goal is to retain authenticity while elevating the overall dining experience,” says chef Deepti Jadhav, Head Chef of Avartana, ITC Maratha Mumbai. Sharing how she incorporates traditional South Indian flavours even though she gives a modern take to her food, the chef adds, “The foundation of my food always begins with traditional ingredients — whether it’s the sharp earthiness of black



Tellicherry pepper from Kerala, the umami of fermented raw rice batters from Tamil Nadu, or the delicate fragrance of curry leaves and coconut from coastal Andhra

and Karnataka. Every dish I make starts with a deep respect for its roots. I might present a rasam as a consommé or serve a Talegaon potato sandwich instead of a

classic vada, but the soul of the ingredient remains South Indian. I also focus on balance — South Indian food is incredibly nuanced in its play of sour, spice, sweet, and

bitterness. That complexity allows me to be creative without compromising on identity.”Some of her go-to ingredients include Tellicherry pepper.

Why Bengalis love ‘khus khus’: The story of poppy seeds, opium, and an easy recipe for ‘alu posto’

The land of the poppy eaters – that would be a fitting name for Bengal, given the quantities of poppy seed we consume in the state. Posto, as poppy seed is called in Bengali, or khus khus in Hindi, is considered a delicacy. The white seeds are soaked in water and ground to a paste, which is then added to vegetables, resulting in a creamy, nutty coating. Sometimes the soaked seeds are ground and mixed with green chillies and a little rice flour, shaped into small cakes or tikkis, fried, and served with dal. Poppy seed is so commonplace in Bengali cuisine – and held in such high regard – that I almost took a packet as a gift for my hosts in Singapore. Thankfully, I didn’t. I was later informed that poppy seeds are banned in Singapore and carrying them could have led to my arrest, and possibly a very extended stay behind bars.In India, we use white poppy seeds. In the United States of America, lemon cake with black poppyseed is popular; those seeds are almost impossible to find in India. Trust me, I’ve tried. While many Indian communities use khus khus in their cuisine, Bengalis have made it nearly a staple. During the Mughal period, poppy seeds were even used in khjur, a sweet, leavened bread where they were kneaded into the dough along with sugar, shaped into flatbreads, and deep-fried. Singapore’s ban stems from the fact that the capsule of the poppy flower is the source of opium, known as opion in Greek, afyun in Arabic, ahiphena in Sanskrit, and aphin in Hindi. Opium was brought to India by the Arabs around the 11th or 12th century, and soon, regions like Uttar Pradesh and Malwa became centres of opium



production. In 1511, a Florentine agent and merchant, Giovanni di Empoli, recorded that Portuguese admiral Albuquerque chanced upon opium aboard eight captured ships from Gujarat.By 1516, Barbosa had listed opium as a key export from India. In 1668, French traveller François Bernier observed that the Rajputs consumed opium as a stimulant on the eve of a battle — this may explain why they lost most of them. Jesuit priest Father Monserrate referred to poppy seed not as khus khus, but by the older term “post,” from which the Bengali posto is derived. By now, I’m assuming it’s clear that opium was of great importance to India and was heavily consumed by the haves, if not the have-nots.During Akbar’s reign, the poppy transitioned from being a medical plant to being a recreational drug. A royal decree increased cultivation, and the crimson flower began to appear as a motif in royal textiles. The dried white seeds, formed after the opium-rich latex had been extracted and which contain negligible narcotic properties, also entered the royal

kitchens. Singapore’s ban stems from the fact that the capsule of the poppy flower is the source of opium, known as opion in Greek, afyun in Arabic, ahiphena in Sanskrit, and aphin in Hindi. Opium was brought to India by the Arabs around the 11th or 12th century, and soon, regions like Uttar Pradesh and Malwa became centres of opium production. In 1511, a Florentine agent and merchant, Giovanni di Empoli, recorded that Portuguese admiral Albuquerque chanced upon opium aboard eight captured ships from Gujarat.By 1516, Barbosa had listed opium as a key export from India. In 1668, French traveller François Bernier observed that the Rajputs consumed opium as a stimulant on the eve of a battle — this may explain why they lost most of them. Jesuit priest Father Monserrate referred to poppy seed not as khus khus, but by the older term “post,” from which the Bengali posto is derived. By now, I’m assuming it’s clear that opium was of great importance to India and was heavily consumed by the haves, if not the have-nots.

Food for thought

The bell above the café door chimed softly. Twenty-two-year-old Kajal—70 per cent blind in one eye and visually impaired in the other—walked over to the café’s door, her breath caught somewhere between fear and excitement. This was her first job as a barista and she wanted to prove that there was more to her than her disability. But it wasn’t easy. Not just because of the physical challenges, customers often looked past her; she avoided eye contact altogether. She went home those nights with bruised pride. By the second week, Kajal had found her rhythm. She could make the best caramel flat white in the shop. She started to recognise regulars by their voice and often by their perfume.The café had become her safe space—not because life was perfect, but because she had shaped it to include her. She had made herself seen. Kajal’s story of inclusivity and independence is not an offbeat example. There are many young women and men like her who have found the courage within to soldier on even after life dealt them a crushing blow. And they are supported by individuals and organisations to reinvent themselves and proudly participate in society, which was unthinkable a few years ago. Suchis-



mita Das, assistant professor of sociology, Govt Degree College, Mangalkote, West Bengal believes acceptance is key to helping survivors or victims heal. “Accepting food served by survivors of any attack, disease, or deformity is the first step towards helping in the process of normalising their lives. Our need for an illusory idea of ‘perfection’ in our consumption often prevents us from accepting food from the survivors of trauma,” she says. As far as clients are concerned, accepting food from a differently abled person carries a profound message of dignity and inclusion. It transcends the act of simply receiving sustenance and becomes a gesture of mutual respect and recognition of equal worth. It also shows how much Gen Z has changed the national conscience in a country like India, where food is the ultimate line to be crossed, accepting it from persons or

communities from the other side of the spectrum places them on an equal footing. Also, for many differently abled individuals, preparing or serving food is a powerful expression of independence and contribution—their values and capabilities break stereotypes and promote a sense of belonging. It fosters empathy and solidarity. It sends a message that everyone has something to offer, and everyone deserves to be seen and valued for who they are—not for what they lack. The decision by Kallol Ghosh from Kolkata to open a café run by HIV-positive people was met with stiff resistance—most posh localities in south Kolkata refused to allot space. Café Positive finally found a spot in the Lake Terrace area. It employs HIV-positive young women and men to serve customers. Ghosh wanted to prove that they are as much a part of society as everyone else.

Chakka Alias Jackie!

Fruits with powerful fragrances have a unique way of connecting with our brains, evoking memories and sensations. Even sans their physical presence, the thought of their fragrance or the texture we feel when devouring them is enough to stir a vivid image. Jackfruit, with its distinctive aroma and texture, is a classic example. Whether it’s a fresh fruit hanging from the tree or a weathered one lying on the path, the air around it is filled with a fragrance that’s hard to ignore. Large in size and with its striking colour or flesh, this tropical fruit is not only a treat for the senses but also a delight for the eyes.

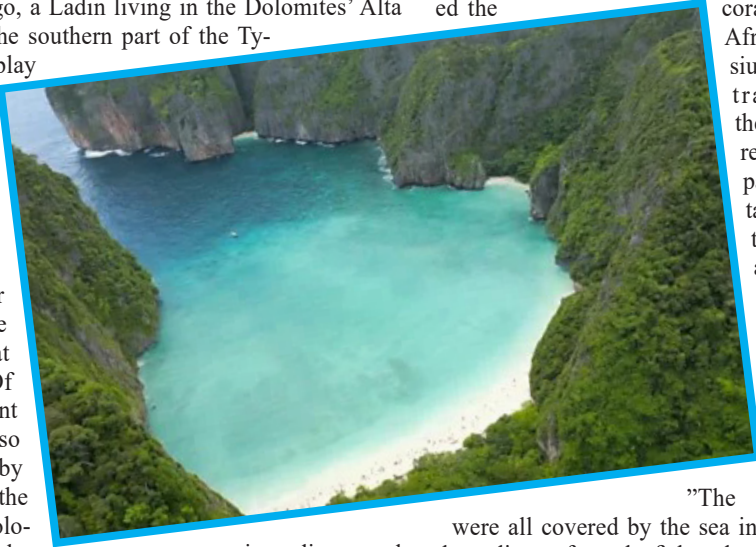
Native to the rainforest of western India, jackfruit has been cultivated for over 3,000 years. It gradually spread throughout Southeast Asia, reaching the Caribbean and the Americas via trade and migration. Valued for its size, versatility and nutritional value, jackfruit adapted to diverse climates, becoming a staple food and a symbol of resilience in tropical regions worldwide. Today, jackfruit is cultivated in over 60 countries, especially India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, China, Thailand and Vietnam.

What paints the Dolomites pink? The magic of the legendary ‘enrosadira’

Maybe it’s skiing beneath prehistoric, snow-capped spires or the combination of home-made pasta and Austrian apple strudel. But the après-ski scene just hits differently in Italy’s Dolomite Mountains – and the “enrosadira” certainly has something to do with it. This rare natural phenomenon washes over the Dolomites at dawn and dusk when the sun’s rays reflect off the craggy peaks in steamy shades of hot pink and wildfire red. The revered towers and cliffs illuminate, transporting visitors back to when the ancient Unesco World Heritage-listed mountains were a coral reef ascending from the sea. And soon, these spectacular sunsets will light up for the entire world when the Dolomites co-host the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympics and Paralympics. But for now, you can still catch this wild, blushing beauty without all the crowds. It’s no surprise that enrosadira translates to “turning pink” in the Dolomites’ ancient Ladin language (the world’s last spoken Latin dialect). Like many Ladin traditions, tales of these mountains have been passed down for centuries. According to local legend, the magenta, amber and violet-tinged-bedrock that arrives every morning and evening is what’s left of an elf king’s beloved rose garden after his daughter was taken away by a suitor. Broken-hearted, he cast a spell forbidding anyone from seeing the beauty of his magical rose garden in the light of day again – only he left out daybreak and twilight. “Enrosadira is deeply rooted in our Ladin tradition and linked to legends, emotions and a strong sense of belonging to the land,” says Nicole Dorigo, a Ladin living in the Dolomites’ Alta Badia region in the southern part of the Tyrol valley. “The play of lights on the mountains creates a magical and evocative atmosphere, conveying a sense of peace and connection with our homeland and the natural beauty that surrounds us.” Of course, the vibrant rock hues can also be explained by science. Back in the 1700s, French geologist Deodat de Dolomieu discovered that the range’s peaks aren’t pure limestone, as many previously believed. They’re made of dolomite – a rock formed



millions of years ago in a continental collision that uprooted the coral reef and islands between Africa and Europe. Magnesium-rich seawater slowly transformed the limestone reefs into a pale gray and tan sediment that reflects and re-emits more light than regular limestone, explaining why these mountains shine so brightly and vividly. “The dolomite layers were all covered by the sea in ancient times. All the sediment from the fish and mud became concrete when the water flooded around it, forming many unique rock shapes,” says Andrea Milani, a climbing



and ski guide for Dolomite Mountains tours. “In the morning and evening when the sun goes down, with a clear sky, the mountains turn pink.” Today these ancient sea beds have become one of the world’s premier ski regions, offering 12 interconnected

Dolomiti Superski resorts. So, after a day on the slopes, over long, deep snowy peaks and valleys where tectonic plates once collided, pull up a lawn chair and watch the sun rays reflect an intense mauve and deep orange. For the best show, face west at sunset or east at sunrise under a clear sky. The lower the sun sits on the horizon, the more dramatic the colours. Après-ski doesn’t get better than Aperol spritz under enrosadira in crisp mountain air – unless you’re lucky enough to find a fossilised seashell in the snow. Here are some of the best après-ski spots to watch the Dolomites blush pink: Sip an apéritif on the terrace of this luxury South Tyrolean hotel overlooking the famous Catinaccio (also called Rosengarten) mountains – the mythical setting of Ladin king Laurin’s rose garden. In real life, these mountains frame Alpine meadows with a 17th-Century chapel, an old watermill and nature park. After your après-ski sunset experience, dine at the resort’s restaurant on fresh, regionally inspired fare. On a candlelit Lake Sompat, nestled between the towering mastiffs, lies Delights On Ice where tuxedoed servers on figure skates bring you Champagne, wowing you with waltz jumps, sizzles and glides as this small frozen pond reflects the rose-colored peaks at sunset. As sommeliere pour Teroldego and other South Tyrolean wines, local chefs dazzle with traditional Italian, German, Austrian and Ladin dishes like homemade silky polenta and spicy goulash. Tickets are available at the Alta Badia tourism office. Club Moritzino is one of the Dolomites’ top spots – both in elevation at 2,05km and for après-ski – and has been the life of the party for more than 50 years. Here, at the summit of La Villa’s Piz La Ila cable car, you get 360-degree mountain views at a gourmet restaurant, wine bar and with an afternoon DJ out on the terrace. Located at the base of the 2026 Winter Olympics Alpine ski slope, Chalet Tofane is convenient both to the slopes and the rest of Cortina’s upcoming Olympic in-town events: bobsleigh, luge, skeleton and curling. Take a seat on the stylish roof deck to watch the sunset and order the Northern Italian favourite drink, the bombardino (a hot, creamy cocktail made from egg liquor, brandy and topped with whipped cream and cinnamon). After skiing the famous Sellaronda ski route across four Ladin valleys, finish the day at La Stua. Translated from Ladin as “wooden living room”, this cosy restaurant with outdoor seating is perfect for watching the enrosadira. And if you want to get a little rowdy, this 1800s farm hut (the Dolomites are home to over 1,000 of these “rifugi”) has an après-ski party that won’t stop until 02:00. Need a place to stay? Head to the nearby Adler Resort, where you can also watch the sunset from the Lodge before partaking in a rejuvenating spa treatment.

Immune cells have unexpected role in fighting pain

Unlike the combative immune cells that protect us from pathogens, regulatory T cells (Tregs) are nurturers. They salve inflammation, promote healing of injured tissue, and rein in immune attacks to curb self-inflicted damage. Now, a study of mice reported today in Science suggests some Tregs also act on nerve cells to quell a specific type of pain—but only in females. Why only female rodents seem to benefit remains unclear, but researchers hope they might someday enlist these Tregs to address pain conditions, many of which disproportionately affect women. “It’s a very impressive paper,” says neuroscientist Gila Moalem-Taylor of the University of New South Wales Sydney, who wasn’t connected to the research. The study “uses elegant, sophisticated methods to conclusively demonstrate the mechanisms” by which the cells reduce one kind of sensitivity to pain, she says. Tregs, a type of white blood cell, are best known for their role in keeping the immune system in balance and preventing autoimmunity. But researchers have recently found that they also help control pain. For example, a 2021 study by neuroscientist Allan Basbaum of the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) and colleagues showed that Tregs reduce mice’s sensitivity to pain triggered by other immune cells that reside in the brain and spinal cord. That research and additional work suggested Tregs influence pain by targeting various immune cells and tamping down inflammation. But these studies left open the possibility that Tregs might also directly affect pain-sensing nerve cells. Basbaum, his postdoc Élara Midavaine, UCSF dermatologist Sakeen Kashem, and their colleagues launched the new study to nail down how the regulatory cells curb pain. They focused on Tregs that dwell in the meninges—the membranes that sheathe the brain and spinal cord—and in similar nearby membranes. The cells are much more abundant in these structures than elsewhere in the nervous system. To find out whether the cells affect pain perception, the scientists used genetically engineered mice whose Tregs are vulnerable to a toxin produced by the bacteria that cause diphtheria. Injecting this toxin into the meninges in the lower back killed about 90% of the Tregs in the membranes without harming Tregs in the rest of the body. The scientists then measured the animals’ responsiveness to pain by prodding their feet with hairlike fibers of varying flexibility. The stiffer the fiber necessary to induce a mouse to pull its foot away, the lower the animal’s presumed sensitivity to pain. In female mice, the researchers found, culling Tregs in the meninges caused pain sensitivity to shoot up. Loss of Tregs did not have the same effect in male mice, however, and it didn’t alter either sex’s responsiveness to heat, cold, and other types of painful stimulation. Boosting Tregs, on the other hand, appeared to blunt painful stimulation. In mice with higher pain sensitivity because of nerve damage, increasing the number of Tregs with injections of the immune system protein IL-2 counteracted this hypersensitivity—but again, only in females. To further probe this sex-specific effect, the researchers surgically removed the ovaries from female mice or gave them a drug that blocks the effects of estrogen. In both cases, IL-2 did not reduce pain sensitivity. The researchers’ findings suggest female sex hormones somehow help control the pain-reducing functions of Tregs. Previous work revealed that Tregs pump out pain-suppressing molecules known as enkephalins. By performing bone marrow transplants with genetically engineered stem cells, the researchers produced mice in which the diphtheria toxin could kill blood cells that made enkephalins while sparing other body cells that fashioned the signaling molecules. Shots of the toxin caused the number of Tregs in the animals to fall and their pain sensitivity to rise. The researchers also explored which cells the rodent Tregs target to quash pain. The enkephalins released by Tregs work by prodding pain-reducing receptors on nerve cells, they reported. “We show a different pathway for how Tregs regulate pain that is independent of how they regulate inflammation and tissue repair,” Basbaum says. New approaches to pain relief are sorely needed, Basbaum says, particularly for women and people receiving gender-affirming care, who have disproportionately high rates of pain. Researchers are already testing therapies for autoimmune diseases that boost Treg numbers, including infusions of the cells, Kashem notes. He and his colleagues hope to investigate the possibility of harnessing such treatments for pain relief. Identifying specific Tregs that reduce pain sensitivity is an important step toward these treatments, says neuroimmunologist Michael Burton of the University of Texas at Dallas, who was not involved in the research.

Can engineering save Antarctica’s most vulnerable glacier?

Icebergs bigger than aircraft carriers crowd the area where Thwaites Glacier pours into the ocean. Those bergs calve from this and other glaciers that ooze off the edges of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet — a dome of ice as large as Mexico. This region at the bottom of the world could become the site of some of the biggest engineering projects the world has ever seen. Researchers are sketching ideas on how to protect West Antarctica’s ice from global warming. The proposed projects would block warm ocean currents or alter the flow of vast glaciers. These projects could be “just enormous,” says Christian Rodehacke. He’s a glaciologist in Bremerhaven, Germany. He works at the Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research. Ultimately, each project hopes to slow how rapidly seas will rise across the globe. Yet the mere idea of engineering glaciers has provoked heated debate, even among scientists who know and respect one another. Can it be done, some ask? Should it be done? And who would pay for such enormous projects? Thwaites is the widest glacier in the world. It’s also the most vulnerable in West Antarctica. It holds 480,000 cubic kilometers (115,000 cubic miles) of ice. Right now, it’s losing about 80 cubic kilometers (19 cubic miles) per year. This is six times faster than in the 1990s. And its ice loss continues to speed up as the world warms. If Thwaites were to collapse, it would release enough ice to trigger disastrous sea-level rise across the globe. And even if humans stop releasing climate-warming gases in the near future, this still might not prevent a collapse. So a few scientists are investigating whether glacial engineering could prevent or delay sea-level rise. Slawek Tulaczyk is one of the people pushing for this to happen. He’s a glaciologist at the University of Santa Cruz. “Maybe the conclusion will be that we should not do it, or that we won’t be able to do it,” he says. But he believes that scientists should at least look into the possibility. Even if it saves Thwaites or other glaciers in Antarctica, it may not save the world. People have about 100 years to get serious about engineering ice for lots of reasons. In the 1980s, for instance, scientists and engineers talked about engineering icebergs to provide fresh water. Douglas MacAyeal was student in glaciology at Princeton in 1983 when he learned about Thwaites. It inspired him to think about tenuous ways that humans could glaciers to solve big problems. He wrote a brief abstract to present at a meeting. It proposed pump-amounts of seawater onto the fronts of glaciers. By freezing would thicken the ice, causing more heavily on submerged below. That stronger anchoring would slow the glacier’s rate of flow. He was looking to get a job and didn’t think this “silly idea” would help him land one. He ended up at the University of Chicago, rejoining the conversation on glacial engineering only in 2023 — as he was retiring. Tulaczyk, too, has long thought about engineering ice flows. While working on his Ph.D. in the 1990s, he studied a coastal site in West Antarctica, roughly 1,200 kilometers (745 miles) east of Thwaites. Six massive glaciers ooze off that coastline. Most of them slide 300 to 700 meters (980 to 2,300 feet) forward each year. But scientists found that one, the Kamb Ice Stream, flowed only two percent that fast. A thin layer of liquid water lies beneath most glaciers. This lubrication lets them glide over rough beds of gravel. That water comes from a slow melting of ice on the glacier’s bottom. It melts due to the heat of friction and heat that seeps out of the ground from deep in the Earth. Tulaczyk and some others thought a loss of this water layer might have slowed Kamb. Like a river jumping its banks, that water seemed to have migrated elsewhere. By the late 2000s, Tulaczyk was wondering if it might be possible to slow other glaciers by mimicking what happened at Kamb. He imagined drilling holes through a glacier and pumping out the water below. This might eventually freeze the glacier to its bed, as Kamb had — stalling the ice flow for decades or centuries. Tulaczyk presented the idea to a small group of climate scientists in 2008. Alas, he never got funding for a workshop at which scientists might discuss this further. Two events helped revive his idea a decade later. Around 2018, Tulaczyk received an email from the sci-fi novelist Kim Stanley Robinson. The author had been one of the few nonscientists present at Tulaczyk’s 2008 talk. Robinson ended up including the idea in his 2020 novel about people who successfully responded to climate change and sea-level rise. (In it, a glaciologist named Slawek proposes Tulaczyk’s strategy for slowing glaciers.) Then, in 2023, Tulaczyk received an email from Alex Luebke. This tech entrepreneur had founded companies to develop satellites and run advanced projects at Google X. Luebke had read Robinson’s book. He, too, loved the idea of engineering glaciers. So he asked Tulaczyk how he might help push for this. A few months later, Luebke and several scientists held a workshop for 50 people to discuss how they might fund and test glacial engineering.



Here’s a view of the edge of the Thwaites Glacier where it sheds icebergs into the Southern Ocean, photographed by NASA from a DC-8 jet. The light blue below the water is more of the glacier. Ninety percent of its thickness extends underwater.

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Italy wins epic tiebreak, reaches Davis Cup Final

Bologna: Double defending champions Italy triumphed over Belgium with a 2-0 victory on Friday in Bologna, following Flavio Cobolli's win in a 32-point tiebreak, securing a Davis Cup final against either Spain or Germany.

Former Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini defeated Raphael Collignon 6-3, 6-4, giving Italy an early lead. Subsequently, team leader Cobolli overcame Zizou Bergs 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (17/15). "It's really tough to say something about this match," Cobolli said. "I played for all of my team, my family, and it's one of the best days of my life." The match lasted just over three hours in a noisy Bologna stadium where the 23-year-old Cobolli broke serve only once, in the first set. Neither player conceded a break point in the second set, which Bergs secured in a tie-break. Growing increasingly aggressive, the Belgian earned three break points early in the third set and a fourth at 4-4. However, Cobolli responded each time with supersonic first serves to eliminate the threat and earned two match points in the following game. The Belgian right-hander saved himself with two aces but failed to convert his fifth break point at 5-5, leading to another tiebreak. In the tense 32-point tiebreak, Cobolli saved seven match points before clinching victory with a final ace. "In the five years I've been captain, I've never seen anything like it," said captain Filippo Volandri. "This match was incredible; in the end, it was 5 per cent tactics and 95 per cent heart." It was Italy's 13th consecutive successful tiebreak in the Davis Cup, a competition in which it remains undefeated since September 2023. Italy is competing without Jannik Sinner and Lorenzo Musetti. Spain and Germany will contest the second semi-final on Saturday. On Thursday, Spain rebounded from one match down to defeat the Czech Republic 2-1, while Germany, led by world number three Alexander Zverev, overcame Argentina by the same score-line.

Lakshya Sen Battles Past Second Seed Chou Tien Chen to Enter Australian Open Final

Sydney: Star Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen advanced to the men's singles final of the Australian Open Super 500 with a resilient three-game victory over world No. 6 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei on Saturday. Lakshya, a 2021 World Championships bronze medallist, demonstrated remarkable mental toughness to recover from an opening-game setback and outlast the second seed 17-21, 24-22, 21-16 in an 86-minute semifinal. The 24-year-old, who reached the Hong Kong Open final earlier this year but has yet to win a title this season, will face either Japan's Yushi Tanaka or Chinese Taipei's fifth seed Lin Chun-Yi in Sunday's final. Lakshya appeared inconsistent early on, while Chen's precise shot selection and execution allowed the Taiwanese to dominate the rallies, securing an 11-6 lead at the mid-game interval. Chen's aggressive back-court attack helped him race to a 14-7 advantage. Lakshya briefly interrupted his run with a powerful

Caleb Love Powers Trail Blazers Past Warriors to Top NBA Cup Group Standings

Agency: Rookie Caleb Love capped a season-best 26-point performance with two key late 3-pointers and the Portland Trail Blazers put themselves in position for advancement in the NBA Cup with a 127-123 victory over the Golden State Warriors on Friday in San Francisco. Deni Avdija also put up 26 points and Donovan Clingan chipped in with 22 points and 10 rebounds as Portland moved to 2-1 in West Group C, good for a first-place tie with the Denver Nuggets with just one game to play.

Toumani Camara added 20 points for the Trail Blazers, who defeated Denver in an earlier NBA Cup game. After an 18-point second quarter by Stephen Curry offset a 19-10 Trail Blazers start, the clubs battled on even terms until Love buried a 3-pointer and



Avdija dropped in five straight free throws in a run that gave the visitors the lead for good at 109-102 with 7:56 remaining. The Warriors got within 119-118 on a layup by Gary Payton II with 1:43 to play, and later within 122-120 after two free throws by Jimmy Butler III with 43.2 seconds left, but both times Love responded with a 3-pointer to help Portland keep the hosts

at arm's length. Love, a two-way player whose previous season high was 17 points, shot 6-for-14 from 3-point range to account for a majority of his points. Avdija went 12-for-13 at the free throw line and also found time for a career-high 14 assists for the Trail Blazers, who also stunned the Warriors with a 139-119 home romp during the first week of the season.

Robert Williams grabbed 11 boards to complement eight points and three blocks for the Trail Blazers, who had lost four in a row. Sidy Cissoko aided the visitors' cause with a career-high 15 points. Portland played without Jrue Holiday and Shaedon Sharpe due to calf injuries. Curry connected on nine 3-pointers in a 38-point effort for the Warriors, who were playing for the first time at home after a 3-3 road trip. Curry hit 14 of his 23 shots overall. Butler and Brandin Podziemski finished with 20 points apiece, Draymond Green with 11 and Moses Moody 10 for the Warriors, who fell to 1-2 in West Group C. Butler had a team-high eight rebounds and Green a team-high eight assists for Golden State, which lost for the first time in six home games this season.

Guardiola Hails Haaland for Ending Norway's World Cup Drought

Manchester: Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola expressed his delight with star striker Erling Haaland's effort to take Norway to the FIFA World Cup 2026 as the forward's exploits in front of goal assured the Scandinavian nation a berth in the quadrennial spectacle slated to be held in North America next year.

Haaland, who leads the Premier League scoring charts with 14 strikes to his name, netted 16 times for Norway in the WC qualifiers to help his nation punch their ticket to the showpiece. "He's incredible this season. He's breaking a lot of personal records in the Premier League and with Norway," Guardiola said. "I'm happy for him, for his national team. I saw yesterday that many of the squad were not born the last



time Norway were in the World Cup," the 54-year-old said. "He made an incredible qualification, scoring a lot of goals and playing really good. As a world class player, he deserves to play a World Cup. I'm so happy for him," the Spanish tactician said. Title contenders Arsenal, guided by Mikel Arteta, Guardiola's former protégé at City, hold a 4-point lead over City after 11 games. Guardiola suggested that catching up

with league leaders Arsenal might be challenging if the Gunners extend their lead due to the quality within the London-based team. "The truth is, a team as strong as Arsenal will not drop points, so if they pull further ahead, it will be impossible to catch up," the Spaniard said. "Arsenal are an impeccable team. If they manage to extend their lead, it will be difficult to catch up, similar to how it was with Liverpool," Guardiola added.

Rishabh Pant Dislikes One-Off Captaincy Matches

Guwahati: Leading in a one-off Test can be a tricky proposition. If you win, it's forgotten quickly but if you lose, the scrutiny can be harsh and long-lasting. Rishabh Pant, who will captain in the absence of the injured Shubman Gill, faces this situation as India look to level the two-Test series against South Africa here.

"Definitely, a one-off match is not the best scenario as a captain," Pant conceded to a pointed question but added that he didn't want to put "undue pressure" on himself. "But at the same time, I'm really proud that BCCI has given me this opportunity. You know, whenever you're leading your country, it's the proudest

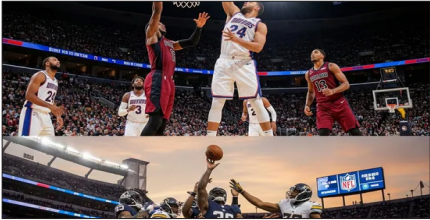


moment. At the same time, I don't want to think about it too much. "I don't want to take that undue pressure of captaincy, I just want to keep things very simple. How I see the game, how we want to play as a team... That's the kind of conversation we're having in the group. If you think about that too much, you're putting undue pres-

sure which we don't want as a team." Extending the same scenario from a team's perspective, Pant, only the second wicketkeeper to lead India, agreed that bouncing back after losing in a two-Test series was a difficult task. "It is always good to have more matches because you can come back from it.

When you have a two-match series, it's harder because the pressure is all the more if you lose the first match. But at the same time, you know, these are the things which we can't control as a team," he said. Given his free-spirited nature, what kind of captain is he going to be? "I want to keep a mixture of both," noted Pant.

Packers Primed for Home Victory Over Vikings to Ignite Playoff Charge



Agency: The Packers begin looking at playoff possibilities when they host the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday in the first of three consecutive games against division opponents.

The Packers rallied for a 27-20 win at the New York Giants to snap a two-game skid. Green Bay, which has played just one division game to date, is a half-game behind division-leading Chicago and a half-game ahead of defending division champion Detroit. Minnesota lost at home to Chicago, 19-17, on a last-second, 48-yard field goal for its fourth defeat in five games. "NFC North, going to Lambeau, always a very, very important game for the Minnesota Vikings and it is absolutely one this week," Vikings coach Kevin O'Connell said Wednesday.

Since opening with dominant victories over the Lions and Commanders, the Packers' offense has been trying to rediscover that rhythm. Green Bay has allowed just a total of 39 points in its three losses, raising concern about the ability of the offense to match that level of performance.

Green Bay trailed 20-19 against the Giants until Jordan Love hit Christian Watson with a 17-yard touchdown pass with just over four minutes remaining. The Packers were out-gained 336-296 in total yards and the Giants had an almost 12-minute edge in time of possession. Green Bay is sixth in the league in yards allowed per game with 292.1 and seventh against the run with 96.8 yards per contest. Love has completed 67.7% of his passes with 15 touchdowns and three interceptions. Romeo Doubs has a team-high 39 receptions for 499 yards and four scores. Green Bay's offense could be impacted by injuries. Packers running back Josh Jacobs is questionable with a bone bruise and thigh contusion. Two of Love's top receivers, Dontayvion Wicks and rookie Matthew Golden, are also game-time decisions.

Brandon Aiyuk Trade Rumors Intensify Amid 49ers Split; Steelers and Browns Are Top Potential Destinations

New York: Brandon Aiyuk is reportedly set to depart from San Francisco 49ers, The New York Times reported. The NFL side is reportedly frustrated with the wide receiver who has been out with an injury since October 2024. Aiyuk reportedly failed to attend meetings and has been a no-show to team activities in recent months. His teammates have tried but have not been able to convince him to get back to the field with them either, as per NYT. The publication reported that Aiyuk mostly trained separately.

With all this in mind, the 49ers are reportedly looking to make a change, but many might be wondering where the 27-year-old could go next. Aiyuk could next head to the Pittsburgh Steelers. They were reportedly in contention to sign Aiyuk in August 2024. However, he ended a contentious contract dispute with the 49ers and negotiated a \$120 million extension over four years. Now that the 49ers chapter looks to be over, the Steelers could take him. While they have DK Metcalf, a strong performer like Aiyuk would definitely help, but



only if the player was at proper fitness levels. Aiyuk's injury is likely to become a factor to consider whenever his next move has to take place. He could also head to Washington Commanders where his longtime friend Jayden Daniels plays quarterback.

Aiyuk could also head to Cleveland Browns, who had made a push last off-season to acquire the wide receiver. Once he becomes a free agent if 49ers do part

ways, then any NFL team could essentially come knocking. However, Aiyuk's injury might be a point of concern. He has been out hurt since October 2024. He tore his ACL, MCL and meniscus during the game against Kansas City Chiefs and had to undergo major reconstructive surgery the following month. There was an expectation he could be back in the latter part of this season, but the 49ers have firmly kept him on the PUP list.

Travis Head Smashes 69-Ball Century, Guides Australia to Dominant Eight-Wicket Win in Ashes Opener

Perth: Makeshift opener Travis Head smacked an explosive 69-ball century to power Australia to victory in a high-octane first Ashes Test on Saturday as England meekly surrendered in the Perth Stadium cauldron. Chasing 205 to win, Head slammed 123 as the hosts romped home on day two by eight wickets in an electric start to the five-match series. Marnus Labuschagne was not-out 51 and Steve Smith on two. Head's heroics came on the back of a blistering spell from marauding pace pair Scott Boland and Mitchell Starc after lunch that sparked a stunning England collapse. The tourists were cruising at 65-1 and building an ominous second-innings lead, but Boland and Starc left them reeling with four wickets in as many overs. A ruthless Boland accounted for Ben Duckett (28), Ollie Pope (33) and Harry Brook (0) in the space of 11 balls, then two deliveries later Starc sent Joe Root packing for eight. When Starc removed skipper Ben Stokes (2), England were flailing at 88-6 and the veteran paceman had bagged a 10-wicket haul for only the third time after his first innings 7-58, a career-best. England were partially rescued by a crucial 50-run stand between Gus Atkinson (37) and Brydon Carse (20) before being rolled for 164 at tea. When they returned Usman Khawaja again failed to show as opener as he battles back stiffness, with Australia signalling their intent by sending in Head. Head, who has opened nine times previous-



ly in Test cricket, quickly got into his destructive rhythm, crunching some lovely boundaries including big sixes off Carse and Mark Wood. He made it look easy, making a mockery of the struggles other batsmen had on the bouncy track, bringing up his half-century in 36 balls, passing 4,000 Test runs in the process. Looking to emulate him, debutant Jake Weatherald also went on the attack, but it cost him, out for 23 after a mistimed pull shot was taken by Ben Duckett off Carse. An unruffled Head kept the pressure on, slamming four boundaries in one Stokes over and sending a six back over the head of Jofra Archer on his way to a 10th Test ton. He eventually fell to Carse going for another big hit. Australia resumed on a paltry 123-9 in their first innings and added just nine before

Nathan Lyon was removed by Carse for four to leave England with a 40-run advantage. Stokes was the star of the show, claiming 5-23 off just 36 balls to give England a golden opportunity to win a Test in Australia for the first time since the 2010-11 series. They had been all out for 172 at the hands of Starc on day one. Australia were banking on the 35-year-old to emulate his exploits in the second innings and he whipped the sold-out Perth Stadium crowd into a frenzy when he removed Zak Crawley in his first over. The veteran consigned Crawley to a pair, diving to his left in an incredible feat of athleticism for a memorable caught-and-bowled. Duckett and Pope settled in, safely reaching lunch at 59-1. But Scott Boland began to find his radar when they returned.