

In Brief

Major fire in Kohima guts five shops

Kohima: A major fire incident in Kohima caused extensive damage to property at Upper AG Colony on Monday morning, with losses estimated at around ₹2 crore. Fortunately, no casualties were reported, officials said. According to Fire and Emergency Services authorities, the fire broke out between 8:45 am and 8:50 am and is suspected to have been caused by an electrical short circuit. The blaze reportedly started from a bakery located on the lower floor of a two-storey building and quickly spread to neighbouring shops.

Youth body fights drugs

Guwahati: The Assam Jatiyatabadi Yuva-Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) staged a protest in Margherita against the increasing drug menace in Tinsukia district, demanding strict action against the illegal drug trade. Leaders highlighted the alarming growth of drug trafficking despite enforcement efforts, criticizing the police and administration for their ineffectiveness. The protest, a padayatra from Ledo College to the Ledo Petrol Depot, included a memorandum submitted to the Sub-Divisional Commissioner advocating for a zero-tolerance policy against drug dealers. AJYCP officials pledged to continue their movement until tangible results are achieved, stressing the societal damage caused by the drug trade and its threat to youth. Additionally, a separate meeting addressed the scrapping of the CAB as a threat to Assamese identity.

Violence

Guwahati: Here is a fully active-voice write-up in Northeast Now style, with short and direct sentences: Violence continued to grip Kheroni near the western banks of the Kopili River on Tuesday as unrest spread into the daily bazaar and turned chaotic. Protesters stormed the market, vandalised shops, smashed windowpanes, looted goods and left debris across the area. Eyewitnesses said the crowd grew larger after Education Minister Ranoj Pegu left the area. He had assured protesters that the government would hold a tripartite meeting with local As tension escalated, police launched a lathi charge and fired tear gas shells to disperse the mob, fled in panic while.

Hojai District Launches Udyam Samagam

Hojai: A five-day Hojai District Udyam Samagam-Swadeshi Mela commenced at Bishnu Rabha Playground in No. 2 Kaki, Lanka, starting December 23, aimed at promoting locally produced goods and supporting grassroots entrepreneurship. Organized by the Department of Industries, Commerce, and Public Enterprises, the event was inaugurated by the Lumding Sub-Divisional Commissioner. It features a variety of vendors showcasing regional products like handloom fabrics and traditional clothing. The Mela serves as a platform for Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSME) to market their goods independently and has garnered significant local attendance, indicating strong community support for regional products.

Good governance key to development, says Dr. Lorrain Lalpekliana Chinzah at Lawngtlai Programme

● *A Good Governance Week programme took place on Tuesday at the DC Conference Hall in Lawngtlai, attended by senior government officials and civil society representatives. Dr. Lorrain Lalpekliana*
● *Chinzah, Chief Minister's Adviser for Health and Agriculture, emphasized the importance of good governance for development and public trust.*



Aizawl, Dec 23: A programme to mark Good Governance Week was held on Tuesday at the DC Conference Hall in Lawngtlai. The event began at 11 am and saw the participation of senior government officials, representatives of

various departments, and members of civil society. The programme was attended as chief guest by Dr. Lorrain Lalpekliana Chinzah, Adviser to the Chief Minister for Health & Family Welfare and Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, and MLA of Lawngtlai East.

The meeting was chaired by Donny Lalruatsanga, District Magistrate, Lawngtlai. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Chinzah thanked all officials and participants for attending the programme. He said good governance is essential for bringing real development to the state and

improving the lives of people. According to him, strong governance helps build public trust, strengthens government systems, and ensures that citizens are satisfied with public services. He urged officials to work with honesty, dedication, and responsibility in their daily duties.

Rules to be framed for Arunachal freedom of religion act, shah assures IFSCAP

New Delhi, Dec 23: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday assured that initiatives would be taken to frame the long-pending rules for the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 1978 in the northeastern state, which has witnessed concerns over alleged forced or induced religious conversions.

Shah made the assurance before a delegation representing the Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh (IFCSAP), raising hopes for the effective implementation of the legislation. The Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act was enacted in 1978 with the objective of preventing religious conversions carried out through force, inducement or fraudulent means. The Act

provides for penalties, including imprisonment of up to two years and a fine of up to Rs 10,000 for violations.

However, despite being on the statute books for more than four decades, the Act has remained largely non-operational owing to the absence of notified rules, prompting repeated demands from indigenous groups for its implementation.

The (IFCSAP) delegation, led by its president Emi Rumi, had met the Union Home Minister at his official residence in New Delhi.

During the meeting, the delegation highlighted the urgent need to operationalise the Act, stressing that the absence of notified rules for decades had rendered the law largely ineffective.

■ *Union Home Minister Amit Shah has promised to take initiatives to frame rules for the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 1978, which aims to prevent forced or induced religious conversions.*

The delegation sought Shah's direct intervention to expedite the framing of the rules to strengthen the safeguards meant to protect indigenous faiths, cultures and traditions in the state.

In a statement, IFCSAP termed the Home Minister's assurance as a significant and positive development for indigenous communities in Arunachal Pradesh. It said the proposed move would strengthen the protection of traditional belief systems and cultural practices in the state.

Guwahati Observes National Mathematics Day with Ramanujan Tribute

Guwahati, Dec 23: In honor of the renowned Indian mathematician Srinivasa Iyengar Ramanujan's 138th birthday, Guwahati celebrated National Mathematics Day on Monday with a full day of events at the Japorigog Mathematics Hall. Students, instructors, academics, and intellectuals came together to commemorate Ramanujan's life and honor the mathematical spirit.

A Smriti Tarpan ceremony honoring Ramanujan's enduring contributions to mathematics kicked off the event at 9:30 AM. Students from all over the city enthusiastically participated in an interschool quiz competition on general knowledge, science, and

mathematics that followed. Prominent quizmaster Mukut Choudhury led the test, and bank employee Sanjeev Kumar Nath offered encouragement and assistance. Certificates and monetary awards were given to the winners. The symposium "Ramanujan, Mathematics, and Beyond" was the day's primary event. Senior novelist and journalist Kanu Kanta Sen took over the session, and retired Chief Engineer Bhupendra Chandra Sharma gave the keynote speech.

Sharma talked extensively about Ramanujan's incredible path from humble origins to international fame, emphasizing how, in spite of his lack of formal training, his intuitive

genius revolutionized fields including number theory, infinite series, continued fractions, and fake theta functions. The program acknowledged efforts outside of academia as well. The Muhiram Saikia Memorial Award was given to senior journalist Safiqur Rahman of Nagaon in recognition of his contributions to public awareness and civic journalism. In his remarks, Rahman urged students to take inspiration from Ramanujan's life and demanded that National Mathematics Day be observed more widely throughout Assam. Additionally, he requested that Kailash Choudhury's "Abhoy Method" for calculating square and cube roots be

officially recognized. A number of enlightening speeches extolled the occasion. Asomiy Pratidin's Achyut Patowary discussed the philosophical side of mathematics, and retired professor Jesim Hazarika used straightforward board demonstrations to clarify difficult ideas. Kamrup College's Dr. Sujan Kalita warned pupils about the negative effects of frequent cell phone use on their ability to learn.

Kailash Choudhury anchored the event, while Mukut Choudhury gave a vote of gratitude, emphasizing the need of preserving and advancing the heritage of brilliant mathematicians like Ramanujan for upcoming generations.

Youth body fights drugs



Guwahati, Dec 23: The Assam Jatiyatabadi Yuva-Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), Margherita Regional Committee, on Tuesday staged a protest against the rising menace of banned drugs in the Margherita and Ledo areas of Tinsukia district. The organization demanded strict and immediate action to crush the illegal drug trade. An AJYCP leader said the steady growth of drug trafficking despite frequent enforcement drives is alarming and questions the effectiveness of the system. The protest took place in the form of a padayatra from Ledo College Tinali to near the Ledo Petrol Depot. AJYCP members strongly criticised the expanding narcotics network and accused the police and civil administration of failing to eliminate it completely. AJYCP leaders said they have repeatedly urged the government and district administration to act tough against banned drugs. However, they alleged that despite checks and surveillance, the drug trade has not only continued but has grown, creating a serious

social crisis. A senior AJYCP functionary said the drug menace is destroying society and threatening the youth. He said their only demand is to stop the "poisonous trade" at any cost and warned that the organisation will continue its movement until the administration delivers results. Senior leaders of AJYCP Tinsukia district, including advisor Jadu Sonowal and vice-president Kanchan Bora, along with members of the Margherita Regional Committee, led the protest. The organisation also submitted a memorandum to the Margherita Sub-Divisional Commissioner through the Officer-in-Charge of Ledo Police Outpost, seeking a zero-tolerance policy and strict legal action against drug dealers and traffickers. A protest meeting was held near the A-Team field of North Lakhimpur Govt. HS School on Sunday evening in which the speakers called for scrapping of the CAB terming it as a threat to the very fabric of Assamese identity, language, and questions the effectiveness of the system.

Bangladesh assistant high commission in Agartala suspends visa, consular services amid protests

Agartala, Dec 23: The Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala has indefinitely suspended all visa and consular services with effect from Tuesday, citing "unavoidable circumstances." An official notification, signed by SM Almas Hossain, First Secretary and Head of Mission, stated that all categories of visa and consular activities at the mission in Agartala will remain closed until further instructions are issued. The suspension comes in the wake of escalating tension following protests outside the Mission by the youth wing of the Tipra Motha Party, the Tipra Indigenous Students Federation (TISF), along with several right-wing organisations. The protesters staged the demonstration against the alleged attacks on members of the Hindu community in Bangladesh and objected

to recent statements on the Northeast region made by leaders of the National Citizen Party. Slogans were raised demanding firm action from Bangladeshi authorities to ensure the safety and rights of religious minorities. Meanwhile, security around the Assistant High Commission has been tightened as a precautionary measure. Officials have not indicated when visa and consular services are likely

to resume, and applicants have been advised to await further announcements from the mission.

● *The Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala has suspended all visa and consular services indefinitely due to "unavoidable circumstances," as stated by SM Almas Hossain, the Head of Mission.*

Amit Shah assures indigenous groups of steps to frame rules for Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act

Itanagar, Dec 23: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on December 22 assured representatives of indigenous groups from Arunachal Pradesh that the Centre would take necessary steps to frame the long-pending rules for the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, offering fresh hope for the effective implementation of a law that has remained largely dormant for decades. The assurance was given during a meeting at Shah's official residence in New Delhi, where a delegation of the Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh, led by its president Emi Rumi, met the Home Minister. During the interaction, the delegation explained that although the Act was passed in 1978, the absence of notified rules has made it almost impossible to enforce on the ground. Members of the delegation told the Home Minister that the

delay in framing rules has weakened legal safeguards meant to protect indigenous faiths, customs and cultural traditions in the state. They urged Shah to personally intervene so that the long-standing issue could finally be addressed. In a statement issued after the meeting, IFCSAP described the Home Minister's assurance as a positive and encouraging step for indigenous communities. The organisation said that proper implementation of the Act would help protect traditional belief systems and cultural practices, especially amid concerns over alleged forced or induced religious conversions in parts of the state. The Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act was enacted in 1978 during the tenure of former chief minister P K Thungon. Its objective was to prevent religious conversions through force, inducement or fraudulent means.



The law provides for punishment of up to two years of imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 10,000 for violations. However, more than four decades after it became law, the Act has remained mostly non-functional due to the lack of rules.

Major fire in Kohima guts five shops

Kohima, Dec 23: A major fire incident in Kohima caused extensive damage to property at Upper AG Colony on Monday morning, with losses estimated at around ₹2 crore. Fortunately, no casualties were reported, officials said. According to Fire and Emergency Services authorities, the fire broke out between 8:45 am and 8:50 am and is suspected to have been caused by an electrical short circuit. The blaze reportedly started from a bakery located on the lower floor of a two-storey building and quickly spread to neighbouring shops. In the incident, five shops were completely gutted, including two ration shops, one bakery outlet, one tea hotel and one paan shop. Two nearby residential houses also suffered partial damage. Officials said the building had multiple electrical connections, including a three-phase power system, which may have contributed to the rapid spread of the fire. At the time of the incident, one family and several workers were present in the building. Fire personnel confirmed that all residents were safely evacuated. As a precautionary measure, LPG cylinders from nearby houses were removed to prevent any further explosion or escalation. Eyewitnesses said smoke was first noticed coming out of the bakery around 8:50 am. Another local res-



ident pointed out that heavy traffic congestion in the area delayed the arrival of fire tenders, making fire-fighting efforts more challenging. A shop owner whose property was partially damaged described the incident as shocking, saying the fire spread so fast that it felt "like a dream." The manager of Square Bakery later informed officials that the fire was likely caused by an electrical short circuit due to excessive load. Firefighters used both water and foam to control the flames, and after nearly five hours of continuous effort, the fire was finally brought under control. Items destroyed in the fire included CGI sheet structures, Assam-type pukka houses, machinery, cold storage units, refrigerators, groceries, household goods and clothing. Personnel from the Fire and Emergency Services, with assistance from the Assam Rifles, carried out the firefighting operations.

NATIONAL

A doctor in Shimla was suspended for abusing a patient

Simla, Dec 23: The Himachal Pradesh government has suspended Dr. Raghav Narula, a 31-year-old senior resident in Pulmonary Medicine, following an alleged assault on a patient at Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital (IGMC) in Shimla.

The incident, captured on video and widely circulated on social media, prompted immediate action from the health department, including the formation of a high-level inquiry committee. Health Minister Dhaniram Shandil emphasized zero tolerance for such behavior from medical professionals.

The patient, identified as 36-year-old Arjun Pawar, filed a police complaint claiming he was assaulted by Dr. Narula after objecting to the doctor's rude inquiries post-procedure. However, Narula



has denied the allegations, asserting that Pawar was disrespectful first.

The police have registered a First Information Report (FIR) following Pawar's complaint and are investigating the circumstances of the incident. The patient's family protested at the hospital, demanding the doctor's termination. Former Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur expressed concern over the incident, highlighting its implications for medical professionalism.

Within two months, dispose of the ash from Union Carbide trash

State government to MP High Court

Bhopal, Dec 23: The Madhya Pradesh High Court issued a directive to the state government mandating the disposal of residual ash from the toxic waste of Union Carbide within

two months. This ruling came as a result of the state's request to review a previous order from October 8, which required the identification of alternate containment sites and the exploration

of a global tender for expert assistance in waste disposal. A division bench, led by Justices Vivek Kumar Singh and Ajay Nirankari, decided to suspend the October 8 order and reinforced the need for

timely scientific disposal according to a December 3, 2024 directive, which is contingent upon the opinion of an expert committee formed by the court. Additionally, a separate petition was lodged

expressing concerns over the presence of radioactive materials in the ash, indicating that the exclusively required technology for its safe destruction is only available in Japan and Germany.

Rahul, the Cong high command, will decide on a leadership matter: CM

Bengaluru, Dec 23: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah emphasized that any decision regarding leadership changes within the Karnataka Congress will be made by Rahul Gandhi and the party high command. He expressed his commitment to accept any decision, stating that discussions surrounding the leadership issue should cease since he had already addressed it in the Assembly. Siddaramaiah clarified that there is no limit to his tenure, dismissing political speculation about a "political revolution" following Sankranti, reiterating that the high command will ultimately decide.

In addressing the meeting between senior Congress MLA K N Rajanna and party state president D K Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah



Chief minister Siddaramaiah

indicated that meetings within the party are normal, and downplayed the significance of credit for past appointments, emphasizing the importance of the party's collective

interests. Rajanna confirmed his support for Siddaramaiah, stating that any leadership changes remain under the control of the high command.

AICC general secretary Sachin Pilot, sitting alongside Shivakumar, described their relationship as brotherly and assured that any decision from the high command would be accepted by all. He praised the integrity of the Karnataka government and expressed confidence that the Congress party would secure a majority in the 2028 elections.

Meanwhile, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge noted that the leadership confusion is localized, urging state leaders to address their disputes independently instead of deferring to the high command. These statements come at a politically tense time as the Congress government approaches the halfway point of its term.

Congress might benefit from Kavitha's assault on BRS



Hyderabad, Dec 23: Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS), led by K Chandrasekhar Rao, is criticized by his daughter Kalvakuntla Kavitha, president of Telangana Jagruti, affecting the party's standing.

Following her allegations of government land encroachment tied to BRS MLA Madhavaram Krishna Rao, the Telangana government initiated an inquiry into the alleged illegal acquisition of land previously assigned to Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd (IDPL). Kavitha has targeted BRS leaders, including her cousins, while not directly criticizing her father.

She highlights issues of corruption during KCR's governance, particularly regarding the Kaleshwaram irrigation project. Amidst her criticisms, Kavitha announced plans to establish a new regional party, focusing on social justice, aiming to compete in the 2029 elections. Analysts suggest her actions may pose a greater threat to the BRS than to Congress, as she targets BRS's developmental failures and corruption, highlighting a disconnect between KCR and Telangana constituents.

The Kerala government will shortly file an appeal against actor Dileep's acquittal in the 2017 actress assault case

Kochi, Dec 23: The Kerala government is preparing to file an appeal regarding the 2017 actress assault case, contesting both the acquittal of actor Dileep and the sentences given to six convicted individuals.

Sources indicate that the state has approved this legal action, as confirmed by officials from the office of the Director General of Prosecution, who noted that the appeal will be initiated following the court vacation. A detailed report has been submitted outlining the grounds for the appeal, highlighting the urgency to challenge the previous court's decisions.

The appeal will specifically target the sentences imposed by the Ernakulam District and Principal Sessions Court, which resulted



in six accused individuals receiving 20 years of rigorous imprisonment.

Additionally, the acquittal of Dileep, along with three other accused, will be contested. It was noted that the trial court based its convictions on testimonies from

approximately 60 witnesses but inconsistently dismissed the same evidence concerning the acquitted individuals.

The case revolves around the abduction and sexual assault of the actress, who was attacked while traveling from Thrissur to Ernakulam

●The trial court sentenced six individuals to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment while acquitting four, including Dileep.
●The appeal will challenge the sentences given by the Ernakulam District and Principal Sessions Court to six accused, including Pul-sar Suni.

in February 2017 after a film shoot.

The incident was reportedly recorded on a mobile device within a moving vehicle, and Dileep had been arrested on charges of conspiracy related to the assault. The survivor has previously expressed her disappointment with the initial verdict on social media, underscoring the impact of the court's decisions on those involved.

Pradhan requests that the central OBC list include Odisha's 108 SEBC communities

Bhubaneswar, Dec 23: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has formally requested Virendra Kumar, the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, to include 108 communities recognized as Socially and Economically Backward Classes (SEBC) in Odisha into the Central OBC list. In a letter dated Monday, Pradhan highlighted the significant discrepancies between the state and central classifications, emphasizing that these omissions lead to various administrative difficulties for the affected communities, particularly in accessing central government services and employment opportunities.

Pradhan noted that many communities already acknowledged in Odisha's state list have not been incorporated into the Central OBC list, which affects their access to essential reservation benefits and welfare schemes at the national level. He argued that the inclusion would establish parity between state and central frameworks, thereby fostering social justice and inclusive development.

Moreover, Pradhan emphasized the necessity for the central listing to ensure equitable access to benefits, thereby promoting edu-

Pradhan noted that many SEBC communities recognized in Odisha's state list are not acknowledged in the central OBC list, leading to administrative challenges for these communities, particularly when accessing central services or migrating.

cational and economic growth among these historically marginalized groups. He provided a detailed list of the 108 proposed communities in his correspondence.

In another letter on the same day, Pradhan also urged Odisha's Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to reconstitute the Odisha State Commission for Backwards Classes (OSCBC), which has become inactive following the completion of its term on January 3, 2024.

He pointed out that the absence of a functioning commission severely hampers the 216 backward class communities in Odisha, posing further challenges in accessing critical benefits. Pradhan stressed the urgency of reconstituting the OSCBC to ensure that these communities receive the required support and services.

Young attorneys need to be national builders

CJI Surya Kant

New Delhi, Dec 23: Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant, addressing the seventh convocation of the Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, emphasized the responsibility of young lawyers to act as "nation-builders" rather than merely "case-builders."

He described India's Constitution as a living blueprint, urging legal practitioners to interpret and animate it through their work for the benefit of future society. CJI Kant distinguished between transactional lawyers who focus on winning individual cases and transformational lawyers who consider the broader societal implications of their work, highlighting the importance of values in professional choices.

He warned against reducing the legal profession to mere billing and procedural mastery, which he believed would not strengthen democratic institutions. By noting that today's graduates are entering a complex legal landscape driven by technological and societal advancements, Kant asserted that lawyers must adapt, interpret complex realities, and humanize the law.

He reiterated his calls for judicial modernization and mediation, stating that legal principles gain significance only when actively implemented by young practitioners.



Drawing from his extensive legal experience, CJI Kant outlined three essential pillars for meaningful legal careers: integrity, compassion, and curiosity.

He stated that integrity serves as the foundation of trust within the justice system, while compassion is necessary to ensure justice remains humane and not merely procedural. Curiosity, he said, is crucial for legal professionals to remain relevant in a rapidly evolving world. He concluded by reiterating the need for action upon the constitutional blueprint, encouraging graduates to build a just future characterized by these core principles.

In the 2016 Bulandshahr gang rape case, five were given life sentences

Lucknow, Dec 23: A special Pcoo court in Uttar Pradesh sentenced five men—Jubair (35), Mohd Sajid (37), Dharmveer (36), Naresh (46), and Sunil (35)—to life imprisonment for the gang rape of a woman and her 14-year-old daughter during a robbery on National Highway 91 in 2016.

The verdict, delivered by special Pcoo judge Om Prakash Verma, followed the men's convictions under multiple sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Pcoo Act, including dacoity, robbery, criminal conspiracy, wrongful confinement, and gang rape. Each convict was also fined ₹1.81 lakh, with half allocated as compensation for the victims.

In his ruling, Judge Verma emphasized the profound impact of rape on victims, recognizing it as not merely a crime against personhood but one that



inflicts lasting mental and physical damage, destroying the victim's entire identity. The court took note of the severe societal stigma faced by both the woman and her daughter, highlighting the devastation to their lives and futures due to the assault.

The crime occurred on July 28, 2016, when the six-member family was traveling to Shahjahanpur.

The assailants, alleged members of the Bawariya gang, attacked their vehicle and, after robbing them of cash and jewelry, committed the rapes in a nearby field. Although three individuals were initially arrested, they were released due to prosecutorial negligence, leading to disciplinary action against 17 police officers, including the then senior superintendent of police.

A special Pcoo court in Uttar Pradesh sentenced five men to life imprisonment for the gang rape of a woman and her 14-year-old daughter during a robbery that took place on National Highway 91 in Bulandshahr in 2016.

After significant delays and a high court directive for a CBI investigation, the agency re-arrested six individuals, including the five now convicted.

The trial relied heavily on forensic evidence, specifically semen traces linking the convicts to the crime. The sixth accused, Salim, purportedly the gang's ringleader, passed away in jail in 2019. The first charge sheet by the CBI was filed in November 2016, with subsequent charges laid against the other defendants by April 2018.

Delhi HC protects Sunil Gavaskar's personality rights

New Delhi, Dec 23: The Delhi High Court has protected former cricketer Sunil Gavaskar's personality rights by restraining various websites from using his name or images for commercial purposes without consent. Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora also prohibited the use of Gavaskar's persona through artificial intelligence and deepfake technologies, ordering the removal of obscene content online within 72 hours. The court had previously instructed social media intermediaries to respond to Gavaskar's grievances and treat his suit as a complaint under the Information and Technology Rules, 2021. Other public figures, including actors and filmmakers, have similarly sought protection of their personality rights through the court.



A Telangana human rights commission requests a report about claims that Dalit youth were killed while in custody

Hyderabad, Dec 23: The Telangana Human Rights Commission (TGHRC) has ordered the state Home department to submit a comprehensive report regarding the alleged custodial death of a Dalit youth in Suryapet district.

This directive comes amidst serious allegations of illegal detention, custodial torture, and the subsequent death of the youth, as reported by his mother. The Commission took note of claims that the young man was unlawfully held by both Chilkur and Kodad Rural Police, subjected to extreme torture, falsely implicated in a criminal case, and denied contact with family members. He allegedly succumbed to severe injuries on November 16, after being transferred from a sub-jail to a government hospital.

According to the mother's account to the Commission, her son was "illegally" detained from November 4 to November 9, during which he reportedly underwent physical torture, as described by the application of "third-degree methods." Following this, he was falsely implicated and remanded to judicial custody on November 10. On that day, she received a troubling call from Huzumagar Sub-Jail staff informing her that her son's health was critical, leading her to discover he was in dire condition upon her visit.

The situation escalated when, on November 14, the youth was moved to the District Government Hospital in Suryapet due to worsening health, and subsequently transferred to a state-run hospital in Hyderabad, where he passed

■The commission is addressing serious allegations including illegal detention, custodial torture, and the youth's death, as claimed by his mother.

away on November 16.

In light of the gravity of these alleged human rights violations, the TGHRC has consolidated this case with a previous complaint involving similar issues and has mandated the principal secretary to provide a detailed report. The case is set for further evaluation on January 12, 2026. The Telangana Director General of Police, B Shivadhar Reddy, has acknowledged the situation, stating that an inquiry is ongoing and appropriate actions are forthcoming.

A pilot of Air India Express is being prosecuted for assault at Delhi Airport

New Delhi, Dec 23: Delhi Police have initiated a case against pilot Virendra Sejwal, following an alleged assault on passenger Ankit Dewan at IGI Airport's Terminal 1. The incident gained significant attention after Dewan posted a video of the altercation on social media. The Ministry of Civil Aviation has mandated an inquiry into the matter, while Air India Express has suspended Sejwal from his duties. The case is registered under sections 115, 126, and 351 of the Bharatiya Nyaya



Sanhita at the IGI Airport police station, following Dewan's complaint claiming he was assaulted during a security check while traveling with his family. The police

reported that a preliminary investigation, which included reviewing video evidence, led to the pilot's custody. Further questioning is ongoing to clarify the events

surrounding the incident. Dewan has alleged he suffered a "displaced fracture of the left nasal bone," and has provided a detailed written complaint to law enforcement, expressing his focus on recovery and desire for justice. Air India Express publicly condemned the incident and affirmed its commitment to cooperating with the investigation. The police indicated that further legal actions will be determined based on the investigation's findings and medical reports.

Mobile internet suspended in Karbi Anglong after Kheroni violence

Guwahati, Dec 23: The Assam government on Tuesday suspended mobile internet services in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts following the violence that erupted in the Kheroni area a day earlier, even as state leaders appealed for calm and unity. According to an official notification issued by the Home and Political Department, mobile data services of all telecom operators have been stopped with immediate effect to prevent the spread of rumours and inflammatory messages

that could further disturb public order. However, voice calls and broadband connections based on fixed telephone lines will remain functional. The order has been issued under provisions of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, and will remain in force until further notice. Meanwhile, Assam Cabinet Minister Pijush Hazarika said that the violence in Kheroni on December 22 was largely triggered by misinformation and lack of proper understanding among people. Speaking to the media

on December 23, he said rumours and misleading information created confusion, which later turned into unrest. “There has been some misinformation spreading, which led to confusion and ultimately resulted in violence. I believe this misunderstanding will slowly clear out,” Hazarika said. The minister urged all sections of society to maintain peace and unity, stressing that harmony is crucial in sensitive situations. He said the rights of the Karbi people and other indigenous



communities must be protected, but the rights of others must also be respected.

“The rights of the Karbi people and other indigenous communities are important, but so are the rights of others. We must move forward together, peacefully,” he added. Violence broke out in Kheroni on December 22 during protests demanding eviction of alleged encroachers from grazing reserve land. Protesters allegedly set fire to property and clashed with security forces, prompting the administration to impose prohibitory orders and a night curfew.

Defusing an IED in Umsning



Shillong: In a late-evening operation, the Ri Bhoi Police successfully defused a powerful Improvised Explosive Device (IED) discovered at Umsning market, preventing a potential tragedy. At approximately 7:30 pm, police received intelligence regarding an abandoned bag suspected to contain explosives near the Meghalaya Rural Bank. Responding promptly, the Ri Bhoi Police cordoned off the area and located the bag. The Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS), accompanied by a K-9 unit, was summoned. They confirmed that the bag contained explosives and successfully diffused the IED.

Preliminary analysis indicated that the IED was constructed with 4.7 kg of gelatin, 10 detonators, and about 50 iron rod pieces, designed for maximum impact. All explosive materials were seized in line with standard operating procedures. Superintendent of Police V. S. Rathore reported that one suspect had been identified, and police efforts were underway to apprehend him. A case has been registered, and an investigation is ongoing. No casualties or property damage occurred during the operation.

Indian Army Takes Charge of Landmark Topo Gone Pilgrimage

Itanagar, Dec 23: From January 19 to 24 of next year, the Indian Army will plan a historic trip to Topo Gone, a revered pilgrimage place of the Galo clan in the Shi Yomi region of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Galo, Bokar, and other communities in Arunachal Pradesh are thought to have migrated along Topo Gone, a 2,900-meter hill along the McMahan Line.

Shamans’ and priests’ ritual chants, traditional stories, and communal folklore all often mention the place, which has profound cultural and spiritual significance. Four women will be part of the expedition crew, which consists of 24 people. The Galo Welfare Society (GWS) and the



Indian Army are working together to organize the mission. Senior Army authorities and GWS members met in Aalo on Saturday to finalize the decision to carry out the trip.

According to a senior Army officer, the trip is a historic partnership that

aims to honor and preserve the Galo community’s indigenous cultural legacy. He stated that the Army is dedicated to making sure the trip is carried out with the utmost safety, dignity, and logistical accuracy. The Army has implemented certain safety pro-

From January 19 to 24 next year, the Indian Army will undertake a historic trip to Topo Gone, a significant pilgrimage site for the Galo clan in Arunachal Pradesh.

cedures, such as required indemnity bonds, medical fitness certification, and age-related qualifying requirements for participants, in recognition of the difficult nature of the high-altitude climb. Moi Bagra, head of GWS Research and Documentation, expounded on the historical significance of Topo Gone at the discussion, characterizing the peak as an essential ancestral monument that represents the tenacity, identity, and legacy of the Galo people.

Violence

Guwahati, Dec 23: Here is a fully active-voice write-up in Northeast Now style, with short and direct sentences: Violence continued to grip Kheroni near the western banks of the Kopili River on Tuesday as unrest spread into the daily bazaar and turned chaotic. Protesters stormed the market, vandalised shops, smashed windows, looted goods and left debris across the area. Eyewitnesses said the crowd grew larger after Education Minister Ranoj Pegu left the area. He had assured protesters that the government would hold a tripartite meeting with local As tension escalated, police launched a lathi charge and fired tear gas shells to disperse the mob. fled in panic while.

Misinformation led to Kheroni violence, peace must prevail: Minister Pijush Hazarika

Guwahati, Dec 23: Assam Cabinet Minister Pijush Hazarika on Tuesday said that the violence reported in the Kheroni area of Karbi Anglong was triggered mainly by misinformation and a lack of proper understanding of the actual situation. He stressed that peace, unity and mutual respect must guide the way forward in the region. Speaking to the media on December 23, a day after the unrest, Hazarika said misleading information circulating among people had created confusion, which eventually escalated into violence. He said such situations often arise when facts are distorted or rumours spread unchecked, and expressed confidence that the misunderstandings would gradually be resolved as clarity emerges. “There has been some misinformation spreading, which led to confusion and ultimately resulted in violence. I believe this misunderstanding will slowly clear out,” the minister said.



Hazarika appealed to all sections of society to remain calm and avoid being influenced by rumours. He emphasised that maintaining peace is essential, especially in sensitive areas where emotions can run high during land and identity-related issues. Highlighting the need for communal harmony, the minister said the rights and concerns of the Karbi people and other indigenous communities must be protected. At the same time, he added, it is equally important to respect the rights and dignity of every individual living in the area. “The rights of the Karbi people and other indigenous communities are important, but so are the rights of others. We must move forward together, peacefully,” he said.

Dialogue, not force is the way forward: Assam CM on Kheroni violence

Guwahati, Dec 23: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that eviction and land-related disputes in Karbi Anglong cannot be resolved through violence and must be addressed only through dialogue and democratic processes. His remarks came in the wake of violent protests in Kheroni that left several people injured and led to arson and damage to property. Speaking to the media, Sarma referred to a growing perception among sections of the Karbi community that Karbis now constitute only about 35 per cent of the population in Karbi Anglong, while the remaining 65 per cent belong to non-tribal communities. This perception, he said, has fuelled demands for eviction of alleged encroachers from land classified as Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) and Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR). The Chief Minister questioned the basis of such claims, saying there is no verified data to support the population figures being cited. “Karbi people are saying they are only 35 per cent and others are 65 per cent, so they feel others should be evicted. They are talking about VGR, PGR and government land being taken. But no



one knows where this 35 per cent data has come from,” Sarma said. VGR and PGR lands are officially designated grazing reserves in Assam, traditionally meant for livestock. While VGRs are generally meant for village-level cattle grazing, PGRs cater to wider or commercial needs. Over the years, these lands have seen repeated allegations of encroachment, leading to eviction drives, protests and legal disputes across several districts of the state. Sarma stressed that the government is aware of the concerns surround-

ing these lands but said any solution must be arrived at through discussion with all concerned parties. “We will sit with them and have dialogue. We have to discuss this with everyone and bring a solution,” he said, adding that unilateral actions would only worsen the situation. Making his position clear, the Chief Minister said violence and forced evictions would not be tolerated under any circumstances. “The way they are trying to do this is not possible. We cannot kill people and evict them,” he said. While reiterating the state government’s stand

against illegal immigration, Sarma underlined that even such issues must be dealt with strictly within the constitutional framework. “In Assam, we don’t like illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, but we cannot beat them and evict them. India is a democratic country, and everything has to be done through democratic rules,” he said. The Chief Minister added that the government is closely monitoring the situation in Kheroni and expressed hope that calm would return through dialogue and lawful intervention.

Assam convenes Karbi eviction talks

Guwahati, Dec 23: The Assam government will convene a tripartite meeting within December involving the state government, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and representatives of protesting locals to address the unrest triggered by eviction demands in West Karbi Anglong. Cabinet Minister Ranoj Pegu, who visited the affected areas as the government’s representative, said the protesters had suspended their hunger strike following his intervention. They have halted their hunger strike on my request, and I have assured them that the Assam government will organise a tripartite meeting within December comprising the state government, KAAC and representatives of the protesting locals,” Pegu told the press,



on Tuesday. He said the government was sensitive to tribal concerns and land rights, and believed the issue could be resolved through dialogue. After meeting protesters, Pegu noted that the agitation went beyond disputes over Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) land. “Locals told us this is not just about PGR or VGR, but about the identity of the Karbi community,” he said.

The minister also assured accountability, stating that strict and immediate action would be taken against any police personnel found neg-

ligent. He said locals were seeking talks with KAAC chief Tuliram Ronghang, which could not take place as the situation deteriorated. Protesters raised concerns over the lack of basic facilities, including fire brigade services. He said locals were seeking talks with KAAC chief Tuliram Ronghang, which could not take place as the situation deteriorated. They also sought the presence of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma at the proposed tripartite meeting. He said the Gauhati High Court had passed an interim order against eviction of non-tribals in West Karbi Anglong, making any such action legally untenable. There have been no arrests,” he reiterated, adding that the issue could be resolved through.

Hojai District Launches Udyam Samagam–Swadeshi Mela at Kaki

Hojai, Dec 23: A five-day Hojai District Udyam Samagam-Swadeshi Mela has been launched at the Bishnu Rabha Playground in No. 2 Kaki, Lanka, with the goal of encouraging the usage of locally produced goods and bolstering grassroots entrepreneurship. It seeks to unite local self-help organizations, craftspeople, and business owners on one platform. The Department of Industries, Commerce, and Public Enterprises is organizing the expo, which will start on December 23.

On Monday afternoon, the Lumding Sub-Divisional Commissioner formally opened the Swadeshi Mela. The Swadeshi Mela, which promotes local business owners and the usage of locally produced goods, was introduced at the event. The ceremonial lighting of lamps and the



presenting of floral offerings in front of the famous artist Zubeen Garg’s portrait were scheduled to be the first events of the day. A formal conference was then held to inform officials and interested parties about the goal of Udyam Samagam.

The Swadeshi Mela’s primary goal is to provide Micro, Small, and Me-

dium-Sized Enterprises (MSME) with a designated space where they can independently market their goods. This festival has a number of vendors selling regional goods such as handloom fabrics, bamboo and cane products, jewels, and traditional clothing that reflects the region’s diversity. The Lumding

Sub-Divisional Commissioner appreciated the caliber and inventiveness of the regional goods on display while he examined the exhibition space and spoke with the sellers. Additionally, he inspired the vendors to keep up their efforts to maintain their old methods while utilizing creative approaches to achieve greater success.

On the first day of operation, this event had an amazing number of attendees, demonstrating the widespread support and appeal of regional goods. The inaugural day was a huge success because so many people from Kaki and the surrounding area attended. The five-day Swadeshi Mela is expected to boost trade, raise public knowledge of Swadeshi, and strengthen the foundation of small businesses in Hojai District.

Swimmers appeal to keep B.P. Chaliha Pool open till final phase of stadium work

Guwahati, Dec 23: A calm and constructive appeal has been made by regular swimmers, trainers and citizens requesting that the B.P. Chaliha Swimming Pool at Nehru Stadium be kept operational until the final phase of the proposed dismantling of the stadium. The request comes amid plans to hand over the stadium complex for redevelopment, even as swimmers stress the need to protect training schedules, public health routines and young sporting talent in the city. The appeal, submitted to the Board of Sports, Assam, clearly states that the B.P. Chaliha Swimming Pool is the only centrally located, professional-standard swimming facility in Guwahati. For decades, it has served children, competitive swimmers, senior citizens, and people advised swimming for medical reasons. Many families say the pool is part of their daily routine and discipline, not a luxury. The memorandum respectfully urges authorities to adopt a phase-wise approach, ensuring that the pool remains functional until the last stage of the redevelopment process. Speaking exclusively to Himalayan Mirror, David Chetia Wanniang, life-

guard-cum-trainer at the pool, shared his concerns in a measured and hopeful tone. He said an early closure would directly affect young swimmers who are currently training for district, state and national-level competitions. “Swimming is not like other sports where practice can be shifted easily. You need a pool every day. If the pool is not there, training stops,” he said. David pointed out that many of his students study in nearby schools and colleges and attend practice sessions early in the morning and again in the evening. The central location of the pool allows them to manage both education and training. “If we are shifted far away, like to Amingaon, it becomes very difficult. I will go if the department posts me there, but my students cannot travel that far every day. They have classes, exams and time limits,” he said. He recalled a similar situation in the past when the pool was closed temporarily for reconstruction. That period, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in a long break in training for many swimmers. “Almost four to five years went by. Only now the new batch of swimmers is coming up again. If the pool closes suddenly, it will

again break the rhythm,” David said. On the question of alternatives, David said there is no realistic replacement for the B.P. Chaliha Swimming Pool in the heart of the city. While Guwahati does have another pool at Sarasajai, he said that it is heavily crowded. “Each coach has 25 to 50 students. There are many trainers there. You don’t get lanes for proper practice. Competitive swimmers need clear lanes and fixed timings. It is very hard to accommodate everyone,” he said. David supported the idea of phase-wise dismantling. He said that the swimming pool is located separately from the main football field area, which is being upgraded. “The stadium work can continue on the football side. The pool can still run. There is even a back entry near Nehru Stadium. Swimmers do not need to enter the stadium area at all,” he explained, calling it a practical and workable solution. He added that even six months of additional time would make a big difference. “Six months is a lot for swimmers. It gives us time to plan, to finish training cycles, and to look for private pools if needed later. A sudden closure gives us no time at all,” he said.

BUSINESS

Ambuja Cements initiates a significant merger to enhance operational efficiency

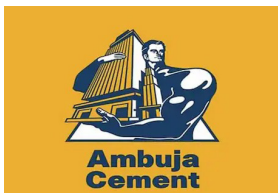
Mumbai: Billionaire Gautam Adani is consolidating his cement empire into a single entity, which is perceived as a strategy to enhance operational efficiency and compete with market leader UltraTech Cement Ltd in India’s swiftly consolidating infrastructure sector. The board of Ambuja Cements Ltd. has approved the merger of ACC Ltd. and Orient Cement Ltd. The deal creates a so-called “One Cement” platform to eliminate the corporate overlap that has been prevalent since Adani Group acquired Holcim AG’s India assets in 2022. The merger also includes Sanghi Industries and Penna Cement, regional cement firms acquired recently. Post-merger, Adani Group’s stake in Ambuja Cements will dilute to 60.94% from 67.65% at present. Post-merger, Ambuja and ACC will continue to operate independently. The idea is to unlock synergies in manufacturing and logistics,

optimise cost related to sales and marketing, and strengthen the balance sheet by improving margin by up to ₹100 per metric tonne. “This consolidation represents a transformational step in building a globally competitive, integrated cement and building materials organisation,” Karan Adani, non-executive director at Ambuja Cements, said in a statement. The unified balance sheet, according to him, would provide the “resilience” needed to accelerate capacity expansion. Ambuja Cements vs UltraTech Cement

Adani Group’s Ambuja Cements is locked in a high-stakes arms race with Aditya Birla Group’s UltraTech Cement. Both the companies are snapping up regional players for a bigger play in India’s infrastructure overdrive. ACC shareholders will receive 328 Ambuja shares for every 100 shares held. Orient Cement shareholders will receive 33

shares for every 100 held. “The swap ratio with ACC largely remains on a par with closing market price while it offers a ~9% premium for minority shareholders of Orient Cement,” JM Financial said in a note dated 23 December. “That said, further simplification of the group structure...should enhance transparency and governance standards, which we view as sentimentally positive for the stock.” The merger, likely to be completed in the next 12 months, is unlikely to attract scrutiny of the Competition Commission of India since it’s between subsidiary and parent firm. Approvals from the National Company Law Tribunal and shareholders are needed. The financial potential of the Ambuja merger

The financial rationale centres on synergies across the supply chain. By integrating Orient Cement’s high-quality limestone reserves and ACC’s vast distribution network,



Ambuja Cements expects to significantly lower its cost of production. The management estimates cost synergies of at least ₹100/tonne with aid in achieving the group’s targeted cost, margin and growth objectives. Ambuja Cements is targeting total production capacity of 118 million tonnes per annum by FY26, 130-135 MTPA by FY27, and 155 MTPA by FY28 as against 140 MTPA earlier. The unified entity will continue to market as ‘Adani Ambuja’ and ‘Adani ACC’ brands. While the corporate structure is being flattened, Adani Group aims to maintain brand equity of each label. Moreover, ACC as a standalone brand enjoys state-level incentives in various states.

Gold reaches an unprecedented peak for the 50th occasion in 2025

Mumbai: Gold prices have reached an unprecedented peak for the 50th occasion this year, as investors considered the increasing geopolitical tensions and the potential for further reductions in US interest rates. Silver has similarly risen to a new record. Bullion surpassed \$4,480 per ounce for the first time, following a 2.4% increase in the prior session—its largest single-day gain in over a month. Traders are speculating that the US Federal Reserve will reduce borrowing costs again next year, resulting in a lower interest-rate environment that would favor non-yielding precious metals. The allure of gold as a safe haven has intensified over the past week due to escalating geopolitical tensions, especially in Venezuela, where the United States has imposed a blockade on oil tankers while increasing pressure on the administration of President Nicolás Maduro. Gold has experienced a 70% increase this year due to a vigorous rally supported by significant purchases from central banks and inflows into bullion-backed exchange-traded funds. The metal is poised to achieve its most outstanding annual performance since 1979. According to data from the World Gold Council,



total holdings in gold-backed ETFs have increased every month this year, with the exception of May. US President Donald Trump’s aggressive moves to reshape global trade—as well as his threats to the Fed’s independence—added fuel to the bull run earlier this year. Investors have also played a hugely important role, spurred in part by the so-called debasement trade—a retreat from sovereign bonds and the currencies they are denominated in over fears their value will erode over time due to ballooning debt levels. Bullion has bounced back quickly after a retreat from its previous peak of \$4,381 in October, when the

rally was seen as crowded and overheated, and is now positioned to carry these gains into next year. Goldman Sachs Group Inc. is among several banks to predict prices will keep rising in 2026, issuing a base-case scenario of \$4,900 an ounce with risks to the upside. Silver also set another record, rising as much as 1% to \$69.7060. The white metal’s rally of around 140% this year has been even more spectacular than gold’s, with its most recent advance buoyed by speculative inflows and lingering supply dislocations across major trading hubs following a historic short squeeze in October.

This is what it implies for pensions when EPFO corrects EPS contribution errors

New Delhi: The Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has introduced new guidelines aimed at correcting errors in the Employees’ Pension Scheme (EPS) to enhance record accuracy and service efficiency for its members. Investigations by the EPFO revealed that some employers either misclassified contributions for ineligible employees or neglected to deposit contributions for eligible ones, leading to delays in pension claim processing. To rectify these issues, the guidelines establish a standardized

corrective framework. For employees who were incorrectly enrolled in the EPS, distinct procedures apply based on whether the employer is an exempted or unexempted establishment. In the case of unexempted establishments, any mistakenly deposited contributions, along with interest, will be transferred from the pension account (Account No. 10) to the provident fund account (Account No. 1), and the corresponding pension service entries in the member’s record will be erased. Conversely, for

exempted establishments, EPFO will transfer the erroneous amounts—including interest—from Account No. 10 to the respective provident fund Trust and remove the incorrect pension service from the member’s account. For employees who had outstanding contributions, unexempted establishments will move due funds plus interest from Account No. 1 back to Account No. 10, re-adding the employee’s pension service, which may cover any applicable non-contributory periods.

Uttar Pradesh is at the forefront of cryptocurrency adoption in India

Mumbai: Uttar Pradesh has become the leading state in India for cryptocurrency adoption, surpassing all others in total investment value, as reported by CoinSwitch in its India’s Crypto Portfolio 2025 report. This discovery underscores a significant transformation in the digital asset environment of India, where growth is now being propelled by smaller cities and non-metropolitan areas rather than solely by large urban centres. Uttar Pradesh accounted for 13 per cent of India’s total crypto invested value in 2025, the highest share among all states. It was followed by Maharashtra at 12.1 per cent and Karnataka at 7.9 per cent. The data shows that UP investors are no longer lagging behind traditional financial hubs and are actively participating in the digital asset economy. What is particularly notable is UP’s well-rounded investment approach. Investors in the state have diversified their funds among small-cap (33.1 percent), mid-cap (22.9

percent), large-cap (29.2 percent), and blue-chip crypto assets (14.7 percent). This indicates a combination of risk appetite and strategic long-term planning. Bitcoin continues to be the most favored asset in Uttar Pradesh, for both investment and trading purposes, highlighting the increasing confidence in established digital currencies. One of the biggest takeaways from the report is that India’s crypto boom is now powered by non-metro regions. Tier-III and Tier-IV towns together account for 43.4 per cent of total crypto activity, while Tier-II cities contribute another 32.2 per cent. Tier-I cities now make up just about a quarter of total participation. Uttar Pradesh’s rise fits into this larger trend. With increasing internet access, digital payments and awareness, people in smaller towns are turning to crypto as an alternative investment option. Ashish Singhal, co-founder, CoinSwitch, said: “2025 has been a year of clear maturation for India’s



crypto market. We are seeing investors move beyond early excitement and make more informed, conviction-led decisions.” While metros continue to drive strong interest, the broader story of adoption is unfolding across India’s non-metro geographies, which now account for over 75 per cent of the country’s crypto activity. The same momentum is visible in the Indian equity markets, where non-metros continue to rise and are poised to deliver the next million investors,” Singhal said. The report suggests that Indian crypto investors are moving away from hype-driven decisions. Blue-chip coins now make up half of the top 10 most-held tokens. Bitcoin has reclaimed the number one spot, accounting for 8.1 per cent of total holdings, followed by Dogecoin and Ethereum.

Vodafone Idea surges 99% from its low in August

Mumbai: The share price of Vodafone Idea (Vi) reached a new 15-month peak of ₹12.20, reflecting a 3 percent increase on the BSE during Tuesday’s intra-day trading, accompanied by substantial trading volumes. So far in December 2025, the stock price of the telecom services provider has surged by 22 percent, driven by optimistic expectations regarding a greater waiver of the adjusted gross revenue (AGR) liabilities, following recent favorable developments concerning Vi’s AGR dues situation. The Vodafone Idea stock now quotes at its highest level since September 18, 2024. It has nearly doubled or zoomed 99 per cent from its 52-week low of ₹6.12 touched on August 14, 2025. At 12:25 PM; Vi share was trading 2 per cent higher at ₹12.10, as compared

to 0.05 per cent fall in the BSE Sensex. A combined 700 million equity shares changed hands on the NSE and BSE. Why was the telecom stock in focus? Vi on November 11, 2025, in the Q2 earnings conference call said that the Hon’ble Supreme Court via its judgement dated October 27, 2025 and November 3, 2025 permitted the Government of India to reconsider and take an appropriate decision with reference to the additional AGR demand as well as to comprehensively reassessing and reconciling all AGR dues, including interest and penalty, up to the financial year 2016-17. The management said the company is in discussion with the Department of Telecommunication (DoT) for next steps on this matter. On December 18, Vi announced that it successfully

secured ₹3,300 crore through the issuance of debentures by its subsidiary, Vodafone Idea Telecom Infrastructure (VIT-IL). The funds raised from this issuance will be used by VITIL to fulfill its payment obligations to Vi. This will allow Vi to enhance its capital expenditure and facilitate business expansion. The fundraise saw strong interest exceeding the NCD issuance, from a diversified group of marquee investors, including large Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBCs), Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) and Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs). Vi further said the discussions relating to long-term debt raise to support capex are ongoing with banks. Domestic mutual funds (MF) holding in Vi touched multi-quarter high during the July to September 2025 quar-



ter (Q2FY26). According to the shareholding pattern, MF increased their holding in Vi to 4.55 per cent from 3.88 per cent in June 2025 quarter (Q1FY26). As on July 19, 2024, MF had held 6.12 per cent holding in Vi, data shows. Meanwhile, retail individual shareholders’ stake in Vi declined to 12.2 per cent in Q2FY26 from 12.78 per cent in Q1FY26. Analysts at JM Financial Institutional Securities said they continue to expect telcos’ FY25-28 average revenue

per user (ARPU) to grow at 12 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) given the consolidated industry structure, to ensure a ‘3+1’ player market and higher ARPU requirement for Jio not only to justify its significant 5G capex but also given its announced IPO plan for H1CY26. The brokerage firm maintained its ‘ADD’ rating on Vi, as it builds slightly higher waiver of AGR dues based on the recent positive developments around VIL’s AGR dues matter.

By FY30, Tata Motors plans to introduce five new EVs in an effort to maintain its market leadership

New Delhi: Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles (TMPV) announced on Tuesday its plan to launch five new electric vehicle (EV) models, including the premium Avinya range, by the fiscal year 2030 (FY30). The company aspires to maintain a commanding market share of 45-50% in India’s expanding EV segment, for which it plans to invest between Rs 16,000-18,000 crore. This investment will include product development and expanding charging infrastructure to over one million points nationwide. TMPV’s Managing Director and CEO Shailesh Chandra emphasized the company’s commitment to mainstream electric mobility, making it more acces-

sible across various market segments and enhancing the ecosystem through investments in technology and localization. TMPV currently holds a dominant share, accounting for 66% of all electric passenger vehicles sold in India, with a broad portfolio that includes the Tiago.ev, Punch.ev, Nexon.ev, Curvv.ev, and Harrier.ev, as well as the XPRES-T EV for fleet operations.

The company also plans to introduce the Sierra.ev and a series update for the Punch.ev next year. By the end of 2026, the much-anticipated premium EV range, Avinya, will be launched. The portfolio expansion strategy is accompanied by a doubling of efforts to enhance charging infrastructure and



other supportive measures to promote EV adoption among mainstream buyers.

Chandra stated that the Rs 16,000-18,000 crore capital expenditure commitment from FY25 to FY30 will fortify TMPV’s leadership position, broaden its EV lineup, and accelerate the mainstreaming of electric mobility in India. With these comprehensive actions, the company aims to consistently achieve a 45-50% EV market share, even amid intense competition. To date, Tata Motors has sold over 250,000 EVs in the Indian market.

The anticipated growth in earnings is expected to enhance returns in 2026

Mumbai: The domestic equity market is set to achieve improved performance in the calendar year (CY) 2026, as corporate earnings are anticipated to rebound to double-digit growth, according to Kotak Mutual Fund (MF) in its equity outlook released on Wednesday. “Equity returns in CY 2026 are likely to be anchored in earnings growth, with India Inc expected to deliver double-digit growth in the coming financial year,” said Nilesh Shah, managing director, Kotak Mahindra AMC. However, he cautioned investors from going overboard on equities amid improving outlook. “Investors are advised to moderate return expectations and adopt a balanced, diversified approach across asset classes to navigate evolu-

ting market dynamics,” he added. The fund house sees opportunities in sectors and themes like financial services, consumption, e-commerce and healthcare. The financial services sector, it said, is witnessing a pick-up in credit growth. In addition, it sees the narrowing gap between credit and deposit growth easing margin pressures and supporting profitability.

Consumption is set for a strong rebound, aided by rising incomes, GST reforms, and festive demand, while healthcare spending is rising with aging demographics and increasing chronic ailments, Kotak MF said. The asset manager said its view is constructive on fixed income as well, given the favourable demand-supply dynamics and supportive macro fundamentals.

Important policy changes that influenced your finances in 2025 include Aadhaar and UPI

New Delhi: As 2025 ends, Indian households and investors have experienced a transformative year marked by significant financial reforms that have reshaped daily financial management and investment strategies. Among the most notable changes are updates to the digital identity framework, improvements in the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and tax reforms aimed at increasing disposable income.

One of the landmark updates in the digital identity framework came in November 2025, enabling online updates to key personal information (such as name and address) via the UIDAI portal or mAadhaar app. This shift reduces the need for physical visits, allowing for quicker Know Your Customer (KYC) updates that facilitate faster banking transactions, loan approvals, and investment activities. Additionally, offline verifications now rely on QR code scans through the Aadhaar Verify app, significantly mitigating identity theft risks and streamlining verification processes for rentals, travel, or subsidies. Changes in enrollment rules for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) were also introduced in August 2025, simplifying access to overseas transac-

tions and enhancing data security.

The UPI remained the dominant platform for digital payments, witnessing over 15 billion transactions monthly, leading to tighter security measures and efficiency improvements. Starting in August 2025, daily balance inquiries were limited to 50, and auto-display features post-transaction were introduced to prevent fraud. Higher transfer amounts now necessitate biometric or multi-factor authentication, while biometric confirmation is required for AutoPay renewals. AI monitoring of transactions has been enhanced to improve security for online shopping and remittances, helping consumers reduce risks associated with high-value transfers.

In response to concerns over taxation, the 2025-26 Union Budget introduced reforms aimed at simplifying tax liabilities and enhancing disposable incomes. A new tax regime was implemented, allowing for zero tax on incomes up to Rs 12 lakh, with subsequent slabs of 5% and 10% for higher income brackets. This could yield annual savings between Rs 20,000 and Rs 30,000 for salaried taxpayers, thereby allowing individuals to allocate more capital toward investments. The limit

for Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) on rent was raised to Rs 6 lakh, and changes were made to Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPs), leading to simplified compliance for tenants and prompting a review of ULIPs versus National Pension System (NPS) options for optimal tax efficiency.

Further enhancements included the introduction of the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) in April 2025, which guarantees a pension amounting to 50% of the last salary for central employees and select public sector undertakings. This reform aims to provide stability in retirement planning for risk-averse individuals. Additionally, new investment opportunities within the NPS for minors and mandatory hallmarking of silver were launched in September 2025 to better safeguard long-term wealth.

Overall, the convergence of digital identity reforms, UPI enhancements, and tax-friendly policies reflects a holistic approach aimed at boosting financial inclusion and security. Individuals are advised to act swiftly—updating Aadhaar details, adjusting UPI usage to align with security trends, and accurately filing taxes—to unlock meaningful savings and set a



proactive pace for effective financial management in 2026.

Vanga praises; Bharti-Haarsh welcome second boy

Mumbai: Ranveer Singh’s Dhurandhar has firmly established itself as one of Bollywood’s biggest blockbusters, ensuring that Hindi cinema ends 2025 on an emphatic high. The Aditya Dhar-directed film has generated significant buzz, and many big names in Bollywood have appreciated the film. The latest to join this bandwagon is Sandeep Reddy Vanga.

Haarsh Limbachiya and Bharti Singh welcomed their second child on December 19, and while this news was confirmed by the cast of Laughter Chefs Season 3 as well, the couple didn’t share an official post on their social media until now. A day after becoming parents, Haarsh and Bharti shared a beautiful video announcing the birth of their second baby boy. Taylor Swift has spoken candidly about the challenges she has faced in sustaining romantic relationships while touring, revealing that her experience changed dramatically after she began dating NFL star Travis Kelce. Malayalam cinema veteran Sreenivasan passed away on Saturday at the age of 69. The actor, screenwriter, director and producer had been admitted in Tripunithura on Friday night after developing breathing difficulties. He was reportedly travelling for dialysis at a private hospital in Kochi when his condition worsened and was shifted to the Government Taluk Hospital in Tripunithura. Aryan Khan, Shah Rukh Khan’s son, created a lot of buzz with his directorial debut The Ba***ds of Bollywood on Netflix. It was well received by the viewers and has now earned him his first award. Aryan won the Best Debutant Director of the Year award at the NDTV Indian of the Year event in New Delhi. What also caught everyone’s attention was Aryan’s acceptance speech in Hindi where he dedicated his award to his mother Gauri Khan.



Dhurandhar Day 18: Ranveer Singh Film Nets ₹16 Cr on Third Monday

Mumbai: After a long and remarkably strong theatrical run, Ranveer Singh’s Dhurandhar has finally begun to slow down at the box office but only marginally. What stands out is how late this deceleration has arrived, with the film still posting impressive numbers even on its third Monday.

According to box office tracking website Sacnilk.com, Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar collected Rs 16 crore on day 18 of its release. With this, the film’s total India net collection now stands at Rs 571 crore, cementing its status as one of the biggest blockbusters of the year. For perspective, the film earned Rs 23.5 crore on its first Monday and an even stronger Rs 30 crore on its second Monday. Compared to those figures, the third Monday dip is minimal and reflects the film’s exceptional staying

Saloni Batra SET for Animal 2 Return; Opens Up on Outsider Journey

Mumbai: Saloni Batra, who recently impressed audiences with her role in the Amazon MX Player web series Bhay, has confirmed that she will be reprising her role in the upcoming sequel to Ranbir Kapoor’s hit action film Animal. Tentatively titled Animal Park or Animal 2, the sequel is set to continue the high-octane action saga that made the original a box office hit.

In a chat with Zoom, the actress not only confirmed her involvement in the sequel but also opened up about her journey and the unique challenges she faced as an outsider in Bollywood. Reflecting on her career path, Saloni Batra candidly shared, “It’s been a series of learning ups and downs. It’s not been a simple straight road. I believe that life is like that for everybody. Because you don’t come from that backing, we have our different set of struggles, which are quite scary sometimes.



I have learnt a lot along the journey.” She further added, “I am happy to have gone through this process because it has taught me a lot. I found my calling when I came to Mumbai. I didn’t even want to become an actor. I come from a design background. Whenever I work, I always remember the feeling of my first day when I faced the camera for

the first time. I want to keep going even if I am put down by anybody or circumstance in life. It is difficult. It is mentally taxing.”

Her words reflect not only the perseverance required to navigate the film industry but also the resilience needed to thrive without a traditional backing or connections. When asked about her role in Ani-

mal 2, Saloni confirmed her participation, saying, “I will be there in Animal 2. People liked Animal; hence, makers want to make this kind of cinema for entertainment and action. It is good for the box office and for us as well.” Fans can also catch Saloni in Bhay, where she shares screen space with Kalki Koechlin, Karan Tacker, and Danish Sood.

Ramya Krishnan Relives Neelambari, Watches Padayappa on Big Screen for First Time



Hyderabad: More than two decades after Padayappa first stormed cinemas, the film continues to generate new memories for those who made it. Actor Ramya Krishnan recently shared a personal moment from the ongoing theatrical rerelease of the 1999 blockbuster, posting a video of herself watching the film on the big screen. The rerelease coincided with Rajinikanth’s birthday on December 12, turning the screening into a celebration of legacy as much as cinema.

The video captures Ramya Krishnan reacting to one of Padayappa’s most emotionally charged moments, the scene where an older Neelambari comes face to face with Padayappa after eighteen years. For audiences, the sequence remains one of Tamil cinema’s most memorable confrontations. For the actor, it marked a rare chance to experience her own performance as a viewer. Captioning the clip, she wrote that this was the first time she had watched Padayappa in a theatre. Directed by K

The Avatar Drop: Rs 8 Crore for Fire and Ash on Monday

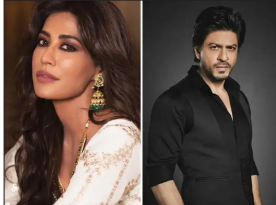


Agency: James Cameron’s Avatar: The Way of Water, the third film in the acclaimed Avatar series, has finally hit theatres worldwide. The film returns viewers to Pandora, where Jake Sully, Neytiri, and their people face new dangers and challenges. The opening weekend saw strong attendance, proving that interest in the franchise remains high. The impressive initial numbers have set a solid foundation for the days ahead.

As expected, the film experienced a noticeable drop in earnings on its first Monday following the busy weekend. However, the weekday figures remain strong. Let’s take a closer look at the day 4 box office collection and the total earnings so far. According to Sacnilk reports, on its fourth day, the film earned approximately Rs 8.50 crore in India. With this ad-

dition, Avatar: Fire and Ash has now taken its total India box office collection to Rs 75.75 crore. The English version recorded an overall occupancy of 18.92%, with regular English shows at 17.94%. The Hindi version performed slightly better, with the 3D format achieving an occupancy of 19.43%, while the 2D shows saw a lower occupancy of 9.99%. In regional markets, the Telugu version attracted 17.37% of the audience, whereas the Tamil version showed a stronger turnout with an overall occupancy of 19.26%. On Day 1, Avatar: Fire and Ash earned Rs 19 Crore, led by English shows at Rs 8.5 Crore, followed by Hindi at Rs 5.25 Crore, Telugu at Rs 2.75 Crore, Tamil at Rs 2.43 Crore, while Kannada and Malayalam contributed Rs 0.05 Crore and Rs 0.02 Crore. On Day 2, the collections jumped to Rs 22.5 Crore, as English brought in Rs 10.5 Crore, Hindi Rs 6.4 Crore, Telugu Rs 2.4 Crore, Tamil Rs 3.1 Crore and minor additions from Kannada and Malayalam.

Career break lost Shah Rukh Khan film



Mumbai: Bollywood actress Chitrangada Singh recently opened up about some important career decisions she regrets today. Chitrangada Singh shared that she once had the chance to work with Shah Rukh Khan but lost the opportunity because she was away from the industry for several years. Speaking to Hindustan Times, the actress reflected on how taking a long break from films affected her career.

She revealed that Shah Rukh Khan himself told her about the missed opportunity while they were shooting an advertisement together. Talking about it, Chitrangada said, “The one I didn’t say no to but still missed was Chalte Chalte (2003) with Shah Rukh Khan. He told me this himself when we were shooting an ad together. He said that they were looking for my number. I had left work for seven or eight years. That’s when it really hits you.” Apart from Chalte Chalte, Chitrangada also admitted that she turned down some major films that later became huge successes. She revealed that she rejected Anurag Kashyap’s Gangs of Wasseypur. The actress said, “I said no to Gangs of Wasseypur (2012). Anurag had come to me for the role that Richa Chadda eventually did.” She also turned down Tanu Weds Manu, which later starred Kangana Ranaut. Recalling that moment, Chitrangada shared, “(Director) Anand Rai had come to me for the part that Kangana did, and I said no. I think at that time I listened to too many people and made some bad choices.” Talking about how the film industry works, the actress said visibility plays a very important role. She explained, “Our industry has a very short memory. If you’re not visible enough or aren’t visible for long, they tend to forget.”

Kartik Aaryan Drops New Pics Before Tu Meri Main Tera Release

Mumbai: Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday are gearing up to entertain the audience once again with rom com, Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri. To increase the excitement level, the actors have once again set social media abuzz with a fresh set of pictures ahead of the release. The film is releasing on December 25.

Taking to his Instagram handle, Kartik Aaryan shared a series of photos with Ananya Panday from their promotions and wrote, “3 days to go”. As soon as he shared photos, fans reacted. One of the fans wrote, “Two gorgeous people!! Making me blessed with Their presence in my city Delhi.” Another wrote, “Can’t wait for to witness this sizzling chemistry on big screen this 25th December.” As per Bollywood Hungama, “Jio Star Studios has permitted exhibitors to

move the Christmas Day programming for Avatar: Fire and Ash as the exhibitors had strong pressure from the stakeholders of Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri, headlined by Kartik Aaryan with Ananya Panday. The show reduction process has already begun at independent chains, and approximately 30 percent of the shows will be reduced for Avatar: Fire and Ash on Christmas Day, which will give a very good release to the Kartik Aaryan film.”

As per the source, the exhibitors are confident about Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri because it’s a happy film with young star Kartik Aaryan, perfect for families during the Christmas and New Year holidays. “There is strong demand for Tu Meri Main Tera among the youth, and they are expected to ensure a strong start for the film on the opening day despite competi-



tion. The audience demand is driving the showcasing and programming, as Avatar: Fire and Ash has clearly not fired the way it should have at the box office,” a source shared with the portal. On the other hand, Jio Studios has not allowed any cut in shows for Ranveer Singh’s Dhurandhar on Christmas Day. Exhibitors are sticking strictly to the film’s original screening schedule.

Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri is directed by Sameer Vidwans, who pre-

viously collaborated with Kartik in Satyaprem Ki Katha. Dharma Productions and Namah Pictures are the film’s producers, along with Karan Johar, Adar Poonawalla, Apoorva Mehta, Shareen Mantri Kedia, Kishor Aroora, and Bhumika Tewari. Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri will be released in theatres on December 25, which coincides with Christmas. In addition to the starring pair, the film features Neena Gupta, Jackie Shroff, and Tiku Talsania in supporting roles.

Madhuri Dixit Judged for Skinny Figure Pre-Tezaab Hit

Mumbai: Long before the applause, the awards, and the iconic status, Madhuri Dixit was navigating an industry that had opinions about everything, especially how a new actor should look. Today, she is remembered as one of Hindi cinema’s most loved stars. Back then, she was just another newcomer being told what needed fixing.

In a recent interview, Madhuri opened up about a phase many may find hard to imagine. She revealed that before her first big success, comments

about her appearance were routine, unsolicited and often blunt. Speaking to Nayandeep Rakshit on his YouTube channel, Madhuri recalled how people around her constantly pointed out supposed flaws. “A lot of people told me when I had just started — do this, how is your nose, your this, your that. I used to go and say, ‘Mom, they’re saying this.’ And my mom would say, ‘Don’t worry about it. Once you have a successful movie, that’s the very thing they’ll love about you.’”

At the time, Madhuri admitted she struggled to believe her mother’s confidence. The advice sounded reassuring, but it felt distant from the reality she was facing as a young actor in the mid-1980s. Everything changed with Tezaab. The film’s release marked a turning point not just in her career, but in how she was perceived. Almost overnight, Madhuri became a sensation. The same traits that once invited criticism were no longer questioned. Looking back, Madhuri said the noise

around her appearance disappeared once the film worked. “After Tezaab, nobody said anything about being skinny or being this or that. People just accepted me for who I am.”

That shift left a lasting impression on her, shaping how she now views individuality in the industry. Drawing from her own experience, she shared advice she often gives young actors today. “Even today, I tell the new girls—Don’t try to be in a mould. Don’t say this is how a heroine should

look. If you’re different, that’s a uniqueness you have. Play on that.” Madhuri is once again in the spotlight, this time for her latest OTT series Mrs Deshpande. Directed by Nagesh Kukunoor, the show is officially adapted from the French series La Mante and places Madhuri in a darker, more complex space than much of her earlier work. The story follows a police investigation into murders that mirror the crimes of a female serial killer already in prison.

How sleeping in old schools is reviving rural Japan

The morning sun filters through tall windows, illuminating rows of wooden desks where students once recited kanji writing symbols. But instead of attracting boisterous children, this classroom now lures travellers in search of deep relaxation and a unique immersion in rural Japanese culture. This is Hare to Ke, a former elementary school-turned-guesthouse nestled in the mountains of Miyoshi on Shikoku, the smallest of Japan’s four main islands. Hare to Ke occupies the former Deai Elementary School, which closed in 2005 after student numbers fell to just five. According to a local newspaper, in its heyday in 1945, the school had more than 500 pupils, but like many rural schools across Japan, it gradually emptied out as families have increasingly migrated to cities. After eight years standing vacant, the school was officially decommissioned in 2013. Today, Miyoshi’s population has declined from a peak of 77,779 in 1955 to around 20,000, and more than 40% of its residents are aged 65 or older. In the decades following Japan’s postwar economic boom, the decline of local industries and a steady exodus of young people left Miyoshi with an aging population and abandoned infrastructure. By 2012, Miyoshi had 28 unused schools, and local officials began actively seeking proposals to repurpose them. But Tokyo-based designer Shuko Uemoto had an idea. Uemoto first visited Miyoshi in 2014 with her then-two-year-old son and was struck by the quiet beauty of the place. “The water and air here are completely different,” Uemoto told the BBC. “When we stayed here for the first time, my son’s asthma symptoms just disappeared. That moment really stayed with me.” “I remember thinking, if my child grew up surrounded by this kind of nature, how would that shape him? I got really excited by the idea,” she said. When she



came across Miyoshi’s call for revitalisation proposals, she returned to tour several of the area’s other empty educational centres. The moment she stepped into Deai Elementary School’s quiet courtyard, she knew she had found something special. “The sound of the river, the sunlight, the silence, it all felt full of potential,” she said. Uemoto relocated from Tokyo, submitted a detailed three-year business plan and launched what would become Hare to Ke with support from local officials and residents. Alamy Uemoto was inspired to transform the school into an inn after visiting Miyoshi for the first time in 2014 (Credit: Alamy) “The school had been a local landmark, but it stood in darkness, closed off from the community. Now, the lights are back on, and people have regained a sense of emotional belonging. The fact that outsiders are now drawn here and find it appealing has helped locals regain their confidence. That, I think, is the greatest achievement,” said Yuko Oka, an official from Miyoshi’s Regional Revitalisation Division. Today, 13 of Miy-

oshi’s previously abandoned schools have been transformed into community cafes, satellite offices and guesthouses like Hare to Ke, which has become a model for how abandoned schools can breathe new life into Japan’s many dwindling communities. But will it be enough to avert the quiet crisis unfolding across Japan’s countryside? As the country continues to grapple with a rapidly aging population and one of the world’s lowest birth rates, it is losing nearly 900,000 residents each year. According to one estimate, more than 40% of Japan’s municipalities could one day cease to exist. As younger generations increasingly trade rural areas for cities, roughly 450 schools close every year, according to Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). In response, a growing number of these once-empty buildings are now being reimagined to revitalise Japan’s depopulated regions. At Hare to Ke, guests aren’t just staying in a repurposed classroom, they’re reconnecting with nature and themselves through

rest and relaxation. The hotel’s name nods to a traditional Japanese concept of time, with hare referring to special celebrations or festivals and ke denoting mundane, everyday life. Historically, the two existed in balance, but following Japan’s postwar economic growth, many believe that distinction has faded, with everyday life becoming dominated by “hare”-like stimulation and abundance. Hare to Ke invites guests to rediscover that ancient rhythm through simplicity and stillness. By embracing slowness and sensory awareness, it encourages guests to return to the depth of “ke”. Visitors are welcomed by the aroma of freshly brewed coffee, they can sip herbal tea, nap to the soundtrack of rustling trees and wake to crisp mountain air. Guest Chill Kouri, who discovered Hare to Ke by chance during a road trip through Shikoku with a friend, echoed this sense of unexpected restoration. “The drive into the mountains was winding and narrow, but when we arrived, I was amazed. The atmosphere was nostalgic but fresh, and everything from the old school

building was thoughtfully preserved and run,” Chill said. “It’s not just a renovation; it’s a place where the whole concept feels alive.” Inspired by its bucolic setting, the hotel recently launched a specialised programme focused on deeper sleep improvement. Guests are asked about what typically disrupts their sleep, and based on their answers, they receive a custom-blended medicinal herbal tea. The experience incorporates aromatherapy, and soothing sounds and scents – engaging all five senses to guide visitors into ideal rest. The idea came after Uemoto relocated to Miyoshi and realised how deeply she slept. “I didn’t expect to feel such a difference, but the air and the silence helped me rest more deeply than I had in years,” she said. Recognising that many city dwellers rarely encounter true quiet or natural darkness, Uemoto saw an opportunity to create this “Sleep Trip” offering. “Many people struggle to sleep while travelling,” Uemoto said. “But if you can sleep deeply, just for one night, it transforms the entire journey. I want guests to

feel that. Surrounded by the mountain air, the cry of deer you can only hear if you stay overnight, the warmth from the sauna deep in your core, I hope people can truly relax here.” For more than 400 years, residents in the surrounding Nishi-Awa region have cultivated terraced fields on gradients as steep as 40 degrees, preserving not only agricultural practices but also the landscape and culture of these mountain communities. Guests who purchase the Sleep Trip option are served dinners featuring grains harvested from this challenging terrain, along with seasonal vegetables and locally sourced game meat. The design of Hare to Ke preserves the warmth and charm of the school’s past. Along the outdoor walkway leading to the entrance, graduation murals painted by former students remain. Class-

rooms feature playful nods to the past: eye charts, flasks and chalkboards evoke a nostalgic feel. Outside, locals who once attended the school as children now gather on the old sports ground to play gateball as guests look on. One of the former schoolhouse’s highlights is the sauna, which has become a destination in itself. “You’re wrapped in the aroma of herbs while gazing at the forest through the window,” said guest Mari Azumi. “The sauna room is lined with warm cedar, and the mountain scenery unfolds quietly in front of you. After the heat, you plunge into a cold bath filled with spring water from the mountains – crisp, clean, and refreshing.” Then comes the outdoor rest. You lie beneath the trees, and in that stillness, you begin to feel yourself blending into the landscape. It’s extraordinary, unfamiliar, yet deeply nostalgic. Like returning to something we’ve long forgotten. Like returning to nature.” According to Koji Kamizasa from Miyoshi’s tourism office,

locally grown ingredients. In addition, every second Sunday of the month, Miyoshi holds a night market where residents not only sell food, but also teach visitors about Awa Odori, Tokushima’s iconic traditional dance. Guests interested in the region’s storied past shouldn’t miss the annual Mt Tsurugi Summer Festival (17 July), a sacred ritual believed to date back more than 900 years. Taking place at the 1,955m summit of the eponymous mountain, it features a dramatic procession in which white robe-clad residents carry a mikoshi (portable shrine) up the mountain’s steep paths. Their rhythmic chants echo through the forest, accompanied by the sounds of flutes and drums. As Miyoshi continues to grapple with depopulation, events like these where travellers can participate not only help preserve cultural identity, but also introduce visitors to the region’s enduring traditions. Nearby attractions like the Iya Valley and its iconic Kazura vine bridge also attract nature lovers. Many travellers combine these highlights with a night at Hare to Ke, making it a

The design of Hare to Ke preserves the warmth and charm of the school’s past, with graduation murals painted by former students and nostalgic classrooms. Hare to Ke is a hotel that promotes slowness and sensory awareness, inviting guests to return to the depth of “ke.” The sauna, a highlight of the hotel, offers a serene retreat with its warm cedar room and mountain scenery. The hotel, located in the mountains of Miyoshi, is a result of the closure of the former Deai Elementary School, which closed in 2005 after student numbers fell to just five. Hare to Ke is a former elementary school-turned-guesthouse in Miyoshi, Japan, offering a unique immersion in rural Japanese culture. 13 of Miyoshi’s previously abandoned schools have been transformed into community cafes, satellite offices, and guesthouses. The hotel’s name nods to a traditional Japanese concept of time, with hare referring to special celebrations and ke denoting mundane, everyday life. The hotel invites guests to rediscover the ancient rhythm through simplicity and stillness. Transforming the school into an inn.

“Hare to Ke is part of a broader story – one where rural Japan is reclaiming its future not through flashy tourism, but by creating intimate, grounding and genuinely local experiences.” For instance, the hotel offers seasonal cooking workshops where residents teach guests how to prepare food with

base for both reflection and adventure. For many in the community, Hare to Ke is more than a guesthouse – it’s a space where old memories resurface and new ones are made. “One day, an elderly woman in her 80s came with her niece,” recalled Uemoto. “She opened an old graduation album and pointed to her younger self, saying, ‘That’s me!’ She was so happy.” “Even the former principal has come back to visit,” Uemoto added. This school isn’t just a building; it holds people’s stories. That’s why repurposing it wasn’t a light responsibility.

The European nation pioneering ‘beer diplomacy’

Czech beer culture is a fascinating and diverse one, with the Czech Republic being one of the world’s great beer-making nations. The country has been known for its pivo (beer), which has been brewed since at least 993 CE. Czechs consume more beer per capita than any other nation on Earth and in many places, beer is cheaper than bottled water. However, Czech lager has long been relatively underrated among true beer aficionados, overshadowed by Belgian ales, Bavarian brews, and the global IPA boom. Since 2019, a network of diplomats and brewers have been working behind the scenes to advance the awareness of Czech beer and inspire foreign brewers to make authentic Czech-style lager. Since the government began welcoming brewers from around the world, Czech-style lagers from craft brewers have been popping up across North America. This strategy is similar to Thailand’s Global Thai Program, which was launched in 2002 to promote Thai restaurants and cuisine abroad. The Czech Republic is following in Thailand’s footsteps with its six-year-old mission of “beer diplomacy.” The Czechs are known for their beer, which is not exactly a big hit with foreigners, but they excel in making it. The Czech Ministry of Agriculture has invited 20 brewers from Australia, Canada, and the United States to spend five days soaking up Czech beer culture. In conclusion, Czech beer culture is gaining recognition as a popular and diverse beverage. The Czech Republic is working to advance awareness of Czech beer and inspire foreign brewers to create authentic Czech-style lagers. The Czech government’s beer diplomacy initiative aims to teach the world how to drink properly by promoting the beermaking process. The initiative, which began in 2015, involves brewers from Pioneer Beer in Zatec, a small craft brewery and taproom, and Lukr, an innovative beer tap-making company in Plzeň. The goal is to create a creamy, thick head of foam that is characteristic of Czech beer, which is sold up to 2,000 a year to bars and tap rooms across the US and Canada. Czech beer culture is all about respecting the process of serving the beer, and the



Czech government is trying to teach this to foreign beermakers and tapsters. Brewers at Holy Mountain Brewing Company in Seattle, Washington, and Ryan Moncrieff, owner and head brewer of Rafters Brewing Company in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, agree that the only way to know the true taste of Czech beer is to go to the source. However, Czech beer doesn’t travel well, and while brewers can try their best to replicate authentic Czech brews, this hard truth debunks the great gospel of globalisation. To experience Czech beer as it was truly made, one must head to the Czech Republic. The Czech government’s programme will ultimately inspire a deeper curiosity from beer drinkers about what it’s like to drink Czech beer.



A technicolour visit to Morocco’s holiest town

Moulay Idriss, a small town in Morocco’s Rif Mountains, is known for its pastel-colored cement buildings and ties to Idris I, the founder of Morocco’s first Islamic dynasty. Despite being historically closed to non-Muslims and lacking a direct train line, the town’s sanctity has made it the country’s holiest pilgrimage site. The city opened to non-Muslims in 1912, and planned improvements to Morocco’s high-speed rail system will make it easier to visit. The town’s most sacred elements are still preserved for followers of Islam. Moulay Idriss, a town in Morocco, is known for its vibrant colors and traditional way of life. The Al-Santisi Mosque, built in 1939, features an emerald-green minaret with white Kufic-scripted Quranic verses, symbolizing the town’s connection to Islam. The town’s homes and shops are built into rocky hills connected by narrow alleys and tunnels, with white facades turning into technicoloured paths. The dominance of white and green in Moulay Idriss is seen as a tribute to Islam, representing peace and the spiritual importance of the town. Cats are highly regarded in Morocco, as they are considered

pure and ritually clean. Prophet Muhammad was known for being gentle and caring towards cats, setting an example for Muslims. Donkeys are a primary form of transportation among local residents, helping with olive harvest and carrying groceries home up the mountain. Much of life in Moulay Idriss exists in the rocky hills above the town and among



the winding, colourful streets.



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



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

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

7 Dietitian-Approved Foods for Lower Blood Sugar



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

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

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

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

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

Five free, easy ways to fight chronic inflammation

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

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

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

What is inflammation?

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

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

Spend time in nature

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



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

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

Engage with art and music

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

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

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

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

Move your body

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

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

Support other people

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

Summer style updates and hacks

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

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

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

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



SPORTS

An intriguing perspective on Rohit Sharma’s weight loss from an ex-teammate: “Don’t Be Fit To Just Look Fit”

New Delhi: Prior to the Vijay Hazare Trophy, which begins on December 24, former India spinner Amit Mishra made a noteworthy comment about star batsman Rohit Sharma’s physical change. Before returning to the international circuit in October of this year, Rohit experienced a significant makeover, shedding almost 11 kg. After hitting a fifty and a hundred in a three-match ODI series, the skipper of India has been in excellent form lately. In the ODIs against South Africa, the 38-year-old maintained that momentum, amassing 146 runs in two games, including two half-centuries. Mishra discussed his thoughts on Rohit’s weight loss quest, pointing out that the modern idea of fitness has evolved. The former leg-spinner also counseled the athletes to keep their natural bodies, not merely for aesthetic reasons. “Everybody has a unique body. There’s a distinction. It’s a different kind. These days, appearance plays a bigger role in determining fitness. To appear slender. Maintaining your fitness and having a real body are preferable. You



can maintain your fitness if you work hard and eat healthily. Maintain a healthy diet

and become organic. It’s not enough to be physically fit. I won’t mention names, but

there are numerous examples of people who quickly made themselves appear fit yet later experienced numerous physical problems. It is preferable to eat healthily, sleep well, and engage in natural activities. Go to the gym; it’s beneficial, but you can also run on the ground. “You have to think like that,” Mishra remarked. However, Mishra continued by asserting that Rohit was always a fit player and that the latter was constantly proactive and never slow on the court. “Rohit Sharma is fit and has returned. He used to be fit too. He and I have played together. He was referred to as “heavy,” but I never thought he was sluggish or incapable of scoring runs. He was active and fielded as well; it wasn’t like he would bat and go out. Everybody has their own viewpoints and opinions,” he continued. After getting included in Mumbai’s squad for the first rounds, Rohit will now be seen competing in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Then, on January 11, he is expected to play for India in a three-match ODI series against New Zealand.

Pakistan will file a complaint with the ICC against Indian U19 players

New Delhi: Thanks to Sameer Minhas’ historic century, Pakistan defeated India in the Under-19 Asia Cup 2025 final. Even if there were a few heated exchanges during the cricket match in the final, Mohsin Naqvi, the head of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) and member of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), seemed to have stretched the issue. Naqvi declared that he will file a formal protest with the International Cricket Council (ICC) when Sarfaraz Ahmed, the coach of the Pakistan Under-19 team, expressed dissatisfaction with the actions of Indian players during the final. Pakistan scored an incredible 347/8 in the final on Sunday. Pakistan secured a resounding 191-run victory after bowling India out for 156 in 26.2 overs while defending the mark. Pakistan won the Under-19 Asia Cup for the first time in 13 years after winning the final. Additionally, it was Pakistan’s second-ever U19 Asia Cup victory. Speaking at Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s Under-19 squad welcome, Naqvi pledged to file a formal complaint against the Indian players for their behavior during the championship game. “Indian players kept provoking Pakistani players during the Under-19



Asia Cup final,” Naqvi told reporters. “Pakistan will formally report the event to the International Criminal Court. Sports and politics should always be kept apart. Sarfaraz claimed that India’s actions throughout the game went against the “spirit of the game” during the same exchange. “India’s behaviour during the game was not appropriate, and their conduct was against the spirit of cricket,”

Sarfaraz stated. “In spite of this, we showed good sportsmanship while celebrating our win. Cricket should always be played with integrity; India’s actions are a reflection of their own. Players from both India and Pakistan were found guilty of violating the Code of Conduct during the men’s senior Asia Cup 2025 matches. The ICC has reprimanded players such as Suryakumar Yadav and Haris Rauf.

Sheetal Devi plans to compete in able-bodied events

New Delhi: The phenomena of armless archery Sheetal Devi, a Paralympic medalist and Para world champion, has now set a new objective for herself: taking home a medal from competitions for athletes with normal bodies. The 18-year-old, along with Paris Paralympic winner Harvinder Singh, recently participated in the able-bodied Compound Championship in Hyderabad and is fostering a de-



sire to excel in a broader arena. The Phase I trials for the Asian Games in Kolkata during the first week of January are Sheetal’s immediate goal. She aspires to participate in the continental mega event after becoming the second armless archer to win the World Para title.

Indian Cricket in 2025: A Dramatic, High-Low Year

New Delhi: India suffered their second home Test series clean sweep in only 13 months at the end of a year that started with a spectacular Champions Trophy victory. Rumors of a chilly connection between the head coach and senior players accompanied the victories. With a new captain leading both Tests and ODIs, it was also a year of change. In summary, 2025 was full of drama, heartache, and glory, reminding fans that cricket is much more than



just runs and wickets—it’s also about rivalries, personalities, and the feelings of millions of people who love the game. India’s Champions Trophy victory in Dubai, which confirmed their su-

premacy in white-ball cricket, was their high point of 2025. With notable performances from Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, and up-and-coming players, the team demonstrated perseverance, depth, and balance. With six balls remaining in the final, India defeated New Zealand by four wickets after chasing their 252-run mark. Rohit Sharma won Player of the Match after anchoring the pursuit with a calm 76. Critics were quiet by the triumph, which also gave India’s cabinet another ICC trophy.

Pat Cummins is doubtful for the Twenty20 World Cup

New Delhi: Australia’s captain Pat Cummins’ chances of participating in the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka next year are “quite grey at the moment” due to a back stress condition that has interfered with his involvement in the current Ashes series against England. After missing the first two Ashes Tests, Cummins returned to play in the third one in Adelaide, where he took six wickets to help Australia win the series 3-0. The Australian Test and ODI captain, however, will not play in the series going forward, and it is also unclear if he will attend the T20 World Cup. Australia’s T20I captain is Mitchell Marsh, an all-rounder. India and Sri Lanka will host the T20 World Cup starting on February 7, with the summit match planned for March 8. Australia’s opening game is against Ireland in Colombo on February 11. All-rounder Mitch Marsh leads Australia in the shortest format, while Cummins captains the Test and ODI squads.

Gede Priandana of Indonesia breaks the world record by taking five wickets in a single over

New Delhi: Gede Priandana, a 28-year-old right-arm bowler for Indonesia, made history on Tuesday in Bali by being the first player in T20I history to take five wickets in a single over. Priandana’s accomplishment is unique in the international game for both men and women. A few of players, including Jason Holder, Rashid Khan, and Lasith Malinga, had taken four wickets in a single over, but no one had ever taken five in one over. In the opening match of a Twenty20 International series against Cambodia, the Indonesian bowler accomplished the feat. Before Priandana started his clinical over, Cambodia sat at 106 for five while chasing 168. With his first three deliveries, he claimed a hat-trick, dismissing Chanthoeun Rathanak, Nirmaljit Singh, and Shah Abrar Hussain. Due to a wide, Priandana only managed one run in the over, which helped his team win by 60 runs. The Indonesian innings was anchored earlier in the game



by wicketkeeper-batter Dharma Kesuma, who hit an undefeated 110 off 68 balls, including eight fours and six sixes. Priandana opened the batting innings with 6 runs from 11 balls prior to his heroics with the ball. The achievement of capturing five wickets in a single over had only been seen twice in men’s T20 cricket, both times in the domestic format, prior to Priandana’s historic effort. The first person to do

so was Al-Amin Hossain, who participated in the 2013–14 Victory Day T20 Cup with the UCB–BCB XI. The second bowler to accomplish the feat was retired Indian cricketer Abhimanyu Mithun, who did it for Karnataka in the 2019–20 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy semifinal. In the international T20 arena, Priandana’s performance is the first time a bowler has taken five wickets in an over.

The India U19 team will be reviewed following their disastrous performance against Pakistan Asia Cup final

New Delhi: The Indian team’s performance at the U-19 Asia Cup was disappointing. The elite team, which included IPL players like Vaibhav Suryavanshi and Ayush Mhatre, advanced to the final undefeated but was defeated by Pakistan by a staggering 191 runs. After Sameer Minhas scored 172 (113b, 17x4, 9x6) to help Pakistan register a massive 347/8, India had to mount a valiant effort to win the tournament’s seventh crown. But as India collapsed for 156 in 26.2 overs, the towering Pakistan pace troika—Ali Reza (4/42), Mohammad Sayyam (2/38), and Abdul Subhan (2/29)—sped through the top order with steady hard lengths. Mhatre of the Chennai Super Kings was out for two, while Suryavanshi, who started the competition with a 171 against the UAE, scored 26. Following the final loss to Pakistan, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) will assess the Mhatre-led team’s performance in the continental championship. This time, the BCCI is likely to “go beyond the usual review process” and have talks with skipper Mhatre and head coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar. Normally, the team manager sends a report to the BCCI following every tournament. Mhatre and Suryavanshi got into a furious altercation with their Pakistani competitors during the final match. It’s unclear if player behavior will be included in the review. The current U-19 team is getting ready for the January–February 2026 Under-19 World Cup. India captain Mhatre stated following the final defeat to Pakistan: “We were clear to bowl first; there were some inconsistencies in the line of bowling.” Play-



ing the 50 overs was a straightforward strategy. The competition was beneficial to us, the boys performed incredibly well, and a few players stood up.” On Monday, December 22, Cricbuzz reported that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has demanded an evaluation of the U19 Asia Cup performance. In the upcoming days, the board is anticipated to meet with coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar and captain Ayush Mhatre after requesting a report from the team management. Following India’s appalling performance in the tournament final, the decision was reportedly made during the BCCI Apex Council meeting on Monday. The

Indian U19 team, unbeaten till the final, lost to Pakistan by a staggering 191 runs. Ayush Mhatre and Vaibhav Suryavanshi, two important players, did not do well on the day, which made it a bad day for the Indian team as a whole. The BCCI’s decision to meet with both the captain and the head coach is uncommon, even though performance assessments are customary following important events. A similar strategy was used earlier this year when the board met with Rohit Sharma and Gautam Gambhir after the senior team’s dismal Border-Gavaskar Trophy campaign in Australia. The forthcoming U19

World Cup, which is set for January and February of 2026, may be the target of the BCCI’s proactive strategy, according to Cricbuzz. The board is eager to resolve any problems as soon as possible in order to prevent setbacks during the international competition. India’s U19 Asia Cup 2025 final in Dubai turned out to be a nightmare as Pakistan easily trounced their bitter rivals by 191 runs at the ICC Academy Ground. On December 21, opener Sameer Minhas set the stage with a brilliant century off 71 balls, and Farhan Yousaf’s squad finished the thrashing by dismissing India for just 156 in 26.2 overs.

Virat Kohli’s return to the Vijay Hazare Trophy has disappointed fans

New Delhi: The M Chinnaswamy Stadium, where Virat Kohli plays for the Indian Premier League (IPL) team Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), will host his comeback to the Vijay Hazare Trophy. However, in a significant development, the Karnataka government is reportedly going to order the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) to conduct Delhi’s matches behind closed doors, depriving supporters of the chance to watch Kohli live. Since 11 supporters perished in a stampede during RCB’s IPL 2025 championship parade, the Chinnaswamy has been under investigation. Since renowned players like Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant are expected to play over the holiday season, the Karnataka state administration is eager to avert any mayhem near the stadium. Due to logistical issues brought on by the presence of celebrities like Kohli and Pant, the KSCA had already moved Delhi’s games from Alur to the Chinnaswamy. The star India duo arrived at the city on Monday night. But according to reports, the BCCI’s Centre of Excellence (CoE) has been reserved as a backup venue in the event that police approval is not obtained to hold the games at Chinnaswamy Stadium. At first, the Karnataka State



Cricket Association (KSCA) planned to erect two public stands that could have held 2,000–3,000 people. But the government rejected the plan, citing problems with compliance and security. The Karnataka government formed a committee made up of police, public works, and fire safety officials in response to a request from KSCA. On Monday, the committee examined M. Chinnaswamy Stadium. On Tuesday, they are anticipated to present a formal report that will probably confirm the much-discussed decision to hold matches behind closed doors because of security concerns. The stadium was declared “unfit for large-scale events” by the Justice John Michael D’Cunha Commission, which was assigned by the Karnataka government to look into the stampede that occurred during the celebrations of Royal Challengers Bengaluru’s (RCB) first Indian Premier League (IPL) victory earlier this year.