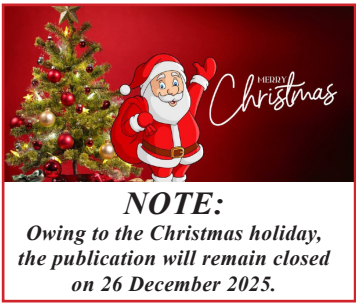




NOTE:
Owing to the Christmas holiday,
the publication will remain closed
on 26 December 2025.

In Brief

BJP Kisan morcha holds state executive meeting

Shillong: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Kisan Morcha in Meghalaya held a State Executive meeting focused on enhancing outreach to farmers and aiming to double their income in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision. The State President emphasized the significance of farmers, who constitute about 80% of Meghalaya's population, and expressed satisfaction with the meeting's participation from various districts. Upcoming programs were outlined, including observances for the birth anniversary on September 25 and the 'Man Ki Baat' initiative on September 28, which encourages unity through shared meals.

Seize illegal arms and ammunition

Imphal: On December 23, Manipur Police conducted two operations in Imphal East district, resulting in the arrest of four individuals and the seizure of illegal weapons. In the first operation, two people, Thingujam Suresh Singh and Moirangthem Dayamoi, were arrested and a .32 pistol, wireless communication set, mobile phones, and an Aadhaar card were confiscated.

Manipur Police Crack Down

Imphal: On Monday, Manipur Police conducted operations resulting in the arrest of an extortionist and the discovery of weapons, including two homemade mortars and three WT sets in Tengnoupal district. Active RPF/PLA cadre Nongmaithem Narendra Meitei was apprehended along with Kshetrimayum Nilakanta Singh, both found with cell phones and identification documents.

AASU Protects Rights

Guwahati: The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) on Wednesday submitted a memorandum to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, asserting that the rights, land, and security of indigenous communities must be safeguarded at all costs and that non-indigenous dominance will not be allowed to take root in Karbi Anglong. In the memorandum, issued from AASU's headquarters at Gauhati University, the student body made its stance unequivocally clear, stating that the current situation in Karbi Anglong poses a serious threat to indigenous existence and social harmony in Assam. AASU stressed that the issue goes beyond local disturbances and has state-wide implications. The union expressed deep concern over the ground situation in Karbi Anglong, alleging that unchecked activities and the growing assertiveness of non-indigenous elements have created fear, instability, and insecurity among Karbi people and other native communities, particularly affecting their land rights and traditional way of life. AASU warned that continued administrative inaction could further escalate tensions, leading to long-term consequences for peace and coexistence in the hill district. It emphasised that law and order must be enforced firmly and impartially to prevent any breakdown of public order. The student body urged the state government to take immediate and decisive steps to protect the constitutional and customary rights of indigenous communities prevent demographic and social imbalance, Anglong.

Tea Garden Youths Receive Health Dept Appointments From Assam CM

Guwahati, Dec 24: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma sent appointment letters to 215 tea garden-origin candidates on Wednesday for a variety of technical and non-technical positions in the Health Department as part of its unrelenting efforts to ensure open and merit-based hiring. The current administration is offering a total of 1,45,664 government jobs as a result of its lengthy hiring list, which includes the most recent recruitment. A number of members, including Ashok Singhal, the Minister of Assam's Health & Family Welfare, Rupesh Gowala, the Minister of Tea Tribes & Adivasi Welfare Departments, MLA Sanjay Kisan, MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi, and other dignitaries, as well as senior physicians and Health Department officials, attended the ceremonial function and the distribution of the appointment letter. However, because it was a significant issue for the chosen youngsters, the presence of family gave the event a sense of pride. Speaking at the same time, the chief minister reaffirmed his government's commitment to conducting government business in a transparent, equitable, and corruption-free manner in order to give candidates from all backgrounds equal chances. He stated that a key focus area of his



state government is the development of the "health sector" through skilled and committed human resources. By formally announcing a 3% reservation for the community in government jobs, the Chief Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to the welfare and representation of the tea garden community. The Chief Minister clarified that the reservation policy would be applicable for Grade I and Grade II positions and would continue annually on a permanent basis, including in the im-

pending Assam Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE). He maintained his optimism that children from tea gardens would rise to honorable positions like Assam Police Service (APS) and Assam Civil Service (ACS) officers, which would represent a significant turning point in social inclusion and empowerment, while keeping in mind the program's long-term strategy. The Chief Minister discussed the advancement of medical education in Assam and mentioned the government's focus on build-

ing health and educational infrastructure. There were just six medical colleges in Assam during the previous Congress government, he said, criticizing them. "However, there are now 30 medical colleges in our government, and 14 more will be added in the upcoming year," he stated. According to the Chief Minister, his overall efforts are focused on representation, employment, and education in all Assamese groups. This action reaffirms the Assam government's efforts to offer a number of new initiatives aimed at empowering young people and improving their employability. These include significant recruitment campaigns, youth-focused, locally relevant skill-building initiatives, and targeted attempts to promote diversity for communities who were previously underrepresented. The government aims to give young people long-term employment and career security through an honest recruitment campaign and capacity-building activities. These selections reaffirm the state's commitment to empowering young, ensuring social fairness, and ensuring effective public service delivery. They also mark another significant turning point in Assam's efforts to guarantee inclusive development.

Manipur Police arrest four in twin operations, seize illegal arms and ammunition



Imphal, Dec 24: Manipur Police, along with other security forces, carried out two separate operations in Manipur on Tuesday, December 23, leading to the arrest of four persons and the seizure of illegal arms and ammunition. The operations were conducted in different parts of Imphal East district as part of the ongoing drive to curb the circulation of illegal weapons and strengthen public safety. In the first operation, teams from Manipur Police arrested two individuals from areas falling under Porompat Police Station.

The arrested persons were iden-

tified as Thingujam Suresh Singh (40), also known as Bimol or Ibohanbi, a native of Sekmaiin Khunou in Kakching district who was currently staying at Khurai Tongbram Leirak, and Moirangthem Dayamoi (39) of Khurai Soibam Leikai. Police said both were picked up from their respective residences following specific inputs. During the search operations, the police recovered a .32 pistol with a magazine loaded with one live round. A BAOFENG handheld wireless communication set with charger, two mobile phones, and one Aadhaar card were also

seized. Officials said the recovered items point to possible unlawful activities, and further investigation is being carried out to find out the source of the weapon and the purpose for which it was kept. In a second operation on the same day, security forces arrested two alleged arms smugglers from Keibi Awang Leikai Yaibirel under Sagolmang Police Station. The accused were identified as Lisham Naoba Singh, also known as Leichin (38), a resident of Uyumpok Mamang Leikai, and Laishram Chingkhel Meitei, also known as Thoubha (23), a resident of Sugnu Tangjeng Bazar.

Arunachal Espionage Case Expands; Two More Arrested

Itanagar, Dec 24: With the arrest of two more people from Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district, the Itanagar Police have stepped up their crackdown on a suspected espionage network operating in Arunachal Pradesh, bringing the total number of arrests in this case to five. The most recent arrests were made on December 18, according to Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Chukhu Apa. The accused have since been transported to the state, where they are presently being held by the police. Aijaz Ahmed Bhat and Bashir Ahmad Ganai are the people who were taken into custody. Apa clarified the case's developments by stating that another individual from Miao in the Changlang area who had previously been held was freed after investigators discovered no concrete evidence connecting him to the purported espionage activities.

The police officer claimed that the suspects were involved in gathering private information from various locations in Arunachal Pradesh and disseminating it to handlers in Pakistan. The case originally surfaced on November 21, when police detained Nazir Ahmad Malik and Sabir Ahmed Mir, both of whom lived in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara area, after receiving specific intelligence re-

garding their possible involvement in espionage.

Malik was first arrested from Ganga village in Itanagar, and later that day, Mir was taken into custody from Abotani Colony in the state capital on the basis of information he provided. Hilal Ahmed, a resident of the Kupwara district, was detained by West Siang Police while operating a fabric store at the Old Market trade show in Aalo, the district seat. Gulam Md Mir from Miao was also detained by Changlang Police, however he was subsequently set free.

According to the IGP, the majority of those detained were blanket vendors who traveled throughout the state to gather information. Regarding the potential for additional arrests, the IGP stated that the accused are still being questioned and that reports from the forensic examination are still pending. "We will proceed further based on evidence in the coming days," he stated. Concerned about inadequate verification procedures, Apa advised people to exercise caution.

"For safety considerations, I urge the people of Arunachal Pradesh to do police verification before permitting anyone to stay on their property. "Don't let anyone stay in your home without the appropriate documentation," he said.

Arunachal Holds Outreach Camps Across Districts During Good Governance Week

Itanagar, Dec 24: District administrations throughout Arunachal Pradesh stepped up outreach, review, and capacity-building initiatives under the "Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur" campaign during Good Governance Week (Sushasan Saptah) with the goal of strengthening participatory governance and bringing government services to people's doorsteps.

The Government Higher Secondary School's tourism, forest, and rural development departments collaborated to arrange a unique "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" camp under Seva Aapke Dwar 2.0 in the Lower Subansiri district. During the camp, hundreds of villagers made use of the amenities. While the forest department issued forms for chainsaw licenses, registered plantations, and raised awareness of biodiversity conservation and responsible resource use, the Rural Development department assisted with the registration and replacement of MGNREGA employment cards and enrollment under PMAY-G. The Chief Minister Paryatan Shiksha Yojana and employment options in the tourist industry were explained to students and the general public by the tourism department.

The week-long district campaign, which began on December 19, will run through Lower Subansiri until December 25. At the district headquarters in Yingkiang, Upper Siang

district, the administration hosted a session on good governance techniques. Accountability, timeliness, citizen-friendly conduct, and efficient implementation of assistance programs were highlighted by speakers. Women's organizations called for more community involvement and more robust anti-drug campaigns, while departmental representatives emphasized efforts in health, education, and the eradication of tuberculosis. The administration also recognized the joint efforts of officials and interested parties in ensuring the smooth conduct of the December 15 panchayat elections. In the meantime, a workshop on the Aspirational District Programme in the Namsai district examined performance in a number of important areas, such as the difficulties facing the health sector, the results of school exams, agricultural output, irrigation, financial inclusion, and skill development.

The introduction of school hygiene ratings, the promotion of certified Khamti rice seed production, and the expansion of skills related to weaving and textiles for the creation of livelihoods were among the suggestions.

According to district administrations, the goals of Good Governance Week's events are to strengthen public involvement throughout the state, guarantee last-mile service delivery, and enhance governance outcomes.

West Karbi Anglong tension comes down, heavy security keeps Kheroni calm after two deaths

West Karbi Anglong, Dec 24: The law and order situation in Kheroni area of West Karbi Anglong has largely returned to normal following days of unrest that claimed two lives, officials said on Tuesday. Heavy security deployment by police and paramilitary forces has helped bring the situation under control, with authorities maintaining strict vigilance to prevent any fresh incidents. Officials said the situation stabilised on the third day after violence broke out in and around Kheroni, forcing the administration to rush

in additional forces. Sensitive locations across the area are now under close watch, and security personnel have been conducting regular patrols to maintain peace. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma confirmed that additional security forces were deployed to restore normalcy. He said the government is closely monitoring the ground situation and is in constant touch with local authorities and community representatives. The Chief Minister stressed that the government's approach is to resolve the matter through

dialogue and coordination, while ensuring that law and order is strictly maintained. According to officials, the violence began when a group of protesters gathered near the Phelangpi area and moved towards Dongkamokam, eventually reaching Kapili Ghat. A counter group was present on the opposite bank of the river, which led to heightened tension in the region. The situation reportedly turned violent after some protesters allegedly attacked police personnel with stones and sticks. Several police officers, including senior offi-

cials, were injured during the clashes.

As the situation escalated, police initially resorted to a lathi charge to disperse the crowd. When the violence continued, security forces opened fire to regain control of the area. Two deaths were reported during the unrest. One person, identified as Singthi Timung, succumbed to injuries sustained during the clashes. Another individual, Surjya Dey, lost his life following an arson attack on a commercial establishment amid the violence, officials said.

Assam government unveils fast-track valuation system for tea garden transactions

Guwahati, Dec 24 : In a significant move aimed at easing transactions in Assam's tea sector, the state government has notified an optional standardised method for valuing tea garden land and assets for the calculation of stamp duty and registration fees. The decision follows the Governor's assent to the Assam Fixation of Ceiling of Land Holdings (Amendment) Act, 2025, which was passed by



the Assam Legislative Assembly during the winter session on November 28. The new notification, issued in line

with a Cabinet decision taken on November 23, seeks to streamline the valuation process for tea gardens while en-

suring transparency, fairness and protection of government revenue. Officials said the move is intended to unlock the economic potential of tea estates and encourage legally compliant transfers through registered sale deeds. Until now, the valuation of tea gardens has involved a detailed and time-consuming physical assessment, without taking away choice," a senior official explained.

Thackeray cousins get back together

declare an alliance prior to the important Mumbai municipal elections

Mumbai, Dec 24: Once estranged, cousins Uddhav Thackeray and Raj Thackeray have formed a political alliance for the upcoming civic body polls in Mumbai, vowing to remain “permanently together.”

This significant announcement occurred at an event in Mumbai, marking a continuation of their reconciliation that began in July when they publicly shared a stage for the first time in nearly twenty years. Both factions, Uddhav’s Shiv Sena and Raj’s Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), will jointly contest in the elections scheduled for January 15, with Raj declaring the union of Shiv Sena and MNS to resounding applause from the audience. He emphasized prioritizing Maharashtra’s interests, ensuring that the next Mumbai mayor will be a Marathi individual from either of their parties.

Additionally, Uddhav highlighted the need for unity among the Marathi community, criticizing previous attempts by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to create divisions within it, particularly during the assembly elections with a negative campaign strategy.

He warned of the dire consequences that could arise from any disunity, stating that if divisions occur, it would lead to their political demise. Despite the alliance’s announcement, uncertainties remain regarding the distribution of seats across the 29 municipal corporations in Maharashtra, especially amid reported disagreements over allocations in significant Mumbai areas such as Dadar and Mahim. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is crucial in these upcoming elections, with additional focus on Thane, Kalyan-Dombivli, and Nashik.

The alliance marks an end to the longstanding political rivalry that began in 2006 when Raj Thackeray left the unified Shiv Sena to create his own party, MNS, and serves as a response to their shared concerns regarding the preservation of Marathi identity against what they describe as “Hindi imposition” in the state. This renewed collaboration was partly celebrated at a rally in July, protesting against a proposed educational policy that sought to introduce Hindi as the third language in Maharashtra’s schools.



Ajit Pawar’s party member ‘abducted’, thrashed in Maharashtra

Mumbai, Dec 24: Jeevan Ghogare, a member of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Maharashtra’s deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, was reportedly abducted and assaulted in a financial dispute involving ₹2 crore in Nanded, Maharashtra. On Monday, while driving his Innova car in the Dnyaneshwar Nagar area, he alleges he was intercepted by a group in a Scorpio that threw stones at his vehicle before forcibly dragging him into their SUV. Following the incident, police launched a search operation. However, Ghogare later informed the police that he had not been kidnapped but had instead left voluntarily for business reasons.

Upon further investigation, police found him injured and abandoned, where he recanted his earlier statement, claiming he was threatened at gunpoint by his abductors and coerced into stating he was safe. Ghogare implicated MLA Prataprao Chikhali, representing the Loha assembly constituency, as having orchestrated the attack alongside a former



legislator. He linked the assault to ongoing financial disputes and political animosity, stating that both he and his family had faced death threats from these political figures.

In response to the allegations, Chikhali dismissed them as a political plot, asserting that his recent engagement in election-related activities, including overseeing vote counting and attending a fair in Malegaon, had kept him occupied from the beginning. He expressed confidence that the police investigation would uncover the truth behind the incident. Seven individuals connected to the abduction have been apprehended, identified as Shubham Sunewad, Rahul Dasarwad, Kaustubh Ranveer, Vivek Suryawanshi, Madhav Waghmare, Mohamad Afroz, and Devanand Bhole.

Major factory fire breaks out in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh due to spark from motor

One injured, two dead

Bilaspur, Dec 24: A catastrophic fire at the Mittal Furniture factory in Sirgitti industrial area, Bilaspur district, Chhattisgarh, resulted in the deaths of two workers and injuries to another. The incident occurred around 4 PM on Tuesday when a spark from a motor ignited turpentine oil stored in jerry cans, sparking a massive blaze fueled by additional chemicals used in furniture production. A ten-hour fire-fighting operation ensued before the fire was controlled.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the fire began while turpentine oil was being transferred from a tanker to jerry cans using a motor. A spark from the motor ignited one of the jerry cans, leading to a series of explosions that caused the fire to escalate rapidly. Around ten employees and artisans inside the factory managed to escape, though one worker, Ritesh Shukla, suffered severe burns. He was transported to a government



hospital in Bilaspur and subsequently referred to a facility in Raipur, where he ultimately succumbed to his injuries.

Tragically, Abhijeet alias Ayush Suryavanshi was trapped inside the factory during the blaze, and despite the risks posed by heavy smoke and flames, rescue efforts were hampered by intermittent explosions. His body was recovered the following

morning. Another individual, identified as Daksh, sustained partial burn injuries and is currently receiving medical care.

Authorities have registered a case and initiated an investigation into the incident. The incident underscores the dangers associated with the handling of flammable materials in industrial settings, prompting calls for stricter safety measures.

Permission for Vijay Hazare’s match at Chinnaswamy is denied by the panel

Bengaluru, Dec 24: A Vijay Hazare Trophy match featuring Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant has been relocated from Bengaluru’s M Chinnaswamy Stadium to the BCCI Centre of Excellence due to safety concerns raised by a committee appointed by the Karnataka government. The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) was informed on Tuesday morning that all matches scheduled at the Chinnaswamy Stadium would be affected, beginning with the opener on Wednesday between Delhi and Andhra Pradesh. The decision, communicated by the state

home ministry, was based on an inspection conducted by a committee headed by M Maheshwar Rao, which included officials from the police and various departments regarding safety and infrastructure readiness.

Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh stated that the venue was deemed unfit for hosting any matches currently, following the committee’s detailed report. This match was initially planned to occur without spectators on December 24, following earlier conditional approval from the state cabinet for

cricket matches, contingent on adherence to safety recommendations. However, the committee’s findings indicated non-compliance with safety measures, including a 17-point advisory issued by the police.

This relocation happens to be the second venue change for matches featuring Kohli and Pant within two weeks, with previous logistical and security issues prompting the original movement from Alur to Chinnaswamy. Both teams have been notified of the latest developments, and their training sessions will now occur at the new venue. The KSCA is also



required to ensure that all matches across Bengaluru are played without specta-

tors, and police officials have committed to providing robust security measures around the new location.

Concerns about safety at Chinnaswamy Stadium have been longstanding, notably after a tragic stampede during a Royal Challengers Bengaluru parade in June, which resulted in 11 fatalities. Consequently, matches scheduled for the International Cricket Council Women’s World Cup were transferred to different venues. The Centre of Excellence, now hosting the match, has previously facilitated various cricket events without spectators.

Guv is urged by BJP leaders to reject law

Bengaluru, Dec 24: Multiple Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti have urged Karnataka Governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot to reject the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025. Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje criticized the Bill, arguing it undermines free speech and empowers the state to control expression, deviating from constitutional limits under Article 19(2). BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal termed it a tactic to silence political dissent, while the Samiti expressed concerns about the Bill’s potential misuse against religious discourse and proposed criminalization of speech-related offences. In defense, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah asserted the law targets harmful speech and applies equally to all political parties, claiming it aims to promote societal peace. The Bill was approved during the winter assembly session concluded on December 19.

In Tennessee, NDA holds the first round of seat-sharing negotiations

Chennai, Dec 24: The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Tamil Nadu, spearheaded by the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), commenced its initial seat-sharing discussions for the 2026 assembly elections on Tuesday. This meeting, held in Chennai, was significantly marked by the arrival of Union minister Piyush Goyal, who is now overseeing election preparations in the state—a notable occasion as it was his first visit since his appointment. During this preliminary discussion, which lasted an hour at a private hotel, Goyal and AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami (EPS) outlined their strategies aimed at unseating the incumbent Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). While specific seat counts were not disclosed, it was reported that both parties exchanged lists of their desired constituencies.

Goyal attended the meeting alongside five senior leaders from the BJP, including Tamil Nadu state president Nainar Nagendran and Union ministers of State Arjun Ram



Meghwal and L. Murugan. The AIADMK delegation was led by EPS and included key aides such as S. P. Velumani, K. P. Munusamy, and P. Thangamani. An AIADMK leader indicated that they proposed a slightly increased number of seats to the BJP compared to previous negotiations, although they still expect further discussion on the matter.

Following the meeting, Goyal expressed optimism about the alliance’s political strategy, emphasizing unity within the NDA for the upcoming elections. He positioned the upcoming electoral battle as a necessity for the people of Tamil Nadu, highlighting the drawbacks of the DMK administration. Goyal noted the NDA’s commitment to delivering good

•The NDA in Tamil Nadu, led by AIADMK, is conducting seat-sharing discussions for the 2026 elections to contest the ruling DMK, though specific numbers are not disclosed.

governance focused on development and outlined a vision that aims to better serve women, youth, and various sectors such as agriculture and trade.

In the context of the previous elections held in 2021, the AIADMK had contested 179 out of the 234 available seats, allocating 23 seats to the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) and 20 to the BJP, with minor parties receiving the remainder. The election concluded with the DMK, led by Chief Minister MK Stalin, securing a victory.

In Andaman and Nicobar, over 21% of voters could be removed under SIR

Port Blair, Dec 24: Nearly 21% of the electorate in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is expected to be deleted following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), with data indicating that of the 310,404 electors as of October 27, forms were collected from 246,390 (79.38%). The 64,014 remaining electors were flagged for reasons including death (9,191 electors or 2.96%), being shifted or absent (51,906 electors or 16.72%), and enrolment at multiple locations (2,917 electors or 0.94%). The enumeration phase ran from November 4 to December 18, with the qualifying date set for January 1, 2026. The Election Commission extended the timeline



twice. South Andaman district saw the highest deletions at 51,801, primarily from Sri Vijaya Puram (44,502

deletions), while Ferrargunj and Little Andaman accounted for 7,299. North and Middle Andaman recorded 8,717 deletions linked to inter-island migration and employment-related movements. The Nicobar district had the lowest deletions at 3,496, with Car Nicobar (1,401) and Nancowry and Campbell Bay together recording 2,095 deletions, attributed to lower population movement despite some connectivity issues.

Electors whose names were removed can apply for re-inclusion during the claims and objections period from December 23 to January 22, and the final electoral roll will be published post this process.

The tribunal extends the deadline for inputting Waqf property data to the UMEED site by six months

Jalna, Dec 24: The Maharashtra State Waqf Tribunal in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar has provided a six-month extension for the uploading of Waqf property data to the UMEED portal, a digital system for managing Waqf properties intended for religious and charitable purposes. This extension was granted on an interim application from the Maharashtra State Board of Waqf, following the expira-

tion of the registration deadline on December 5. The Board reported significant technical issues after attempting to engage the UMEED support team through various communications.

Out of approximately 75,000 Waqf properties, only 50,000 had been successfully uploaded despite 36,000 registered Waqf institutions in Maharashtra. The Tribunal, led by District Judge and Chairman Adil Khan

along with Member Mohd Mohiuddin Moied, stipulated that the extension would take effect once the UMEED portal is fully operational, functioning 24/7 without any technical problems. It ordered central officials to rectify the portal’s defects within ten days, asserting that it should only operate after these issues are resolved.

Additionally, the Tribunal prohibited adverse actions against mutawal-

lis of Waqf institutions related to the UMEED Act during this period. The Board indicated that if technical defects are not addressed in time, further extensions should be granted to compensate for downtime. This decision was welcomed by the Federation of Maharashtra Muslims, with calls for mutawallis to utilize the extended period efficiently once the portal functions correctly.

Locals protest after a girl was “raped, murdered” in Bhadrak, Odisha

Bhadrak, Dec 24: A 10-year-old girl was allegedly raped and murdered in the Bhadrak district of Odisha, sparking local protests. The body of the girl was discovered near a bush in Baligaon on Tuesday evening, prompting her family to file a police complaint. The complaint included accusations of rape and murder, claiming that those responsible discarded her body. Following this, locals staged a protest and blocked roads in Baligaon demanding immediate arrests.

The Superintendent of Police, Manoj Kumar Rout, reported that one suspect has been arrested in Jagatsinghpur district. The girl’s father reported her missing on Tuesday, and police are investigating the incident,



which appears to involve sexual as-

sault and murder. To maintain order, additional police forces have been deployed to the area.

Despite the escalating tensions, the situation is reportedly under control, with Chandbali SDPO Trilochan Sethi and local officials present to oversee operations. The police are also exploring claims from residents regarding the presence of unauthorized shops and illicit liquor sales in the area. SP Rout assured that strict actions would be executed to remove these illegal operations, with plans for a special drive against illegal liquor and ganja trading in the district. Local Tahsildar Bhabatosh Mallik confirmed that identified unauthorized shops will be evicted from encroached land.

The Delhi High Court is upset that air purifiers are not exempt from taxes in “emergency situations”

New Delhi, Dec 24: The Delhi High Court recently voiced dissatisfaction with authorities failing to grant tax exemptions on air purifiers given the “very poor” air quality in Delhi.

Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela mandated that the counsel consult with officials and report back by 2:30 pm. The case pertains to a public interest litigation advocating that air purifiers be designated as “medical devices” to lower their goods and services tax from 18% to 5%.

The bench highlighted the



urgent need for clean air, insisting on the necessity of providing air purifiers as a minimum action. They suggested a temporary exemption for at least a week or month, emphasizing the public health crisis caused by severe air pollution. The judges stressed that citi-

zens breathe approximately 21,000 times a day, indicating the detrimental impact of air pollution on health.

The petition, filed by advocate Kapil Madan, argued that air purifiers cannot be viewed as luxury items given the extreme emergency caused by pol-

•The bench emphasized the necessity for clean air, stating that providing purifiers is a minimal action needed during this “emergency situation.”

•It highlighted the health risks from poor air quality as citizens breathe approximately 21,000 times daily.

lution. It stated that access to clean indoor air is vital for health and survival. The imposition of the highest GST on air purifiers creates a financial barrier for many, resulting in an unreasonable burden on the population, which the petition claims is unconstitutional.

Key Government Schemes Reviewed at Sivasagar DDC Meet

Sivasagar, Dec 24: The Sukafa Conference Hall of the District Commissioner’s Office in Sivasagar hosted the District Development Committee (DDC) meeting for the months of November and December of this year on Tuesday. Heads of several government ministries attended the meeting, which was presided over by Sivasagar District Commissioner Aayush Garg. All government departments, including Panchayat & Rural Development, Agriculture, Education, Health, Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, Revenue, Public Works (Roads and Buildings), Public Health Engineering, Transport, Women and Child Development, Urban Development, Power,



Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, Fisheries, Industries and Commerce, Water Resources, Irrigation, and Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission, were thoroughly reviewed during the meeting. The district’s imple-

mentation of important government programs was also carefully evaluated. Department heads were instructed by the District Commissioner to guarantee the timely execution of departmental plans and tasks while up-

holding quality standards. In order to guarantee the successful execution of welfare-oriented programs for the public’s benefit, emphasis was also placed on enhancing interdepartmental collaboration.

2 killed in Karbi Anglong violence

West Karbi Anglong, Dec 23: Two persons were killed and at least 45 others, including 38 police personnel, injured in violence in Assam’s West Karbi Anglong district, after two groups of protesters clashed, prompting security forces to lathicharge and fire tear gas shells to disperse them.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said he is closely monitoring the situation in West Karbi Anglong. “It is deeply painful that two persons lost their lives during today’s unrest,” he said. “Additional security forces will be deployed in Kherani tomorrow to maintain peace. We are in constant

touch with all concerned to restore normalcy and resolve issues through dialogue,” the CM said. “My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. The Government will stand with all affected families and provide all necessary support,” Sarma said.

trade has changed in recent years. He noted that the country is now negotiating with clarity and confidence, moving away from hesitation seen in the past. According to him, this shift reflects a more focused and purposeful trade policy. Mein said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India’s trade strategy has become more self-assured. He added that the recent FTAs show a nation that is shap-

Seven FTAs in five years show India’s growing global reach, says Arunachal Dy CM Chowna Mein

Itanagar, Dec 24: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Monday said that India has entered a new and confident phase of trade diplomacy, pointing to the signing of seven Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) in the last five years as clear proof of the country’s growing presence in the global economy. In a post shared on social media platform X, Mein said India’s approach to

ing its own opportunities in global markets rather than waiting for them. Explaining the importance of these agreements, the Deputy Chief Minister said the FTAs are not only about reducing tariffs. He said they are meant to widen market access for Indian products, attract investments, and connect Indian industries more closely with global supply chains. He also said these agree-



ments can help Indian businesses compete better at the international level. Officials familiar with the trade policy said the focus of the FTAs has been on protecting domestic interests while also opening doors to global integration. They said the agreements aim to support manufacturing under the ‘Make in India’ programme, encourage foreign direct investment, and create new opportunities for exports and jobs.

minor girl on October 26, 2014, in the bedroom of a school quarter. The court also directed the Manipur authority to provide compensation of Rs 8 lakh to the victim from the government fund. Court Number 1 also sentenced Mayanglabam Jitan, 40, to ten years imprisonment for committing aggravated penetrative sexual assault of an 8-year-old minor in February 2019 and also recommended authorities concerned provide Rs 1.5 lakh compensation to the victim. The court also sentenced Lairenlakpam Rana, 52, to 3 years in jail under Section 366 IPC and POCSO Act for committing sexual assaults on November 5, 2016.

BJP Kisan morcha holds state executive meeting, focuses on farmers’ welfare and outreach

Shillong, Dec 24: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Kisan Morcha, Meghalaya, on Tuesday held its State Executive meeting, with discussions centred on strengthening outreach among farmers and working towards doubling farmers’ income in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision. Addressing the meeting, the State President of BJP Kisan Morcha, Meghalaya, said the organisation was actively engaging with farmers across the state to understand their issues and support them. “Today we have a State Executive meeting. In this meeting, we had a lot of discussions on how to uplift the farmers as per our Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s dreams, especially to double farmers’ income,” he said. He underlined the importance of the farming community in Meghalaya, stating, “Farmers are the backbone of our state. About 80 per cent of the population in Meghalaya depends on farming, including cultivation, horticulture, agriculture and livestock.” The State President expressed satisfaction over the wide participation at the meeting, noting that representatives from across the state attended. “We are very glad today. Members from all districts — Garo Hills, Jaintia Hills and Khasi Hills — are present here,” he said. He also outlined upcoming pro-

grammes as per the party’s national calendar, including a programme on September 25 to mark a birth anniversary observance, followed by ‘Balidan Diwas’, and the ‘Man Ki Baat’ programme scheduled for September 28. Speaking about the latter, he said, “Man Ki Baat is very unique. Our national leadership has instructed that every karyakarta should bring their own tiffin. We will sit together and have food, which also symbolises unity and an early New Year greeting.” Sharing the organisation’s political goals, he said the Kisan Morcha would work to strengthen the BJP at the grassroots level. “From our Kisan Morcha, we are trying hard and will do our level best to help the party grow, especially in rural areas. Our target for the 2028 elections is to secure around 15 to 20 MLAs,” he stated. Rejecting misconceptions about the party, he added, “People are now willing to accept the BJP. It is not just about calling BJP a Hindu party. Prime Minister’s schemes have reached interior areas — free ration, housing, and even the Jal Jeevan Mission. Because of this, people are changing their mindset.” The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment by the BJP Kisan Morcha to intensify farmer-centric programmes across Meghalaya.

Manipur court sentences 68-year-old to life imprisonment

Imphal, Dec 24: A special court in Manipur on Tuesday sentenced a 68-year-old man to life imprisonment, serving a minimum term (often 14 years), for committing sexual assault on a minor girl, an official of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) stated on Wednesday. RK Memcha, Special Judge (POCSO), Fast Track Special Court Number 1, Manipur, handed down the sentence under Section 6 of the POCSO Act to the man, who committed the sexual assault on different dates in October and November 2021, under the jurisdiction of Lamlai police station in Imphal East district. The convict committed the heinous crime against the minor, then 13 years old, resulting in the birth of a child. The victim is a relative of the convict, according to the legal dossier. The convict had been in custody from August 7, 2022, and remained so until the present, in connection with the case. He was produced before the court from Manipur Central Jail, Imphal East, for the



sentence hearing on Tuesday. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on the convict and directed the State Government to provide Rs 6 lakh to the victim from the victim compensation fund or any relevant scheme as compensation within 30 days. A fast track court in Manipur has sentenced at least four men to various quantum of punishments, the highest of which was 35 years in jail for the offenses of rape, molestation, and sexual assault

under the Indian Penal Code and Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and crimes under the Juvenile Justice Act. Special Judge (POCSO), Churachandpur on Thursday sentenced Suan Jacob, 36, convicted in the rape case of his 13-year-old daughter in November 2020, to 35 years of rigorous life imprisonment, according to the court dossiers. The court also ordered Jacob to pay a fine of Rs 10,000, failing which, he will continue to

stay in jail for 2 more years. Further, the court awarded Rs 10 lakh from the state fund as compensation to the victim directing the District Legal Services Authority to extend all necessary help in this regard. In yet another verdict, Court No 2 sentenced Arambam Robindro, 38, to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment and directed him to pay Rs 5000 as a fine for committing aggravated penetrative sexual assault on an eight-year-old

The court also sentenced Lairenlakpam Rana, 52, to 3 years in jail under Section 366 IPC and POCSO Act for committing sexual assaults on November 5, 2016. The court also sentenced Lairenlakpam Rana, 52, to 3 years in jail under Section 366 IPC and POCSO Act for committing sexual assaults on November 5, 2016. Salam Imocha, Judge of the Fast Track Special Court number 1 Manipur on Friday announced the sentence against convict Nongthombam Ramesh, 65, of Imphal West district.

Manipur Police Crack Down, arrest PLA Cadre with Arms seizure

Manipur Police and security personnel arrested an extortionist and uncovered a significant cache of weapons and explosives during several operations across the state.

Imphal, Dec 24: On Monday, Manipur Police and security personnel conducted several operations throughout the state, which resulted in the arrest of an extortionist and the discovery of a sizable stockpile of weapons and explosives. Two homemade mortars and three WT sets were found by security officers from the Konaitong and Pelyang hill range under the Machi police station in the Tengnoupal district, according to a statement from Manipur Police. Security forces arrested active RPF/PLA cadres in Imphal West District during intelligence-based cordon and search operations. Nongmaithem Narendra Meitei, an active RPF/PLA cadre extortionist, was taken from his home by the police at the Lamphel police station in the Imphal West area. Two cell phones containing two SIM cards and an Aadhaar card were taken from him. According to the release, security forces detained Kshetrimayum Nilakanta Singh, an active



RPF/PLA cadre, and found two cell phones and a driver’s license. Along with the concerned District SsPs and Petroleum Dealers Association, Manipur, the police also convened a meeting at the police headquarters, presided over by Addl DGP (L&O), to examine the security measures currently in place. Security plans for Retail Outlets (RO) will be examined, the Po-

lice Department has promised. Vetting all RO staff is one of the additional security steps that must be implemented. To protect ROs, mobile police units will be stationed in key areas. To prevent threats to ROs of petroleum products, the anti-extortion mechanism would be strengthened. Two people have been arrested by the Manipur Police for extortion at a gas station in recent

days. The announcement also stated that more research is ongoing. Furthermore, it has been guaranteed that 111 cars transporting necessities would be able to travel along NH-37. To guarantee unrestricted and secure vehicle mobility, strict security measures are implemented in all susceptible areas, and a security convoy is supplied in sensitive areas.

Assam-Based Minority Body Demands Security for Hindus in Bangladesh

Mangaldai, Dec 24: More than a hundred office bearers and members of the All Assam Garia-Mariya-Deshi Jatiyo Parishad’s Darrang District Committee participated in a powerful demonstration against the recent violent situation in Bangladesh on Monday evening at 5 p.m. at Karim Chowk in Mangaldai town, the district headquarters of Darrang. The demonstrators sought protection for the lives and property of non-Muslim minorities in Bangladesh and vehemently denounced the brutal deed of hardline Jihadists who killed innocent Hindu youth Dipu Chandra Das by burning him alive. Dr. Sahir Bhuyan, Central Chief Advisor of the All Assam Garia-Mariya-Deshi National Council, spearheaded the demonstration. He vehemently denounced the ruthless killing of the defenseless young Dipu Das and blamed the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Yunus administration for the horrible act. He insisted that Yunus’s Peace

Prize be revoked by the international Nobel Prize administration, as was done with former Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Additionally, he vehemently denounced the threats made by Jihadist-fundamentalist groups to split Assam and the Northeast as a whole, and he insisted that India employ military force if required to drive out and eradicate these radicals. The demonstrators vehemently objected to Dr. Muhammad Yunus’s gesture of bowing before fundamentalists and calling the deceased Jihadist leader Nihal Othman Hadi a “martyr.” They urged Yunus to declare Dipu Chandra Das a martyr right away and demonstrate his manhood if he had the guts. The demonstrators tore his picture and set it on fire while calling for the overthrow of the Yunus administration. In front of the picture of victim Dipu Chandra Das, they also paid respect and lit candles.

Suspected Bangladeshi Citizen Detained by Sribhumi Residents

Sribhumi, Dec 24: There was tension in Sribhumi on Tuesday night after a suspected Bangladeshi national who had been acting strangely in the region was arrested by residents, amid an increase in incidents of atrocities against minorities in Bangladesh. On Gach Kalibori Road, the arrest took place. Residents reportedly noticed an unfamiliar person roaming about the neighborhood under strange conditions. The man was arrested and the incident reported to the police after the locals, who were suspicious of him, questioned him about his whereabouts. The individual identified himself as Kamrul Islam and said he was from Barishal, Bangladesh, during the initial investigation. Suspicion over his identity and intentions was further height-

ened when Bangladeshi currency was found in his possession. Law enforcement officers quickly arrived at the scene after learning of this and took the person into custody. He was then brought to the police station for additional investigation and confirmation. In order to ascertain how he entered the area and whether any laws pertaining to immigration, security, or other matters have been broken, the relevant authorities have begun an inquiry. Residents of Sribhumi are concerned about this matter, particularly in light of the growing sensitivity around border crossings. In order to prevent people from entering the nation covertly, the locals have demanded increased border security and vigilance.

BUSINESS

‘Google Maps’ thieves arrested: Used navigation app as tool scout targets

New Delhi: A gang of burglars, who used modern technology to plan an interstate crime spree, has been dismantled by police in Jharkhand. The group, consisting of three men from Bihar, reportedly used Google Maps to scout for wealthy residential targets across Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Bihar. The arrests follow a series of daring break-ins that had local authorities on high alert. According to East Singhbhum Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Piyush Pandey, the gang moved away from traditional “casing” methods such as physical reconnaissance, in favour of digital tools. The thieves may have used the app’s satellite imagery and street-view features to virtually “walk” through affluent neighbourhoods from their mobile phones. By zooming in on high-resolution photos, they could have identified large houses with weak boundary walls or secluded entry



points, effectively scouting targets from hundreds of miles away without ever drawing suspicion from neighbours.

After the homeowner, Rishabh Kumar, lodged a formal complaint, a special investigation team was formed. By combining CCTV footage with tech-

nical intelligence and mobile tracking, the police successfully traced the suspects back to Patna. The arrested men have been identified as Vikas Kumar (27), Raju Kumar (49), and Mohamad Irfan (26). During the raid, officers recovered a firearm.

Sensex at 98,500, Nifty 29,500 in 2026
Murphy’s law played out in 2025

New Delhi: “Anything that can go wrong will go wrong,” as Murphy’s Law goes. ICICI Direct said Indian equities in 2025 reflected this classic case, as a series of unforeseen developments weighed on market performance. The brokerage noted that despite a favourable long-term backdrop, equities delivered single-digit returns during the year amid geopolitical tensions in the first half, tariff-related disruptions and a prolonged lack of resolution on key global issues. It added that these factors heightened economic anxiety and diverted liquidity towards other equity markets and asset classes, particularly as Indian markets continued to trade at relatively rich valuations ahead of a meaningful revival in corporate earnings.

ICICI Direct said domestic equities underperformed global equities and



precious metals such as gold and silver in 2025, but called the outlook as constructive with corporate earnings approaching a recovery phase. Rolling forward its valuation framework and introducing FY28 estimates, the brokerage said it valued the Nifty at

29,500, based on a 21 times price-to-earnings multiple on FY28 earnings. The corresponding target for the Sensex is pegged at 98,500. ICICI Direct expects the market to deliver healthy double-digit returns over the next 12 months.

Groww, India’s answer to Robinhood Jefferies initiates stock coverage with Buy

New Delhi: Jefferies initiated coverage on Billionbrains Garage Ventures Ltd (Groww) with a ‘Buy’ rating, likening the platform’s rapid rise and product-led growth strategy to US trading app Robinhood. Despite launching only in FY21, Groww has already emerged as India’s largest broker by active clients, commanding a 26 per cent market share, well ahead of peers, the foreign brokerage said. Jefferies said Groww has multiple levers to deliver a 35 per cent earnings growth annually over FY26-28, driven by steady expansion in its core broking franchise, sharp scale-up in newer businesses and a meaningful margin uplift. Jefferies set a price target of Rs 180, valuing the stock at 33 times estimated December 2027 earnings per share (EPS), representing about a 15 per cent discount to Robinhood.

“Groww trades at 25x FY27e adj. EBITDA, a 50 per cent discount to Robinhood despite better growth. We think the discount is a function of higher regulatory risk to earnings in India relative to the US. Nonetheless, Robinhood has paid multiple fines to SEC in the last five years, with the

company paying \$45mn in January 2025. We expect the discount to narrow as Groww diversifies its revenues away from derivatives through scale up of MTF, wealth management and commodities,” it said. Jefferies attributed Groww’s market-share gains to its strong mutual fund funnel, intuitive user interface and powerful word-of-mouth adoption. It expected the broking business to grow at a 19 per cent CAGR, aided by improving client vintage and rising wallet share. Drawing parallels with Robinhood, Jefferies highlighted Groww’s high product velocity as a key differentiator. Revenue is forecast to grow at a 29 per cent CAGR over FY26-28, supported by a sharp increase in client assets and cross-selling opportunities. The brokerage noted that client assets has risen 6-11 times over the past three years, while Groww expanded into margin trading, commodities, bonds, wealth management and loans against securities. Robinhood has expanded into multiple products besides investments including credit cards, retirement accounts and crypt wallets. Hence, we expect Groww to expand its products,

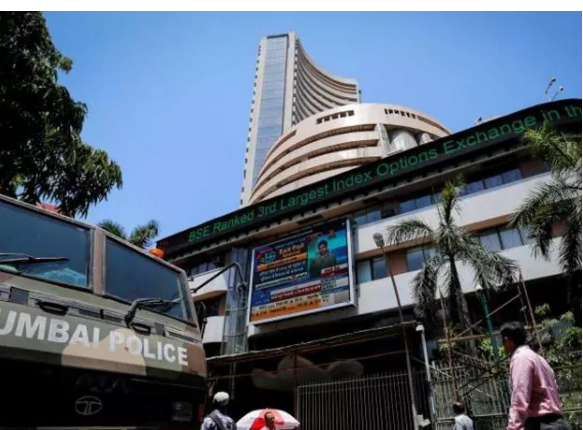


services & features as well. We see unlisted shares, distribution of insurance savings products, credit cards & subscription based advisory models as key opportunities. While life insurance savings, unlisted shares & credit cards

could take time, subscription based advisory model could happen sooner considering Groww’s growing share of affluent clients (assets >Rs2.5mn) who may need more support,” Jefferies said.

Sensex jumps 447 pts, Nifty above 25,950; will rally

New Delhi: Domestic equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty snapped their four-day losing streak to close higher on Friday as upbeat global cues and a softer-than-anticipated U.S. inflation print lifted investor sentiment. At closing bell, the Sensex rose 447.55 points, or 0.53%, to settle at 84,929.36, while the Nifty closed 150.85 points or 0.58% higher to finish at 25,966.40. Vatsal Bhuva, Technical Analyst at LKP Securities, said that the weekly chart shows the formation of a doji candlestick, reflecting growing indecision among market participants and a lack of clear directional conviction. Adding, “In Friday’s session, the index once again failed to close above its 10-day SMA, keeping short-term sentiment cautious.” Bharat Electronics (BEL) emerged as top gainer on the Sensex, gaining 2.38% to Rs 392.80.



Tata Motors PV followed with a 2.36% rise, while Power Grid Corporation of India, Reliance Industries (RIL), Asian Paints and Bajaj Finserv Cement climbed 2.25%, 1.39%, 1.09% and 0.97%, respectively. Five stocks, namely RIL, HDFC Bank, L&T, BEL and Power Grid, contributed heavily to the Sensex’s gain. Among sectoral indices, the BSE Auto index climbed 1.24% to close at

61,533.18, while the BSE Capital Goods also gained 1.65% to settle at 66,534.02. Shares of Shriram Finance rallied sharply to a fresh all-time high of Rs 914.10 after the NBFC confirmed a strategic investment by Japan’s MUFG Bank. The global banking major will pick up a 20 per cent stake in the company. “index continues to stay below its short-term moving averages. A decisive breakout above 59,500.

Adani to invest Rs 1 lakh crore in airportseyes aggressive bids

New Delhi: Adani Enterprises plans to aggressively bid for 11 airports that the federal government plans to lease to the private sector, as part of the company’s \$11 billion expansion strategy for airport infrastructure over the next five years. The Adani Group, through its airport arm Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL), is India’s largest airport infrastructure operator. It controls a significant share of India’s air traffic, accounting for roughly 23 per cent of passenger movements and about 33 per cent of cargo traffic nationwide. The Indian government is leasing out government-owned airports for long periods to private players while incentivising building new ones. It plans to have 350 to 400 airports by 2047 from 163 currently. Earlier this year, New Delhi outlined plans to lease out 11 airports, including at Amritsar and Varanasi. Adani Airports manages seven airports across India and is set to op-



erationalise the first airport it has built from scratch - a new airport near Mumbai - this month. Navi Mumbai International Airport will become the latest addition to the Adani Group’s expanding airport portfolio, further strengthening its presence in India’s aviation infrastructure. The airport, being developed by Navi Mumbai a capacity to handle 20 million passengers annually, with plans to scale up to 90 million passengers over time, easing capacity constraints at Mumbai’s existing airport and supporting long-term growth in the region’s air traffic. Adani group had acquired the Mumbai airport

from GVK Group. Beside the two airports at Mumbai, Adani Group operates six other airports at Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram, Jaipur and Mangaluru.

This portfolio includes a mix of metro and regional airports, with the group also planning to bid aggressively for the next round of airport privatisations. “As a staunch believer, bullish believer in this industry, we would be 100 per cent very aggressive in the next round of bidding for all 11 (airports),” he said. In the previous round of privatisation in 2019, Adani Group won six airports - Ahmedabad, Lucknow

Paytm Cloud Technologies to launch new subsidiaries in Indonesia and UAE

Mumbai: Paytm Cloud Technologies Limited (PCTL), a wholly owned subsidiary of One 97 Communications Limited, has approved the setting up of two new companies in Indonesia and Luxembourg. This move is part of the company’s plan to expand and offer its payment and financial services technology in new international markets. The Board also approved the creation of Paytm Arab Payments L.L.C. (“PAPL”), a company incorporated by PCTL on April 30, 2025, to expand Paytm’s payment services in the UAE. At a recent meeting, the Board agreed to issue 76,862 shares of PAPL at AED 100 each to Abbar Global Opportunities Holdings Limited (“AGOHL”), a company based in Abu Dhabi.

AGOHL is a special purpose company promoted by Mr. Mohamed Ali Rashed Alabbar, founder of Emaar Properties, known for landmark projects such as the Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall. He also co-founded Noon and is associated with several other businesses, including Americana Restaurants and Zand Bank. PCTL is also planning to set up a company in Indonesia to expand Paytm’s payment technology presence in the country. This



expansion will involve partnerships, investments, and obtaining the necessary local licences. The company has stated that no government approval is required to incorporate this entity. The initial investment in the Indonesia company will be up to ₹25 crore, to be infused in one or more tranches. PCTL will wholly own this new company through

its subsidiaries. The share agreement with AGOHL was signed on December 22, 2025, and the transaction is expected to be completed by February 28, 2026. PAPL will receive approximately AED 7,686,200 (Seven million six hundred eighty-six thousand two hundred dirhams) from AGOHL towards the share subscription.

Google will start accepting green card applications again in 2026, but there are requirements

New Delhi: The Mountain View tech giant, Google, has assured employees to file more green card cases as per eligibility. The company has said that it will start the Program Electronic Review Management (PERM) process in Q1 of 2026, which is the first and mandatory step to secure a U.S. green card. According to a Business Insider report, Google’s December memo has highlighted that an outside lawyer will get in touch with the eligible employees to get started with the process for permanent residency in the US. The report states tech companies often sponsor PERM so that employees working on a work visa or H-1 B status can get a green card, which gives them the liberty to live and work permanently in the US. However, Google



will not file PERM applications for all employees, but only employees who meet specific requirements.

PERM eligibility for Google employees According to Business Insider’s report, Google’s internal memos reviewed in December 2025 highlighted employee eligibility

criteria for the PERM application process. In the memo, the company said that employees on H-1 B status or any work visa must hold at least a Moderate Impact (MI) rating or higher in annual performance reviews. In addition, employees with Level 3 roles or below are less like-

ly to meet the eligibility threshold for sponsorship. Google employees must be based in a Google office, and remote Googlers must agree to relocate to the office to become PERM eligible. In addition, specific roles must consist of a formal degree and prior work experience to meet standard Department of Labour requirements. Lastly, employees must remain in good standing with the company to be considered. This means they should not have any disciplinary actions or policy violations filed, and they must maintain a positive employment status. It is also reported that Google has filed PERM for a small number of employees this year, and it is continuing to do so next year as well, as per the above-mentioned requirements.

Govt to tap e-tailers, online sources for price data in new CPI series

New Delhi: The government proposes to include online sources as well as e-commerce platforms to compute retail inflation in a bid to substantially improve reliability, accuracy, and overall quality of the consumer price index (CPI). Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is in the process of revising the base years for computing CPI, Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The new series of CPI (consumer price index-based inflation) with base year (2024=100) data is scheduled to be released on February 12, 2026. The data on National Accounts with financial year 2022-23 as base year is scheduled to be re-

leased on February 27, 2026, while the new series of IIP data with base year 2022-23 will be released on May 28. MoSPI on Tuesday organised a pre-release consultative workshop on base revision of CPI, GDP and IIP. On inclusion of new data sources in CPI, the ministry said in addition to the data collected from physical outlets as being done in the current series, prices would also be obtained from e-commerce platforms in 12 selected cities having a population of more than 25 lakh. Efforts will also be made to procure administrative data in coordination with railways for rail fares, petroleum ministry for fuel prices, and postal department for postal tariffs.

Bhavna Ajwani enters Anupamaa as Prerna

Mumbai: Anupamaa is set to enter an exciting chapter. The makers introduced a new character to stir major drama. The latest promo unveiled Prerna, Rajni's daughter, making a grand entry to the show.

With her growing interest in Prem and a possible bond with Anupama, Bhavna Ajwani's Prerna is expected to shake things up in the show. The promo introduced Bhavna Ajwani's entry into the show in the role of Prerna, the daughter of Rajni. Prerna is expected to play a negative character in the show, making things difficult for the rest of the characters. The promo showed Prerna openly expressing her interest in Rahi's husband, Prem. Upon seeing him, Prerna said, "Jo cheez mujhe achi lagti hai, woh meri hoti hai." The promo also hinted at a possible bond between Prerna and Anupama, which could further fuel Rahi's jealousy and add more drama to the story. Bhavna Ajwani is an aspiring actress who is best known for her role in Tu Juliet Jatt Di.

Mohitt Maalik wraps Mirzapur Jaisalmer shoot; production moves to Mumbai

Mumbai: Mohitt Maalik, who made a striking Bollywood debut with Azaad, recently joined the cast of one of the most anticipated projects, Mirzapur: The Film. The actor took to his social media to announce the same and share his excitement about being a part of one of the biggest franchises.

Now, the actor has recently wrapped his intense Jaisalmer schedule, reportedly filled with high-octane action sequences, and is now gearing up for the Mumbai shoot. Sharing a behind-the-scenes glimpse on Instagram, Mohitt wrote, "Jaisalmer wrapped. Mumbai next. Kahani aur gehri hogi. #MirzapurTheFilm" Sharing his excitement and happiness on social media, Mohitt Maalik posted a warm note he received from the producers and wrote, "Excited to join the world of Mirzapur! Thank you to the team and producers for this warm welcome on board. Grateful and looking forward to this journey."

The handwritten welcome note sent by Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar reads, "Dear Mohit, we are excited to have you on the team for



Mirzapur. Can't wait to see the magic you bring to the screen. Best wishes, Ritesh and Farhan." Alongside Mirzapur, Mohit is also set to return to television. He will be seen in a mythological role as Lord Shiva in Sony TV's upcoming show Ganesh Kartikey. This project is completely different from his film, proving once again that Mohit is not afraid to experiment and take risks. Mirzapur: The Film will see the return of fan-favorite cast members like Pankaj Tripathi (Kaleen Bhaiya) and Ali Fazal (Guddu Pandit), Divyenndu (Munna Bhaiya), Abhishek Banerjee (Com-

pounder), Rasika Dugal (Beena Tripathi), Shweta Tripathi (Golu Gupta), promising a larger-than-life cinematic experience. Adding to the cast is Jitendra Kumar, who will be replacing Vikrant Massey in Mirzapur: The Film, as well as Ravi Kishan and Mohit Malik in significant roles. Meanwhile, yesterday, Sonal Chauhan also confirmed that she has joined the cast of the film.

Backed by Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment, it is a cinematic adaptation of the popular Prime Video series and will bring back the original cast, except Vikrant

Massey. The big-screen adaptation is slated for a 2026 theatrical release across India before making its way to OTT platforms. The production machinery is now shifting from the deserts of Rajasthan to the bustling film studios and on-location sites of Mumbai. This major transition suggests the film will move from showcasing the territorial disputes of the heartland to navigating the more corporate or high-stakes urban power centers, likely involving the characters of Kaleen Bhaiyya (Pankaj Tripathi) and Guddu Pandit (Ali Fazal) in new, dangerous turf wars.

Akshaye Khanna Drops Out of Drishyam 3 Over Salary Dispute

Mumbai: Akshaye Khanna, who has been riding high on the massive success of Dhurandhar, is reportedly no longer associated with Drishyam 3. According to a report by Bollywood Machine, the actor has walked out of the much-anticipated sequel due to a combination of monetary and creative differences with the makers.

The report claims that Akshaye demanded a substantial hike in his remuneration following the phenomenal box office performance of Dhurandhar. In addition to the financial aspect, the actor also allegedly sought significant changes to his on-screen look for Drishyam 3. These demands are said to have led to disagreements, eventually prompting him to step away from the project. That said, all may not be lost for fans of the franchise. Insiders suggest that negotiations between Akshaye Khanna and the makers are still ongoing, and no official confirmation has been made regarding his exit. Whether the actor returns to the project or the makers move forward with a replacement remains uncertain at this stage. The reported development



comes at a time when Akshaye Khanna is enjoying one of the biggest successes of his career. Aditya Dhar's Dhurandhar, starring Ranveer Singh and Akshaye Khanna, continues to dominate the box office nearly three weeks after its release. While the film witnessed a minor dip in collections on Day 18, it quickly bounced back and achieved a major milestone on Day 19. According to trade website Sacnilk, Dhurandhar collected an estimated Rs 17.25 crore net in India on Tuesday. With this, the film's total Hindi net collection has climbed to approximately Rs 590 crore. This achievement helped Dhurandhar surpass the Hindi box office collections of Shah Rukh Khan's 2023 blockbuster Jawan, which had ended its Hindi

run at Rs 582.31 crore. However, Jawan's overall domestic net collection across all languages remains higher at Rs 640.25 crore. The spy action thriller opened to thunderous numbers and has maintained a strong grip at the box office since its release. Dhurandhar earned an impressive Rs 207.25 crore in its first week alone. By the end of its second week, the film had already amassed Rs 253.25 crore net, highlighting its widespread appeal across multiplexes and single-screen theatres alike. With Dhurandhar continuing its dream run and speculation swirling around Drishyam 3, all eyes are now on Akshaye Khanna's next move. An official announcement from the actor or the filmmakers is awaited to bring clarity to the situation.

Ranbir's Animal gets Japan release two years later

Mumbai: The makers of director Sandeep Reddy Vanga's immensely popular film 'Animal', featuring actors Ranbir Kapoor, Rashmika Mandanna and Bobby Deol in the lead, on Wednesday announced that the film would release in Japan on February 13 next year.

Taking to its X timeline, Bhadrakali Pictures, the production house that made the film, wrote, "Kono otoko wa Darenimo Tomerarenai. The most talked-about, debated, and unforgettable cinematic experience is coming to Japan. Animal releases in Japanese theatres on February 13, 2026. It may be recalled that only at the beginning of this month, Bollywood superstar Anil Kapoor and director Sandeep Reddy Vanga had celebrated the second anniversary of the film.

The actor and the director marked the milestone with emotional posts and stories on their social media accounts. Anil shared

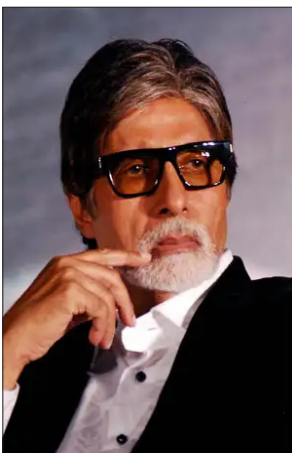


a series of on-set pictures and wrote, "Two years of a film that didn't just release, it erupted #2yearsofAnimal". The director of the movie, Sandeep Reddy Vanga, echoed the sentiment with a powerful still of Ranbir Kapoor in full intensity and captioned it as "Two years for 'ANIMAL'." Anil Kapoor shared various clips of the movie and also a BTS of the same. From preparing for scenes and interacting with director Sandeep Reddy Vanga to sitting in character as Balbir Singh, Anil shared a collage of all the pictures.

Amitabh Bachchan Praises Kartik Aaryan; Discusses Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety

Mumbai: Kartik Aaryan's walking scene from Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety has once again been in the talks, especially due to Amitabh Bachchan. This iconic moment has found renewed appreciation among audiences. Amitabh recently revisited the scene during a discussion on the set of Kaun Banega Crorepati, highlighting the subtle strength of Kartik's nuanced performance and highlighting why the moment continues to impress viewers years later.

Recalling the film, Amitabh Bachchan mentioned a particular shot that left a lasting impression on him — the concluding scene where Kartik's character, rather than speaking, opts for silence and departs, allowing the emotion to convey its own message. Elaborating on this moment, Amitabh stated, "Main aapko bataun, mujhe aapka kaunsa shot yaad hai. Aap last shot mein ekdum serious hokar khade hote ho. Bas aapko 'na' bolna hota hai. Par aap 'na' nahi bolte. Aap chup-chaap chal kar aate ho... aur ni-



kal jaate ho." The megastar termed the performance as "tremendous," praising the restraint and impact of the scene. This interaction resonated deeply with audiences, many of whom re-watched the scene online and praised its emotional depth. In an industry frequently characterized by loud climaxes and theatrical monologues, this particular moment served as a reminder that silence, when used effectively, can leave a lasting impact.

As Kartik Aaryan basks in this special praise from



one of Indian cinema's most respected figures, the actor is now preparing for his upcoming cinematic release, Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri, scheduled for a Christmas release, hence adding to the anticipation for the festive box-office period. The film is directed by Sameer Vidwans, who worked with Kartik in Satyaprem Ki Katha. Apart from Kartik, the film also stars Ananya Panday in the lead role along with Jackie Shroff, Neena Gupta, Tiku Talsania and Aruna Irani in key roles.

Hindustani Bhau Fires Back at Jaya Bachchan's Paparazzi Remark



Mumbai: Sometimes, celebrities make remarks that spark public uproar, and something similar happened recently. Jaya Bachchan's comment about paparazzi drew the ire of the photographer community. Reacting to her statement, Hindustani Bhau, a popular content creator, shared his views at a recent event.

Hindustani Bhau was recently spotted at an event, where he was asked about Jaya Bachchan's remarks on paparazzi. Clearly upset, the Bigg Boss 13 contestant fired back, saying that Jaya Bachchan,

who wears a saree worth just Rs 150, has the audacity to call photographers poor and judge their clothes. He added, "Arey, kayeko jaata hai aise logon ke peeche, jahan pe aapko izzat nahi milti hai?" Inko inki aukaat malum padegi jab aap inko dikhana band karoge." Users reacted to Bhau's statement. Someone commented, "Absolutely right." Another one added, "Sahi baat hai, jahan izzat nahi hai, wahan jaana hi nahi chahiye." An individual wrote, "Sahi baat bole. Kisi mein toh himmat hai stand lene ke liye." Another

one remarked, "Absolutely right. Khud itni kaabiliyat rakho, sabse pehle khud ki respect karo. Kisi ke peeche bhagne ka nahi, izzat se milte hain toh theek, nahi toh mat milo...that's it."

Earlier this month, Jaya Bachchan, in a candid conversation with Barkha Dutt at the We The Women event, spoke about her relationship with the media. She revealed that while her relationship with the media is based on respect, her relationship with the paparazzi is non-existent. She even questioned, "Who are these people?" Jaya mentioned that her father was a journalist, and she holds immense respect for the media. However, her views on paparazzi were far from respectful. The statement that sparked outrage came when she said, "Yeh jo bahar gande, tight pants pehenke, hath mein mobile lekar... they think that just because they have a mobile they can take your picture and say whatever they want." She also questioned their education and background. This comment led to widespread criticism. Many celebrities and social media personalities like Hindustani Bhau called out the veteran actress for her classist remarks.

Chris Evans Confirmed as Steve Rogers in Avengers: Doomsday Teaser

Agency: Marvel Studios has officially set the internet ablaze with the release of the first teaser for the highly anticipated Avengers: Doomsday. In a move that few saw coming, the teaser confirms the monumental return of Chris Evans to the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) as Steve Rogers, the original Captain America.

The short clip, which released in theatres alongside Avatar: Fire and Ash, offers a grounded and emotional look at the legendary hero. In the footage, Steve Rogers is seen riding a motorcycle through a quiet, suburban setting, eventually pulling up to a 1950s-style house. The scene feels like a direct continuation of his ending in



Avengers: Endgame, where he chose to stay in the past to live a full life with Peggy Carter. In an emotional moment, Steve is shown looking at his old Captain America suit before putting it away, seemingly choosing his domestic life over his superhero duties. However, the biggest surprise comes when he is shown holding

a newborn baby, hinting at a new chapter for the character as a father. The teaser concludes with the familiar text, "Steve Rogers will return for Avengers: Doomsday," followed by a ticking countdown clock leading to the film's release on December 18, 2026.

This is not the only major return keeping fans on their

toes. While Chris Evans is back as the Star-Spangled Avenger, Robert Downey Jr. is also returning to the franchise, but with a massive twist. Instead of playing Iron Man, Downey Jr. will play the film's main antagonist, Doctor Doom. Apart from these stars, Chris Hemsworth is also confirmed to return as Thor, further solidifying the reunion of the MCU's "Big Three." Directed by the Russo Brothers, Avengers: Doomsday is shaping up to be a massive crossover event. With the return of fan-favorite veterans and the introduction of a new, dangerous threat, the road to December 2026 promises plenty of excitement for Marvel fans worldwide.

Priyanka Chopra Says She Scolds Daughter Malti Marie In Hindi

Agency: Priyanka Chopra proved that, at heart, she is just like any other desi mother. During her recent appearance on The Great Indian Kapil Show, she discussed how her Indianness comes out when she scolds her three-year-old daughter, Malti Marie Chopra Jonas. When Kapil Sharma asked what language she uses to scold her daughter, the actress shared a hilarious detail, leaving everyone laughing.

In the episode, the comedian-turned-actor said, "Maa jo hoti hai, jab uska baccha sharaarat karta hai to usko andar se apni matrabhasha hi nikalti hai (When a child misbehaves, a mother usually scolds them in her mother tongue)." He then asked Priyanka, "Hum ye jaanna chahte hai Priyanka Chopra, unki beti jab sharaarat karti hai toh aapke andar se kaun si bhasha nikalti hai us samay (We want to ask Priyanka Chopra, when your daugh-



ter is being naughty, what language comes out of you at that moment)?" Responding with honesty and humour, the 43-year-old actress revealed that whenever she scolds Malti, her thoughts automatically shift to Hindi. "Meri soch Hindi mein hoti hai lekin usko zyada Hindi samajh mein nahi aati hai aur wo meri galti hai kyunki main bolna bhul jaati hun kabhi kabhi usse lekin nikalti Hindi mein hi hai (My thoughts are in Hindi, but she doesn't understand Hindi that well, and that is my fault because sometimes I forget to speak it with her. But when it comes out, it comes out in Hindi)." The heartwarming anecdote about the Hindi scolding resonated instantly with South Asian parents worldwide, many of whom rely on their mother tongue to impart a sense of authority and cultural connection that English often cannot replicate.

Bharti meets Kaju after two days

Mumbai: Bharti Singh, who welcomed her second baby boy on December 19, shared through a vlog that she got her newborn in her arms two days after giving birth. In the video posted on her YouTube channel, LOL (Life of Limbachiyya's), which she runs with her husband, Haarsh Limbachiyya, the comedian and television host gave her fans the first glimpse of her baby boy, Kaju.

In the vlog posted on Tuesday, December 23, Bharti informed that she was still in the hospital, as her newborn son was kept under observation for routine check-ups as a precaution. At one point, a nurse was seen bringing her baby boy to her hospital. The comedian captured the moment and became visibly emotional as she held her



son in her arms. With tears in her eyes, she said, "So, finally Kaju is here. Haye kitna pyaara hai. Guys, abhi thode der pehle Gola and Haarsh ghar gaye hain. Agar ye thode der pehle aajata toh woh bhi mile (Oh, he is so adorable. Gola and Haarsh left for home just a while back. If he had come a little earlier, they would have met him too)." She kissed her baby boy and shared how overwhelming it felt to finally have him in her arms after the long wait.

Bharti continued, "Finally, ye mere paas aa chuka hai. Bahot hi sundar, pyaara aur healthy baby hai, ekdum Gole ki tarah (Finally, he is with me now. He is very beautiful, cute, and a healthy baby, just like Gola)." She mentioned that she is not sure who he resembles, but promised that she would reveal her son's face pretty soon. The comedian added, "Finally, mera kaju mere haanth mein hai. Ganpati Bappa Morya, khush rahe humesha healthy rahe, do din baad baccha mila hai yaar (Finally, my Kaju is in my hands. Ganpati Bappa Morya. May he always stay happy and healthy. I got to hold my baby after two days)." The vlog received love from her fans, who flooded the comments with congratulatory messages for the family.

As the train pulls out of Inverness Station, bound for the utmost reaches of the Scottish Highlands, a familiar thrill tingles through my fingers. Having once called the area home during four summer work seasons, I still feel an unshakable connection to this remote, untamed scenery. And now, at last, I have returned to unite two of my great passions – the romance of rail travel and the peaty moorlands of northern Scotland – in one journey. It’s 07:00 and I’m on the Far North Line that stretches from Inverness to Thurso and Wick at the very tip of mainland Britain. Covering 168 miles and taking around four hours, it’s the northernmost railway in Scotland, cutting through the Flow Country; a blanket peat covering much of the northern Highlands. Studded with bog pools and home to a vast array of unique flora and fauna, the Flow Country is the largest and most intact peat system in the world. In 2024, it was named the world’s first and only peatland Unesco World Heritage Site. But, for me, the Flow Country’s true appeal is its ethereal remoteness. The sun has blanketed the Highlands for most of my visit, but now, the ground is covered with a dusting of frost that twinkles lightly in the early morning glow. As the train chugs past the village of Canon Bridge and the quaint port town Invergordon, the landscape stays gentle, with hills and farmland rolling past my window. There’s no convivial chatter; an early morning start in northern Scotland means people silently clutching their takeaway coffee cups, perhaps preparing mentally for the day ahead. Gazing out of the window, I see a train passing, heading to Inverness. I am going in the opposite direction, deeper into the Highlands, where hurry always seems to fade away. The Far North Line was built in stages in the late 19th Century, driven by a more pragmatic goal than my quest for remote landscapes. The tracks were created to boost trade, particularly in fishing and agriculture. The first terminus, Dingwall, opened in 1862, followed by Invergordon the next year. Golspie was reached in 1868, Helmsdale three years later, and finally, Thurso and Wick in 1874. However, the line’s creation was not without its struggles. Harsh weather, tricky terrain and financial difficulties threatened its completion. Enter the third Duke of Sutherland. A passionate railway enthusiast, the duke had once completed an apprenticeship with the London and North Western Railway to better understand the workings of steam locomotives, writes Michael William in his book, *On the Slow Train Again*. The Duke was eager to build a railway that, conveniently, would run close to his doorstep, Dunrobin Castle. On 20 June 1870, an Act of Parliament granted him permission to extend the line from Golspie to Brora and on to Helmsdale. But construction had already



begun in anticipation, and by 1 November that year, the Dunrobin-to-Helmsdale section was operational. Today, Dunrobin Castle Station is one of the Far North Line’s most enchanting stops. Designed in 1902 by L Bisset, its Alpine cottage-like architecture evokes scenes from a Grimm Brothers fairy tale. But on my journey, the train swishes past the station, a humble request stop where passengers press a button should they wish to board. Soon after Dunrobin, the train reaches the seaside. The 10 miles between Brora and Helmsdale are among the journey’s most scenic. I see waves crashing against the shoreline’s jagged black stones, sheep grazing on the green fields and a man with two border collies on their morning walk. Then, after Helmsdale, the tracks turn inland, deeper into the Highlands. We are now approaching the Flow Country. The blanket bog covers 1,544 sq m, about 2.5 times bigger than the metropolitan area of London. When it was inscribed by Unesco, it joined other natural

marvels like Australia’s Great Barrier Reef and the Galápagos islands on the Unesco list because, as the organisation states, it’s “home to a distinct combination of bird species and displays a remarkable diversity of features not found anywhere else on Earth”. Earlier that week, I met with Dr Roxane Andersen, a professor of Peatland Science at the University of the Highlands and Islands, in the village of Lochinver, to discuss the landscape and its recently acquired Unesco status. As someone who has been studying the area for more than a decade and was closely involved in securing its World Heritage status, Andersen knows the bogland through and through. It is a land of striking contrasts – hauntingly beautiful, even mysterious at times, stretching from the hills of the west coast to the gentler terrain of the east. Moreover, this vast bogland plays an indispensable ecological role. “Like all peatlands, the Flow Country plays a critical role in regulating the Earth’s climate because it slowly but steadily takes carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and stores it as dead vegetation, or peat, for millennia. In doing so, it cools the climate,” said Andersen. Along



the Far North Line, Forsinard is the best stop to explore this unique landscape. Here, the old train station serves as Fors-



inard Flows Visitor Centre, open from April to October. From the train station, I stroll the 1 mile Dubh Lochan Trail along a wooden platform to the Flows Lookout Tower, which is open year-round. The platform is dotted with information posts about the landscape, from the trees that used to grow here to the workings of the bog’s pool systems. “There are places where one can actually walk for tens of kilometres in one direction without seeing another person, without crossing a road,” said Graham Thompson, a local resident and tour guide. “It truly is magnificent to still be able to experience this in the UK.” Reaching the wooden two-storey lookout tower, I remember Thompson’s words; indeed, there is no one around but relentless wind and an occasional gust of drizzle to keep me company. I climb the tower and take in the view. The brown

peat dotted with dark pools of water extends over the horizon. In its bleakness, the landscape has a strong impact. Here, amidst the bog and water, the creatures that thrive – insects, birds and the occasional mammal such as otters and red deer – form a delicate balance that makes this place truly one of a kind. “It is Britain’s last remaining wilderness,” Thompson told me. And as I stand there, I can feel it. But the Flow Country is no *Paradise Lost*. For centuries, it has struggled against the pressures imposed by human actions. On a riverside bench in Lochinver, I listened as An-

dersen explained how the area was shaped by the aftermath of the Jacobite uprising and the Highland Clearances, when this remote landscape was reshaped into vast estates dedicated primarily to sheep grazing. Once-peopled

valleys and straths were emptied, with communities pushed to the coast, leaving behind the bogs and hills. A more recent struggle dates to the 1980s, when commercial forestry introduced non-native trees and large sections of the bog were drained. While Thompson believes things are getting worse, with wind farms springing up everywhere, Andersen takes a more optimistic view, highlighting the transformation of both the landscape and the people. “Now all these people sit around the table together and have a shared vision of what could happen in this landscape for the future. And I think that, as a society, the shift from 40 years ago to where we are today in such a short time is truly inspiring.” I leave the viewing tower and Forsinard behind, Andersen’s words of hope lingering in my mind, and hop back onto the Far North Line, continuing my journey to the small harbour town of Thurso. As the train pushes further north, keeping away from the coast, I reflect on the sights I’ve seen. The Far North Line has delivered most of the typical Scottish imagery, from border collies and sheep to dramatic coastlines and wild bog landscapes. It has been a great alternative to the NC500, a popular and often over-crowded drive around the Highlands, offering a romantic way to experience the wild beauty of the region. We pass Georgemas Junction, where the line splits towards Thurso and Wick, before finally reaching Thurso, the last train stop before the sea. Along the way, we’ve passed Beaulay Station, home to Scotland’s shortest train platform – at just 15.06m long, only one carriage door can be opened for people to exit or enter the train – and we’ve also passed Altnabreac, the country’s most remote station; surrounded by boglands and located 10 miles from the closest road. Georgemas itself is the UK’s northernmost junction. But more than these superlatives, this journey has been about slowing down and allowing the mind to wander.

Bites on gladiator bones prove combat with lion



Bite marks found on the skeleton of a Roman gladiator are the first archaeological evidence of combat between a human and a lion, experts say. The remains were discovered during a 2004 dig at Driffield Terrace, in York, a site now thought to be the world’s only well-preserved Roman gladiator cemetery. Forensic examination of the skeleton of one young man has revealed that holes and bite marks on his pelvis were most likely caused by a lion. Prof Tim Thompson, the forensic expert who led the study, said this was the first “physical evidence” of gladiators fighting big cats. “For years our understanding of Roman gladiatorial combat and animal spectacles has relied heavily on historical texts and artistic depictions,” he said. “This discovery provides the first direct, physical evidence that such events took place in this period, reshaping our perception of Roman entertainment culture in the region.” Experts used new forensic techniques to analyse the wounds, including 3D scans which showed the animal had grabbed the man by the pelvis. Prof Thompson, from Maynooth University, in Ireland, said: “We could tell that the bites happened at around the time of death. “So this wasn’t an animal scavenging after

the individual died - it was associated with his death.” As well as scanning the wound, scientists compared its size and shape to sample bites from large cats at London Zoo. “The bite marks in this particular individual match those of a lion,” Prof Thompson told BBC News. The location of the bites gave researchers even more information about the circumstances of the gladiator’s death. The pelvis, Prof Thompson explained, “is not where lions normally attack, so we think this gladiator was fighting in some sort of spectacle and was incapacitated, and that the lion bit him and dragged him away by his hip.” The skeleton, a male aged between 26 and 35, had been buried in a grave with two others and overlaid with horse bones. Previous analysis of the bones pointed to him being a *Bestiarius* - a gladiator that was sent into combat with beasts. Malin Holst, a Senior Lecturer in Osteoarchaeology at the University of York, said in 30 years of analysing skeletons she had “never seen anything like these bite marks”. Additionally, she said the man’s remains revealed the story of a “short and somewhat brutal life”. His bones were shaped by large, powerful muscles and there was evidence of injuries to his shoulder and spine, which were associated with hard physical work and combat. Ms Holst, who is also

managing director of York Osteoarchaeology, added: “This is a hugely exciting find because we can now start to build a better image of what these gladiators were like in life.” The findings, which have been published in the *Journal of Science and Medical Research PLoS One*, also confirmed the “presence of large cats and potentially other exotic animals in arenas in cities such as York, and how they too had to defend themselves from the threat of death”, she said. Experts said the discovery added weight to the suggestion an amphitheatre, although not yet found, likely existed in Roman York and would have staged fighting gladiators as a form of entertainment. The presence of distinguished Roman leaders in York would have meant they required a lavish lifestyle, experts said, so it was no surprise to see evidence of gladiatorial events, which served as a display of wealth. David Jennings, CEO of York Archaeology, said: “We may never know what brought this man to the arena where we believe he may have been fighting for the entertainment of others, but it is remarkable that the first osteoarchaeological evidence for this kind of gladiatorial combat has been found so far from the Colosseum of Rome, which would have been the classical world’s Wembley Stadium of combat.”

Area burned by UK wildfires in 2025 already at annual record



The area of the UK burnt by wildfires so far this year is already higher than the total for any year in more than a decade, satellite data suggests. More than 29,200 hectares (292 sq km or 113 sq miles) has been burnt so far, according to figures from the Global Wildfire Information System, which has recorded burnt area since 2012. That is more than the previous high of 28,100 hectares for the whole year of 2019. The prolonged dry, sunny weather in March and early April helped to create ideal conditions for widespread burning, according to researchers. Wildfires are very common in the UK in early spring, with plenty of dead or dormant vegetation at the end of winter that can dry out quickly. The switch back to wetter conditions over the past couple of weeks has largely brought an end to the spell of fires for now, but not before reaching record levels. The figures from the Global Wildfire Information System only capture fires larger than roughly 30 hectares (0.3 sq km). More than 80 such fires have been detected across the UK since the beginning of the year. Most fires are deliberately or accidentally started by humans, but favourable weather conditions can make it much easier for fires to ignite and spread quickly. “We had an exceptionally dry and sunny March,” said Will Lang, head of risk and resilience services at the Met Office. “This followed quite a wet autumn and winter, which can have the effect of increasing the vegetation that acts as fuel for any fire that does start.” A lack of rainfall in March and April can be particularly conducive to fires. “The vegetation is coming out of the winter and it has gone dormant, so it’s not growing, and therefore it’s very dry and doesn’t have water,” explained Guillermo Rein, professor of fire science at Imperial College London. “Then in the spring, before you start to collect the water into the live tissue, there is a period where it’s very flammable.” The seven days from 2 to 8 April saw more than 18,000 hectares (180 sq km) burnt, the highest weekly figure on record. The BBC has also analysed satellite images to illustrate two of the biggest burns this year. In Galloway Forest Park, in south-west Scotland, an estimated 65 sq km burnt, nearly a quarter of the UK total. A fire in mid-Wales, about 25 km (16 miles) from Aberystwyth, also burnt a large area of roughly 50 sq km. Fires have also been detected by satellite imagery on the Isle of Arran, the Isle of Bute and the Isle of Skye in Scotland, as well as in the Mourne Mountains in south-east Northern Ireland. All occurred in early April. These burns - predominantly heath and shrub fires - have placed great strain on fire services, but they can be managed. “We are not concerned about the fire season, but we are concerned about the peak of the fire season, which typically comes later when temperatures are high and vegetation has dried out again.” “My number one worry is what is going to happen in the summer,” said Prof Rein, when “there are fewer wildfires but they are bigger and they can actually be seriously catastrophic”. “You can have 100 [small] wildfires across the whole country and all of them can be handled in one day, or you could have one summer wildfire that actually cannot be stopped in a week and actually goes on to burn houses.” The recent widespread burns don’t necessarily mean this summer will be a busy fire season. But scientists expect the UK to see an increase in weather conditions conducive to extreme wildfires in a warming world, even though there’s lots of variation from year to year. A study led by the Met Office found that the extreme “fire weather” that helped spread the destructive blazes of July 2022 were made at least six times more likely by human-caused climate change. Shifts in the way land is used can also play a key role in shaping fire risk. “One thing that seems to have consensus is that we are likely to see more fires and possibly worse fires with climate change,” said Rory Hadden, senior lecturer in fire investigation at the University of Edinburgh.

Shehnaaz Gill Sparkles In Statement Gold Sequins For A Glam Fashion Moment

Draped in unapologetic glam and oozing confidence, Shehnaaz Gill just served a look that’s not just fashion, it’s a whole moment. Channeling the energy of a modern-day disco queen, Shehnaaz took to Instagram with a series of smouldering shots captioned, “Not just a look... it’s a whole mome



Sparkling drop earrings and silver strappy heels brought just the right touch of bling, harmonizing with the dress without stealing the spotlight. Her luscious waves, full of volume and movement, added an element of carefree glamour. Whether she was in motion or holding a power pose, her hair flowed like a mood, untamed, confident, and feminine. With her signature glowing skin, bold brows, and a soft smokey eye, Shehnaaz struck a balance between sultry and sophisticated. The subtle nude lip ensured the focus stayed on her outfit and eyes. Set against a hot pink backdrop, the contrast only amplified her golden goddess aura. Every frame from this shoot feels like a freeze-frame from a pop anthem, electric, fierce, and fabulous. Shehnaaz Gill isn’t just stepping into fashion territory; she’s owning the damn runway with her vibe. So next time you’re dressing for a moment, take a cue from her: be bold, be bright, and never dim your shine.

Urban Sanctuaries: How Organic Cafes Are Redefining Conscious Dining in Mumbai

In a city that never stops, where the rhythm is fast and the noise constant, two thoughtful spaces have emerged to offer Mumbai a breath of calm, one nourishing meal at a time. Café Saar and Paashh are not just cafés—they are sanctuaries that nurture the soul, celebrate sustainability, and honour slow living in the most conscious ways. Tucked amidst the green heart of Bandra, Café Saar feels like an oasis of peace. A place where lush foliage wraps around you and every corner whispers serenity, it redefines vegetarian dining through its focus on nutritious, calming meals served in harmony with nature. Designed to dissolve the boundary between indoors and out, Café Saar invites patrons into open seating under trees, with sunlight filtering through leaves and tables surrounded by flourishing plants. From its coffee menu to its soul-nourishing food, everything at Café Saar is curated with intention. Think: velvety cinnamon-vanilla lattes with oat or almond milk, raw mango rasam soup that tingles your senses, and Truffle Khichdi that comforts like a hug. Every bite and sip is a celebration of balance, health, and joy. Signature offerings like the Overnight Oat Bowl, All About Nuts

Panjiri, and vegan-friendly small plates showcase a dedication to fresh, plant-based ingredients. “At Café Saar, we strive to create soul food that nourishes both the heart and the body,” says Chef Vinit. “Our dishes are crafted with love and care, using the freshest ingredients to provide a wholesome and fulfilling dining experience.” Meanwhile, Paashh, already a beloved name in Pune for its slow living philosophy has opened its tranquil doors

a café; it’s a pause. It’s the long exhale in a world that breathes too fast. At its core lies the vision of founder Vaishali Karad, a wellness-focused marathoner who believes true luxury is living intentionally. “Paashh was born from a personal journey,” shares Vaishali. “I wanted to create a space where slow, conscious living isn’t a luxury; it’s a way of life.” From handcrafted brassware to seasonal, local produce, every element of Paashh is rooted in care.



in Mumbai. This isn’t just Their vegetarian menu is not only organic and predominantly vegan but also

Where Movement Meets Mindfulness

For Shakti Mohan, movement has always been a form of expression, but her recent journey to Queensland, Australia, revealed a new rhythm entirely. Away from the spotlight and studio mirrors, the celebrated dancer and choreographer found herself immersed in something far more elemental: the quiet pulse of the rainforest, the salty breeze of untouched beaches, and the golden hush of a Queensland sunset. “Queensland, Australia offers such a compelling mix, from peaceful coastal retreats and ancient rainforests to vibrant urban energy. This trip allowed me to reconnect with nature and experience Australia in a truly fresh and soulful way,” Shakti shared, reflecting on a journey that blurred the lines between luxury, nature, and inner stillness. Her travels spanned the urban vitality of Brisbane, the golden expanse of the Gold Coast, the laid-back charm of the Sunshine Coast, the marine wonder of the Great Barrier Reef, and the grounding calm of ancient rainforests. But it wasn’t just the geography that made an impact; it was the emotional texture of



each place. With every barefoot walk, silent gaze, and cultural encounter, Shakti’s posts unfolded not as a travel diary but as a personal unravelling. In images and video captured mid-journey, she’s seen with wind-tousled hair by the sea, still beneath the rainforest canopy, or laughing quietly with locals. It’s a softer, more intimate portrait of the artist, one that reveals a side rarely seen on screen. What began as a collaboration with travel company JourneyLabel and Tourism and Events Queensland soon evolved into something more personal: a

chance to pause, breathe, and move at nature’s pace. “At JourneyLabel, we are drawn to destinations that leave a lasting impression. Queensland, Australia’s stunning beauty, diversity, and warm spirit align perfectly with what today’s Indian traveller seeks,” said Sufail Husain, Co-Founder, JourneyLabel. “It’s a privilege to partner with TEQ and collaborate with Shakti Mohan, who brings such grace and sincerity to the storytelling. We believe this journey will inspire others to travel deeper and dream bigger.” As Shakti continues to share her journey on social media, her audience is tuning in not just for the scenic beauty, but for the feeling of presence, of peace, of purposeful travel. Through Shakti’s eyes, Queensland becomes more than a destination. It becomes a mirror, a muse, and a moment of renewal.

Cardiologists Explain The Hidden Cardiac Risk

Heartburn, nausea, or breathlessness is usually associated with an unsettled stomach or a stressful day. Maybe it’s the late-night meal, a skipped breakfast, or just a little anxiety. But cardiologists are sounding a quiet, critical alarm: these symptoms might be telling a different story, one about your heart. “When symptoms like a hyper feeling in the mind, nausea, or breathlessness appear, they should never be brushed off,” says Dr. Sunil Dwivedi, Consultant, Cardiology at Manipal Hospital, Millers Road, Bengaluru. “No matter which part of the body they seem to arise from, they often signal something significant. These symptoms are commonly linked to the digestive system, and sometimes to the heart.” That’s what makes these symptoms particularly tricky. According to experts, cardiac and gastrointestinal symptoms can mimic each other so closely, they’re often

mistaken for one another, especially when the signs are subtle. It’s a common misconception that heart problems always announce themselves with crushing chest pain or dramatic collapses. In reality, the signs can be whisper-soft and dangerously easy to miss. “Light heartburn, nausea, and shortness of breath may be easily overlooked as either a mild digestive issue or stress reaction,” explains Dr. Jajati Keshari Padhi, Senior Consultant Interventional Cardiologist at Manipal Hospital, Bhubaneswar. “Especially when these feelings of discomfort occur soon after eating or during exercise.” But for certain individuals, especially older adults, diabetics, and people with multiple health conditions, heart trouble may not present with textbook symptoms at all. “Heart attacks in these groups often begin with something as subtle as mild heartburn, or sometimes just vomiting. In many elderly

or immunocompromised patients, vomiting can be the only symptom,” adds Dr. Dwivedi. One particularly deceptive symptom? Breathlessness. It’s easy to chalk it up to poor fitness, anxiety, or even the weather, but in the context of heart disease, it can be a serious sign. “Shortness of breath, often attributed to anxiety, can actually indicate congestive heart failure or coronary artery disease,” warns Dr. Padhi. “It may reflect the heart’s reduced ability to pump blood, leading to fluid backup in the lungs.” So, how does one tell the difference between a harmless bout of acidity and a potential cardiac warning? Even experienced professionals can struggle with that,” Dr. Dwivedi admits. “But what patients must understand

is that these are not usual symptoms. If the discomfort feels different, if your regular acidity meds don’t work, or the nausea seems unusual, don’t wait. Seek help immediately.” As Dr. Padhi puts it, “Being famous and fabulous won’t provide answers. Many cardiac patients don’t show any signs until the condition becomes critical. By then, time becomes the enemy.” Early detection is key. Appropriate tests and evaluations can dramatically alter the course of treatment and recovery. While it’s true that not every case of heartburn or nausea is heart-related, the risk of ignoring the early, quieter signs can be life-threatening. “It’s always better to be careful. Getting checked early can help prevent serious heart problems,” Dr. Padhi stresses. The advice is consistent: listen to your body.



SPORTS

Smriti Mandhana becomes first Indian batter to hit 4000 runs in Women’s T20Is

Mumbai: Ishan Kishan’s explosive return to form in domestic cricket has once again put India’s T20I opening combination under the spotlight, with fans already T20 World Cup just 50 days away, the timing of Kishan’s as it adds fresh pressure on Shubman Gill’s. The left-handed batter achieved this historic milestone during the first T20I against Sri Lanka Women at the ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium on Sunday. Mandhana, who scored 25 runs during the opening T20I of the five-match series, also became the second woman to reach the landmark of 4000 runs in T20Is after New Zealand’s Suzie Bates (4716 runs). Coming to the match, Jemimah Rodrigues slammed a match-winning, unbeaten half-century that helped the Harmanpreet Kaur-led India Women to a dominating eight-wicket win against Sri



Lanka Women in the series opener on Sunday. With this commanding win, the Women in Blue took a 1-0 lead in the ongoing T20I series against Sri Lanka. While chasing a 122-run target, Jemimah hammered an unbeaten 69 runs off 44 deliveries, with the help of 10 fours that helped India Women

to chase down the target in just 14.4 overs. Jemimah also equalled Mithali Raj’s four 50-plus scores against Sri Lanka in T20Is. During the chase, Mandhana and Jemimah stitched a crucial 54-run partnership for the second wicket that put India into a commanding position. Jemimah also stitched an unbeaten 55-

run stand for the third wicket with captain Harmanpreet Kaur, who made an unbeaten 15 that helped the Women in Blue win the first T20I by eight wickets. Earlier, after being asked to bat first, Sri Lanka Women were restricted to 121/6 in their 20 overs. Sri Lanka opener Vishmi Gunaratne was the top scorer for the visitors, scoring 39 off 43 balls. Among the bowlers, Deepti Sharma was the most economical, returning figures of 1/20 in her four overs, which included a maiden. Kranti Gaud finished with 1/23 from three overs, while Shree Charani conceded 30 runs and picked up one wicket in her four overs. Brief scores: Sri Lanka Women 121/6 in 20 overs (Vishmi Gunaratne 39, Harshitha Samarawickrama 21; Deepti Sharma 1/20) vs India Women (Jemimah Rodrigues 69*, Smriti Mandhana 25; Inoka Ranaweera 1/17).

New Zealand wins the third test by 323 runs after bowling out the West Indies for 138

Mumbai: Jacob Duffy took 5-42 as New Zealand bowled out the West Indies for 138 on a deteriorating fifth-day pitch to win the third Test by 323 runs on Monday, clinching the three-match series 2-0. Duffy surpassed Richard Hadlee’s New Zealand record of 80 wickets in a calendar year and finished the series with 23 wickets at an average of 15.4, including three five-wicket hauls. He bowled more than 154 overs across the three Tests as the workhorse of the New Zealand attack. “I saw that list at lunchtime and there were some cool names on there, so to be up there on any sort of list with those names was special,” said Duffy, who was named Player of the Series. New Zealand’s win capped a series in which both teams coped with significantly depleted pace at-

tacks and a flurry of batting records fell.

The West Indies were without Shamar Joseph and Alzarri Joseph. Duffy emerged as New Zealand’s pace spearhead after injuries sidelined Matt Henry, Will O’Rourke, Ben Sears, Kyle Jamieson, Nathan Smith and Blair Tickner. The third Test was a feast for statisticians. Devon Conway scored 227 and Tom Latham 137 in a 323-run opening stand in New Zealand’s first innings of 575-8 declared. Conway then made 100 and Latham 101 in a partnership of 192 in the second innings before New Zealand declared at 306-2. West Indies were set a target of 462 after being bowled out for 420 in the first innings. Conway became the 10th Test player, and the first New Zealander to score a double-century and a



century in the same match. He and Latham also became the first opening pair to score centuries in both innings of a Test. “I don’t think it’s sunk in yet,” Conway said. “It will take some time to get my head around what happened in this Test match, but I’m really glad we got the win.”

Rohit Sharma admits he considered retirement 2023 World Cup final

New Delhi: Rohit Sharma had contemplated retirement after the heartbreaking loss to Australia in the 2023 ODI World Cup final, the former India captain said on Sunday. Under Rohit’s captaincy, India enjoyed a dream run in that World Cup, marching into the final with nine consecutive wins. However, Australia dashed its hopes with a six-wicket win, riding on Travis Head’s match-winning century. “After the 2023 World Cup final, I was completely distraught and felt like I didn’t want to play this sport anymore because it had taken everything out of me and I felt I had nothing left,” Rohit said during a Masters Union event in Gurugram. “It took some time, and I kept reminding myself that this is something I truly love, that it was right in front of me, and I couldn’t let it go so easily. Slowly, I



found my way back, regaining the energy and getting myself moving again on the field. “Everybody was extremely disappointed, and we just couldn’t believe what had happened. It was a very tough time for me personally because I had put everything into that World Cup, not just two or three months before it, but ever since I took over the captaincy in 2022,” he added. I guess when you invest so much into something and don’t achieve the result, it’s a

very natural reaction. That’s exactly what happened with me. But I also knew that life doesn’t end there,” Rohit added. “It was a big lesson for me on how to deal with disappointment, reset, and start fresh. I knew that something else was coming at the 2024 T20 World Cup in the USA and the West Indies, and I had to shift all my focus towards that. “It’s very easy to say this now, but at that moment, it was extremely difficult.”

Satwik-Chirag should be thanked by Indian badminton for keeping the game alive

In the last month, the men’s doubles pair from India bagged its second BWF World Championships bronze medal and has followed it up with back-to-back final appearances on the Tour.

Mumbai: It wasn’t the best year of their careers for Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty. 2025 may end without a title – the first such for half a dozen years. But Indian badminton owes the unassuming duo immense gratitude for keeping the sport relevant in the country by trying to stay in the realms of excellence with immense hard work. Six semifinals and two finals, besides the strong finish at the World Tour Finals, out of 16 elite tournaments played in a season in which they looked for stability rather than silverware, is far more than what any other Indian shuttler managed. That’s 9 top-4 finishes out of 16 in a not-the-greatest year, when they had fallen out of the World Top 25. India’s sin-



gles stars would’ve traded a limb for results like that. After the Olympics, it took us time to digest the result. I was also having back issues then. I couldn’t figure out what was wrong. Then, in January, I think, Chirag had a few niggles. My father passed away, so it was a very tough time. Even at the All England, we faced some issues.

We were getting better, but then there used to be something to stop us. I think it’s part and parcel of the game; you need to respect your body. You never know where you will get injuries from. Chirag was there helping me and telling me, ‘It’s okay, nothing will happen’. We knew that once we’re fit enough, we can give our 100 per cent

and be at the top. Last few months, we’ve been just holding on. Coach was there to help, and [Pullela] Gopi [Chand] sir was also there for us. In these times, you get to know who’s really behind you and supportive. We’re grateful for the things we have now. Before the Worlds, we had met them once [Li Yiu and Bo Yang Chen] in the Thailand Open final, but at that time, I think we won it in two games; but this time around, in the third game especially, they started flicking us, which we didn’t expect them to do. We were trying to take the shuttle high because they were serving quite well in the front. I think we could have taken a different approach where we were not dwelling so much on receiving and playing the wait-and-watch game, rather than attacking right away. Credit to them for mixing it up, but it can also backfire sometimes if you keep varying your service too much, because the opponent can catch you, and then your service game drops. But that day, it worked for them.

Under-19 Asia Cup final Pakistan wins as Sameer Minhas’ massive century and pacers defeat India

New Delhi: Asia Cup, and as it is the norm now, there was no formal greetings between the players of two teams. Once Pakistan posted a mammoth 347 for eight, riding on Minhas’ 172 (113b, 17x4, 9x6) they needed a lion-hearted chase to clinch a ninth title in the tournament. But the tall Pakistan pace troika — Ali Reza (4/42), Mohammad Sayyam (2/38) and Abdul Subhan (2/29) — hurried their top-order with consistent hard-lengths as India folded for 156 in 26.2 overs. However, India’s chase began on an explosive note despite losing Ayush Mhatre early. Vaibhav Suryavanshi hammered Raza for two sixes and a four to take 21 runs in the first over. Aaron George too began brightly, caressing Sayyam for three fours in a row in the fourth over as India raced off the block at 10 runs an over. But the game’s course changed in the last ball of the fourth over. George was jostled into a pull by Sayyam, and all he could do was to sky the short-pitched ball to Mohammad Shayan inside the circle. In the first ball of the fifth over, India suffered a body blow with the dismissal of Suryavanshi. The left-hander went for a full-blooded pick-up shot off Raza, but the good-length ball, which had extra bounce on it, took the edge of the opener’s bat and nestled in the gloves of stumper Zahoor Hamza. Raza and Pakistan fielders celebrated wildly, and a few words were exchanged before Suryavanshi trudged off



dejected. India slipped from 49 for 1 to 49 for three in the space of two balls, and it was just the beginning. Vedant Trivedi and Kanishk Chouhan too fell to snorters as Pakistan pacers made the flat ICC Academy pitch look like the Road of Bones. India’s last hope — even if feeble — was the presence of Abhigyan Kundu, and a drop on 12 off Subhan hinted at a possible shifting of fortune. But all such hopes were trampled when Kundu’s upper cut two balls later after his reprieve found Niqab Shafiq at third man. Earlier, Pakistan opener Minhas struck a brilliant century as Pakistan motored to a humongous total. Minhas, the younger brother of Pakistan T20 player Arafat, went after every Indian bowler but was especially harsh on new-ball bowlers Kishan Singh and Deepesh Devendran. Minhas brought up his century off 71 balls with a four in the 29th over off Devendran. This was Minhas’ second hundred in the competition having cracked an unbeaten 177 against Malaysia in the opening group match. Minhas’ six in the 28th over, where he used his feet to launch a Mhatre delivery high up in the air to deep mid-wicket, had class written all over it. The 19-year-old looked set for a double century but he was tricked by a slower delivery from Devendran (3/83) to be caught at mid-on. It was smooth sailing for Pakistan after Hamza Zahoor (18) departed early.

Jemimah Rodrigues puts on an offside masterclass India vs Sri Lanka

Of the 10 fours Jemimah Rodrigues hit, nine were on the offside, all between third-man region and cover.

Mumbai: On a night when Sri Lanka batters combined to hit nine fours, Jemimah Rodrigues, by herself, hit 10 during a sublime, unbeaten knock of 69 that guided India to a comfortable eight-wicket win in the first T20I at the ACA-VDCA Stadium in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. The victory — the team’s first game since the 50-over World Cup final win in November — was effectively set up by a collective bowling display that restricted Chamari Athapaththu’s side to just 121/6. But the headlines will rightly belong to Jemimah for the class of her innings, with her offside strokeplay being a standout feature. Sri Lanka pacer Malki Madara thought it was a close call for caught behind when she bowled a 104.6kph delivery at a good length just outside the off stump, but Jemimah executed the perfect late cut — a shot she plays so well — for her first boundary of the innings. It set the tone for what was to follow from the Mumbaikar. In the post-match interview, when she was told maybe Sri Lanka should consider putting three-four field-



ers in that region, she joked: “I will still find the gap.” That’s the sort of zone she was in. Out of the 10 fours she’d go on to hit, nine were on the offside, all between third-man region and cover. Still on her mind when she was bowled for a duck by an absolute peach that turned away from her. But she targeted The 17-year-old is an ambidextrous spinner but even more interestingly, bowls left-arm wrist-spin, not something common in the women’s game. Jemimah, though, was ready for it and didn’t let the youngster settle into any rhythm, hitting six fours against her.



lock that has paralysed Indian football’s top division. However, the AIFF has indicated that any structural or commercial change would require approval under its new constitution. Complicating matters further is the fact that the federation’s General Body is yet to be fully reconstituted as per that constitution, limiting the scope for immediate amendments.

AIFF is unable to launch are instructed to submit proposals for consortiums Indian Super League (ISL)

New Delhi: Indian Super League (ISL) clubs are currently being invited to submit ideas to create a consortium to manage the league, indicating that the administrative impasse in Indian football is not going away. The proposal is made in the midst of ongoing confusion around the official start date and timeframe for the 2025–2026 ISL season. There is also added uncertainty due to the likely implementation of the National Sports Grievance Act in the near future, which could introduce fresh governance requirements. Officials familiar with the process have admitted that overlapping regulations could further delay decision-making. The topic is anticipated to be discussed during the All India Football Federation’s (AIFF)

Annual General Meeting on Saturday, to which all ISL club representatives have been invited. Clubs have been told to submit their consortium plans to the sports ministry by Friday night prior to the AGM, although there is no guarantee that the gathering will result in a definitive decision. The proposal was also discussed during a virtual meeting held on Thursday, which included senior AIFF officials, representatives of ISL clubs and members of the sports ministry. Club officials remain cautious, with several acknowledging that while the submission has been requested, it does not guarantee approval or immediate resolution. The idea of forming a consortium was initially floated by ISL clubs as a way to break the ongoing commercial dead-

lock that has paralysed Indian football’s top division. However, the AIFF has indicated that any structural or commercial change would require approval under its new constitution. Complicating matters further is the fact that the federation’s General Body is yet to be fully reconstituted as per that constitution, limiting the scope for immediate amendments.