

Gaurav Gogoi accuses Assam government of ‘Gundaraj’, says Congress will remove BJP in four months

Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi criticized the Assam government, led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, for fostering an environment of lawlessness and corruption, using the term “gundaraj” to characterize the current political climate.

Guwahati, Dec 26: Congress leader and Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi has sharply criticised the Assam government led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, accusing it of creating an atmosphere of lawlessness and corruption in the state. Gogoi made the remarks through a post on the social media platform X, where he used the word “gundaraj” to describe the present political environment in Assam. Gogoi said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government had allowed corruption and syndicate activities to flourish. He alleged that several leaders close to the Chief Minister were repeatedly appearing in

controversies involving land deals, grain theft and other illegal activities.

According to him, these cases reflected a deeper problem in governance and accountability. In his post, Gogoi wrote that almost every hour there was news about another BJP leader facing allegations.

He claimed that issues such as charging commission for land transactions, encroachment on tribal land and illegal trade involving cattle and coal had become common in Assam. He described this situation as “gundaraj under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma”. The Congress leader also made a strong political statement, saying his party would remove the BJP from power in Assam within the next four months.

He linked this claim with the slogan “Natun Axom” or “New Assam”, which the Congress has been using to promise change in the state. Gogoi’s remarks came amid fresh controversy involving

Hemanga Thakuria, the BJP MLA from Palasbari. An audio clip allegedly featuring Thakuria discussing commission payments related to land deals has gone viral on social media, leading to widespread debate and criticism. In the clip, a voice believed to be that of the MLA appears to talk about land brokering and demands for large commission amounts.

One allegation suggests that a commission of around Rs 8 lakh was discussed for one bigha of land. The speaker in the recording is also heard saying that he wishes to remain an MLA for 25 years and openly mentions personal financial benefit, raising concerns about ethical standards in public life. The circulation of the clip has led to public discussion across Assam, with many people questioning whether elected representatives should be involved in such dealings.

Opposition parties, especially the Congress, have



seized on the issue to mount attacks on the ruling BJP. However, Hemanga Thakuria has strongly denied the accusations. He has said the audio clip is manipulated and politically motivated.

According to him, the con-

troversy is an attempt by rivals to tarnish his image ahead of upcoming political events. Thakuria has also pointed to development projects he claims to have brought to the Palasbari constituency. These include road construction works

and proposals related to establishing an Indian Institute of Management in the area. He suggested that his growing political influence and these initiatives may have upset certain groups, who now want to damage his reputation.

Meghalaya BJP condemns Christmas disruption, demands strict government action against all offenders

Shillong, Dec 26: The Meghalaya unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday called for strict action against individuals involved in attempts to disrupt Christmas celebrations in different parts of the country, stating that such actions violate India’s constitutional values and the right to religious freedom. The statement by Meghalaya BJP chief spokesperson Mariahom Kharkrang comes amid Opposition parties raising concerns over incidents involving Christians ahead of Christmas in states such as Assam, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Kharkrang said Christmas is widely celebrated across India by people of all communities and symbolises love, unity and goodwill. He criticised efforts to politicise what he described as isolated incidents, saying they do not reflect the country’s broader social fabric. Several Opposition lead-

ers on December 25 voiced concern over reported attacks on minorities, including an incident in Jabalpur where a BJP leader allegedly assaulted a visually impaired woman over accusations of promoting religious conversion. Kharkrang said only a small number of individuals were responsible for actions that disturbed the festive atmosphere and strongly condemned such behaviour. He added that attempts to disrupt Christmas celebrations amounted to an attack on India’s civilisational values. He further said portraying these incidents as organised political acts was misleading, accusing some Opposition parties of using individual criminal cases for political advantage.

Kharkrang pointed out that the Prime Minister and senior BJP leaders regularly participate in Christmas programmes, including in 2025, and said this reflects the party’s com-



mitment to inter-faith harmony. He challenged Opposition leaders to demonstrate similar engagement by their leadership. Stressing that the freedom to celebrate festivals is a fundamental right, Kharkrang demanded that those involved in recent incidents be arrested and punished

under the strictest provisions of law. He added that BJP leaders in Meghalaya are coordinating with party units in other states to ensure accountability for those responsible. he BJP in Meghalaya said that it will only allocate tickets for the parliamentary seats based on the candidates’ “winability factor”. M Kharkrang, the chief spokesperson for the BJP, announced that the party’s decision to allocate tickets for the Shillong and Tura parliamentary seats will be primarily influenced by the candidates’ “winability factor.”

While addressing reporters, Kharkrang clarified that the focus is not solely on fielding women candidates but rather on assessing the potential success of all candidates. Responding to advocate Fenela Lyngdoh Nonglait’s expressed interest in contesting on a BJP ticket from the Shillong constituency ions of law.

Tripura Assembly Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen passes away at 72

Agartala, Dec 26: Tripura Assembly Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen passed away late on December 25, at the age of 72, while being treated at Aster CMI Hospital in Bengaluru after a prolonged illness that began with a brain hemorrhage in August. His death has elicited widespread sadness among political leaders and the public. Chief Minister Manik Saha confirmed the news on social media, lauding Sen as a respected and dedicated public servant. A senior political figure, Sen was serving his fourth term as an MLA and represented the Dharmanagar constituency, having transitioned from the Indian National Congress to the Bharatiya Janata Party during his career. He was known for his calm demeanor and was regarded as a fair Speaker of the Assembly, qualities that will be missed in future sessions. His mortal remains are expected to return to Tripura on December 27 for the public to pay their respects.

Manipur Police recover grenades, rifles and pistols in two security operations

Imphal, Dec 26: Manipur Police have recovered a large number of weapons and explosives in two separate security operations carried out on December 24 in Imphal West and Churachandpur districts. The recoveries have once again drawn attention to the continued presence of illegal arms in different parts of the state. Security forces said these operations were part of regular efforts to control violence and prevent further unrest. According to officials, the first operation took place in the Imphal West district. Security personnel conducted a search in the areas near Lambal and Haorang Keirel under the Lamsang police station. During the search, they found several weapons hidden in the area. The recovered items included a single-barrel gun, three pistols with magazines, three bolt-action rifles, and eight grenades. Out of these, seven were white phosphorus grenades, and one was a high-explosive grenade fitted with a detonator. Apart from these weapons, the police also seized 23 mini flare cartridges, eight 12-bore cartridges, and 28 live rounds of different calibres.

Arrest people raising anti-karbi slogans under SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act: AJP

Guwahati, Dec 26: The Asam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) expressed serious concern over an incident at Kheroni in West Karbi Anglong, where a procession of non-indigenous people reportedly raised slogans such as “Karbi Go Back” and “Karbi Chinese Go Back.” The regional party alleged it was the direct outcome of a BJP-led conspiracy to politically annihilate indigenous communities, stating that such a situation had never arisen in Assam before the BJP came to power. AJP alleged that despite coming to power on slogans of protecting jati, mati, bheti (community, land, and hearth), it is under BJP rule that indigenous people have lost land, lost their

homes, and are now being attacked even in their last refuge—their dignity and self-respect. The party demanded that those who raised “Karbi Go Back” slogans in Kheroni be arrested and prosecuted under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters in Guwahati on Friday, AJP general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan said since the BJP assumed power, the very existence of indigenous people has come under threat in every inch of Assam. He recalled that the Assam Movement took place precisely to protect indigenous existence, during which 860 people sacrificed their lives, eventually leading to the

signing of the Assam Accord. “The BJP had sought votes from the people of Assam by promising to implement the Accord clause by clause, especially Clause 6, to ensure linguistic, cultural, and constitutional safeguards for indigenous communities. However, over the past nearly ten years, the BJP has betrayed the people of Assam by failing to fulfil these commitments,” Bhuyan alleged. Referring to the Chief Minister’s recent statement about the increasing presence of “outsiders” in Assam, Bhuyan said that what the Chief Minister is acknowledging today was felt by the people of Assam four decades ago, which led to the Assam Movement. “While BJP leaders, including

the Chief Minister, repeatedly claim that they will not allow indigenous people’s existence to be threatened, in reality, under their patronage, people from North India and Bangladesh have entered Assam in large numbers. This has not only intensified the challenge to indigenous existence but has also created an environment where outsiders feel emboldened to raise “go back” slogans against indigenous communities,” he stated. Bhuyan squarely blamed the BJP-led government for this situation, stating that wherever indigenous people have faced threats, the BJP government has adopted anti-indigenous positions for vote-bank politics, clearly exposing the party’s anti-indigenous policy.

In Brief

Ammunition and explosives seized

Imphal: Manipur Police arrested Salam Shyam Singh and his associate Salam Naobi Singh, both alleged members of the banned militant group Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), in separate operations in Imphal West. The arrests occurred on December 25, following intelligence about their involvement in the group. During searches, police seized a significant cache of ammunition and explosives, including 111 rounds of various calibres, a high-explosive grenade, detonators, and mobile phones. These arrests are part of ongoing efforts to counter insurgency and disrupt militant networks in the state.

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24 missing Tripura youths rescued from Arunachal

Agartala: Tripura Police have rescued 24 missing youths from Arunachal Pradesh’s Siang district after a coordinated inter-state operation carried out with the help of Arunachal Pradesh Police. All the rescued youths are reported to be safe, and arrangements are being made to bring them back to Tripura. According to officials, the case began when a woman from Unakoti district lodged a complaint on December 24, stating that 24 youths from the area had gone missing. Acting on the complaint, the police immediately registered an FIR and launched an investigation.

KYKL cadre and associate arrested in Manipur; ammunition and explosives seized

Imphal, Dec 26: Manipur Police have arrested an alleged active member of the proscribed militant group Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) along with one of his associates in two separate operations carried out in Imphal West district. Police also recovered a large quantity of ammunition and explosives during the search operations linked to the arrests. According to officials, the first arrest was made on December 25. Police detained 44-year-old Salam Shyam Singh, a resident of Sega Road Takhellambam Leikai in Imphal West. He was picked up from a rented house at Keishampat Leimajam Leikai, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Imphal Police Station. Police said the arrest came after specific inputs were received regarding his presence and alleged involvement with the banned organisation. Following his arrest, security agencies carried out follow-up investigations and questioning.

Based on these inputs, police subsequently moved to another location and detained his associate, identified as 43-year-old

Salam Naobi Singh, a resident of Nongmaikhong Awang Leikai in Kakching district. Officials said Naobi Singh was detained from his residence, where he was believed to be in possession of materials handed over to him. During the search operations linked to both arrests, police recovered a cache of ammunition and explosive devices. These included: 111 rounds of ammunition of different calibres, One No. 36 high-explosive grenade without a detonator, Two detonators, Two mobile phones, Two Aadhaar cards. Officials said the recovery indicates that the men may have been handling or storing materials meant for militant activities. However, further verification and investigation are still underway to determine the source of the weapons, the intended use, and any possible involvement of other operatives. Police also stated that these arrests form part of the ongoing counter-insurgency operations being carried out across the state to track down militant networks, disrupt their movement, and prevent the circulation of weapons and explosives.

Tripura soaks into Christmas festive with special prayers for peace, unity

Agartala, Dec 26: Prayers and community togetherness marked Christmas celebrations across Tripura, as people thronged public spaces and churches of various denominations and public spaces amidst carol singing and colourful festivities on Thursday.

People of all ages attended midnight services at prominent churches, including the Don Bosco Church at Nandannagar in Agartala, offering special prayers for peace, harmony, and well-being of humanity.

The Mariamnagar Catholic Church near Agartala emerged as one of the

main centres of celebration. The iconic church was beautifully illuminated with decorative lights and glowing Christmas stars, attracting large numbers of faithful for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day prayers.

Adding to the festive mood, a traditional fair featuring food stalls and local vendors was organised in the area, drawing people and highlighting Tripura’s rich blend of religious tradition and cultural vibrancy.

The state’s ethos of unity and peace in diversity was reflected profoundly as people from various communities,

including non-Christians, actively took part in the celebrations.

Tripura Governor Indra Sena Reddy Nallu and Chief Minister Manik Saha extended warm greetings to the people of the state on the occasion of Christmas.

“Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas filled with peace, hope, and joy. May this festive season strengthen the bonds of togetherness, inspire compassion for those in need, and usher in a New Year of harmony, happiness, and prosperity for all,” the Chief Minister stated on social media.

NATIONAL

Four Dead, Two Injured in Nandyal Road Accident



Nallagatla, Dec 26: A high-speed collision between a passenger car and a private bus on National Highway 40 left four people dead and two others injured in the Nandyal district late

Thursday night, authorities said.

According to police, the incident occurred when a car travelling toward Nandyal at excessive speed lost control. The vehicle reportedly struck the

median and crossed into oncoming traffic, where it collided head-on with a private bus travelling to Arunachalam. "Four persons died on the spot, while two others were shifted to a hospital at Nandyal, where they are undergoing treatment," Allagadda Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) K. Pramod Kumar told reporters. Preliminary findings by investigators suggest that the fatal crash was likely the result of overspeeding or the driver falling asleep at the wheel due to fatigue. Local reports identified the four deceased as residents of Hyderabad who were returning from a pilgrimage to Tirumala. While the car was destroyed in the impact, no injuries were reported among those on the private bus. All passengers from the bus were safely transferred to an alternative vehicle to continue their journey. Police have registered a case and are continuing their investigation into the exact circumstances of the wreck.

V V Rajesh Sworn In as Thiruvananthapuram Mayor, Marking BJP's Kerala First

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 26: V V Rajesh of the BJP has been elected as mayor of Thiruvananthapuram city corporation - a historical event for the saffron party for having its first mayor in Kerala. Rajesh secured 51 votes, including one that of an independent councilor in the voting held on Friday (December 26).

In the 101 member council, BJP-NDA got 50 seats, CPI(M)-led LDF got 29 and Congress-led UDF got 19. Two seats were won by independent candidates. Election to one ward was postponed owing to the death of a candidate. Apart from the 50 votes of BJP-NDA, Rajesh got the support of independent candidate Pattoor Radhakrishnan, who was a former president and secretary of the Thiruvananthapuram Press Club. The other independent candidate -- Sudheesh Kumar -- who won as a UDF rebel candidate, abstained from the voting. While LDF candidate R P Sivaji secured 29 votes, UDF candidate K S Sabarinadhan secured only 17 out of the 19 UDF votes as votes of two UDF councilors became invalid owing to technical reasons.

Rajesh, who was sworn-in as mayor by district collector Anu Kumari, said in his opening remarks that he would work with the aim of making the city corporation one of the best corporations in the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to come



down to the city in January and announce major development plans for the city. BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar and other senior leaders were present at the council hall to witness the historic moment. Even as former DGP and first woman IPS officer from Kerala R Sreelekha, who is also BJP councillor, was also considered for the mayor post, the party zeroed in on Rajesh. His political experience could be a key factor as the BJP is one short of clear majority in the council and many senior politicians are among the opposition councilors. RSS and a section in the BJP were also learnt to have backed Rajesh.

Refused proposal: woman shot in Gurugram

Gurugram, Dec 26: A 25-year-old woman was shot at inside a club in Gurugram after she allegedly refused a marriage proposal from a man, police said on Thursday. The incident took place in the early hours of December 20 on MG Road.

Police said they received information about a woman injured in a firing incident and found her admitted to a private hospital, where she was initially unfit to give a statement. The woman's husband, from Najafgarh in Delhi, lodged a complaint stating that his wife, Kalpana (25), worked at a club in Gurugram and was shot by Tushar, a resident of Sangam Vihar in Delhi. In his complaint, the husband said his wife had gone to work on December 19 and around 1 am called him to say she had been shot. "Around a month ago Tushar came to our house, had a fight with us and left," the complainant added. Based on the complaint, an FIR was registered at Sector 29 police station. During the investigation, a crime unit team arrested two accused, Tushar alias Jonty (25) and his friend Shubham alias Jony (24), both residents of Sangam Vihar, from Baraut in Uttar Pradesh, police said. During interrogation, police said Tushar revealed that he befriended the victim around six months ago and wanted to marry her, but she repeatedly refused. Police alleged that on the night of December 19, Tushar, along with Shubham, went to the club, proposed to her again and upon refusal shot the woman.

Congress Lauds Manmohan Singh's 'Stronger India' Vision on Death Anniversary

Congress leaders pay Singh tribute

New Delhi, Dec 26: Congress leaders on Friday paid tribute to former prime minister Manmohan Singh on his first death anniversary, saying his humility, honesty and legacy would continue to inspire future generations.

Singh, who died last year at the age of 92, was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Assam for five terms from 1991, including during his 10-year tenure as prime minister. He also served as finance minister in the PV Narasimha Rao-led government and as the RBI governor between 1982 and 1985. Describing Singh as a transformative



leader, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said he reshaped the country's economic path, expanded opportunities for millions through economic reforms and lifted large numbers of people out of poverty. "Known for his humility, integrity, and wisdom, he

led with dignity and compassion, ensuring that progress remained inclusive and welfare reached those most in need. The rights-based paradigm is a testament to that approach. We had built a stronger India under his vision," he said. "We pay our heartfelt tribute to a

statesman whose legacy of honest public service and lasting reforms shall continue to inspire generations," the Congress chief said in a post on X. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi also paid tribute to the former prime minister. "Through his visionary leadership, he empowered India economically. His historic efforts and bold decisions for the underprivileged and poor gave India a new identity on the world stage," Gandhi said. "His humility, hard work, and honesty will always be an inspiration to all of us," the former Congress President added.

Protests Against Bail for Kuldeep Sengar Rock Delhi High Court

New Delhi, Dec 26: The family of the victim in the Unnao Rape case and other women activists staged a protest outside the Delhi High Court on Friday against the conditional bail granted to the convict Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the Unnao rape case. While the police warned the protesters, saying, "Demonstrating here is prohibited and illegal. Legal action may be taken against you after five minutes. If you want to protest, go to Jantar Mantar."

The mother of the victim said the bail should be rejected and asserted that she would approach the Supreme Court for justice, expressing loss of faith in the High Court's verdict. "His bail should be rejected... We will knock on

the doors of the Supreme Court. We have lost faith in the High Court... If we don't get justice in the Supreme Court, we will go to another country... The person guilty of my husband's murder should be hanged immediately," she told ANI. Women activist Yogita Bhayana said they approached the Delhi High Court peacefully to demand justice for the Unnao rape victim and urged that their petition be heard, adding that they will protest if justice is not served.

Speaking to ANI, Yogita Bhayana said, "Today, we have come to the High Court peacefully to appeal that the injustice done to our daughter be revoked and that the petition we are about to file be

heard. If we do not get justice, we will protest, and that is our right..." Congress leader Mumtaz Patel criticised the Delhi High Court's decision, calling it a "huge setback" and said that the ruling undermines the confidence of women across the country. "This is a huge setback, the way the High Court has given Sengar a free pass on a technicality. This is setting a very bad precedent in the country... How much their confidence must have been shattered by this ruling. Not just theirs, but that of women across the country," Patel said. The Delhi High Court granted bail (suspension of sentence) to former MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the Unnao rape case. He was convicted by a

Delhi CBI court in a minor's rape case and was serving a life sentence. He has been granted relief on the condition that he furnish a bail bond of Rs 15 lakh.

However, he will remain in custody as he has not yet been granted bail in the victim's father's custodial death matter. An appeal and application for suspension of sentence is pending before the High Court of Delhi. He was awarded a 10-year sentence in that case. While granting bail, the High Court has directed that Sengar will not go into the 5-kilometre area where the victim resides in Delhi. It is also directed that Sengar shall remain in Delhi. He shall not contact the victim's family members.

Bangladeshi Tourist Ban in Siliguri Due to Dhaka Turmoil

Kolkata, Dec 26: An association of hoteliers in West Bengal has decided to temporarily stop providing accommodation to Bangladeshis in and around Siliguri in view of political turmoil in the neighbouring country.

According to a recent notice issued by the Greater Siliguri Hoteliers Welfare Association, the decision was linked to incidents that have strained India-Bangladesh relations, including alleged disrespect towards the Indian flag and provocative statements by a section of Bangladeshi citizens. The hoteliers' organisation said the move was aimed at ensuring the safety and well-being of guests and hotel staff in the current sensitive climate. Members of the association will not permit the check-in



of Bangladeshi nationals until further notice, a functionary of the organisation said. Siliguri, located close to the international border in north Bengal and the strategically sensitive Siliguri corridor, connecting mainland India with the northeastern states, has been a major entry point for Bangladeshi visitors travelling to India on tourist, medical and student visas. The association said the restriction would be reviewed periodically based on the evolving situation, with the "possibility of reinstating accommodation facilities once conditions are deemed

safe and respectful". Member hotels have been urged to strictly adhere to the decision to maintain uniformity and solidarity across the association. Sources said the association has around 180 member hotels in and around Siliguri, all of which are following the decision. Nearly 50 additional hotels, which are not members of the association, have also voluntarily begun adhering to the restriction, they said. Hoteliers in West Bengal's Malda district are considering a similar move. The Malda Hotel Owners Association, which has around 250 member hotels, is expected to hold a meeting to discuss whether to impose restrictions on accommodating Bangladeshi nationals, the sources said.

President Murmu Presents Bal Puraskar Awards

New Delhi, Dec 26: President Droupadi Murmu conferred the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar on children for their exceptional achievements in the fields of Bravery, Social Service, Environment, Sports, Art & Culture and Science & Technology at a ceremony held in New Delhi on Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, the President congratulated the recipients of the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar. She said that the award-winning children have brought pride to their families, their communities, and the entire country. She expressed confidence that these awards will inspire all children across the country. She stated that this award was presented to them in recognition of their encouragement. She expressed confidence that these awards will inspire all the



children of the country. The President said that about 320 years ago, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Guru of the Sikh faith and revered by all Indians, and his four sons made supreme sacrifices while fighting for truth and justice. She said that the bravery of the two youngest Sahibzadas is honoured and respected both in India and abroad. She remembered with reverence the great child heroes who laid down their lives, proud of their commitment to truth and justice.

The President said that a country's greatness is evident

when its children are filled with patriotism and high ideals. She was pleased to note that the children have showcased their exceptional talent across bravery, art and culture, the environment, innovation, science and technology, social service, and sports. She said that it is because of talented children such as the seven-year-old Vaka Lakshmi Pragnika that India is considered a chess powerhouse on the world stage. Ajay Raj and Mohammed Sidan P, who saved others through their bravery and intelligence, deserve all the praise they receive.

Modi Promises 'Even Greater Vigour' for Future Government Reforms

New Delhi, Dec 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the government's reform trajectory will continue with even more vigour in the coming times as it is committed to boosting 'Ease of Living'.

The prime minister made this observation on a series of posts by the central government on its various reform initiatives. "Ours is a Government committed to boosting 'Ease of Living' and this thread below gives examples of how we have worked in that direction. Our reform trajectory will continue with even more vigour in the coming times," Modi said. With the hashtags #ReformInAction & #Good-Governance, the central government said in the posts that the real test of reform is whether it reduces stress for people and 2025 marked a clear shift in governance, with reforms focused on outcomes, not complexity. Simpler tax laws, faster dispute resolution, modern labour codes, and decriminalised compliance reduced friction for citizens and businesses alike.

The emphasis was on trust, predictability, and long-term growth, show-

ing how well-designed policy can quietly improve everyday life, the posts by MyGovIndia said. For millions of Indians, tax relief became real. Incomes up to Rs 12 lakh attract zero tax. Middle-class families now retain more of what they earn, giving them flexibility to spend, save and invest with greater confidence, it stated. It said the Income Tax Act, 2025 streamlined compliance and brought clarity, transparency, and fairness to the direct tax system, making it more taxpayer friendly and aligned with today's needs. Small businesses can now grow without fear of losing benefits. Higher investment and turnover limits allow MSMEs to expand while retaining access to loans and tax incentives. This encourages scaling up, hiring more workers, and building stronger local enterprises. Rural employment now creates assets, not just wages. With extended guaranteed employment and a focus on village infrastructure, rural labour is now building permanent assets that strengthen communities and livelihoods, it said. It observed that workers no longer need to navigate



dozens of laws as 29 labour laws were simplified into four clear codes covering wages, safety, social security, and relations. Rights are clearer, compliance is easier, and women benefit from assured maternity and workplace protections, it stated. The government also stated that GST has been made simpler for businesses and consumers alike. With streamlined tax slabs, easier registration, automated processes, and faster refunds, the next generation of GST reforms is improving ease of doing business. The impact is clear in record Diwali sales of Rs 6.05 trillion

and the strongest Navratri shopping in over a decade, it said. It also said that businesses can now bring products to market faster. With rationalised Quality Control Orders, Indian manufacturers face lower compliance costs, improved efficiency, and greater strength in global markets. More room to grow for Indian businesses, the government said in the posts. The expanded definition of small companies reduced compliance burden and costs, allowing enterprises with turnovers up to Rs 100 crore to focus on innovation and expansion, it added.

IT Firm CEO, Two Others, Arrested in Udaipur Gang Rape Case

Jaipur, Dec 26: Three people, including the CEO of a private IT company, have been arrested for alleged gangrape of a female manager of the company after a birthday party in Rajasthan's Udaipur, police said on Friday.

According to police, the accused CEO, Jitesh Sisodia, had organised a party on his birthday last Saturday, in which the manager was also a guest. The other accused in the case were a female executive head of the company and her husband Gaurav Sirohi of Meerut. All the three accused were arrested on Thursday and produced before a court, which remanded them to four-day police custody. "The accused were arrested following the registration of a case at Sukher police station under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. They were produced before a court on Thursday and sent on four-day police remand," Udaipur Superintendent of



Police Yogesh Goyal said. According to the woman's complaint, she was left alone as other guests gradually left after the party. The female executive head then offered to drop her home and took the woman in her car, in which Sisodia and Sirohi were also seated. On the way, they bought something resembling cigarettes from a shop and offered it to the woman. She allegedly lost consciousness after con-

suming it. She woke up the next morning to realise that she was sexually assaulted, the complaint said. Based on the woman manager's complaint, a case was registered, and the three accused were detained and arrested after interrogation, police said. The woman's medical examination was done and statements were recorded, and the case was handed over to Additional Superintendent of Police Madhuri Verma, they added.

Fresh land check ordered for Lada–Sarli highway work in Arunachal

Itanagar, Dec 26: The Arunachal Pradesh government has ordered a fresh round of land verification for the Lada–Sarli Frontier Highway project in East Kameng district. The verification will cover land and compensation details linked to all the five project packages. The state government has said that this step is important to ensure that the records are correct and that there is no confusion later when the highway construction moves ahead. This decision was taken after a fact-finding committee submitted its report to the government. Based on that report, the Department of Land Management formed new re-verification committees for the project area. These committees will work directly under the supervision of the deputy commissioner of East Kameng district. According to the official order, every piece of land that falls within the approved Right of Way of the highway will now be physically checked on the ground. This will be done strictly according to the approved strip plan for the project. Once the verification is done, the



findings will be matched with the compensation awards that were prepared earlier by a committee formed in January 2025. This comparison is being done to ensure that there are no mismatches in land area, ownership, or compensation amounts. The government has asked the re-verification teams to prepare detailed comparative statements. These statements must clearly mention the chainage, names of beneficiaries, total land area affected, details of standing assets like trees or crops, and the amount of compensation worked out under the Manual 2022. If there are any differences between earlier figures

and current findings, those must be recorded in detail. To make the process transparent, the entire exercise will be recorded on video and properly documented. For smooth functioning, the government has formed separate committees for different sections of the project. One committee will look after Packages I and II, another will handle Packages III and IV, and a third will verify Package V. These committees include officers from several departments, such as land management, public works, horticulture, fisheries, agriculture and forests, so that every type of land and asset can be properly assessed.

The Right of Way on the ground will be marked with the help of the chief engineer of PWD Highways. The executive engineer and project consultants will also assist in this work. The district administration has been asked to extend full logistical support to the teams involved. The committees have been given a time limit of 45 days from the date of the order to complete the verification work and submit their reports. To maintain transparency and security during the process, three platoons of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) will be deployed on the ground. At the same time, the Anti-Corruption Bureau will monitor the verification exercise. The government has also sanctioned Rs 60 lakh to meet the expenses related to this work. Officials said the order was issued on December 23, 2025 after receiving approval from the chief secretary of Arunachal Pradesh. The move is seen as an effort by the state government to avoid disputes and delays in the future, especially in an important infrastructure project like the Frontier Highway.

24 missing Tripura youths rescued from Arunachal

Agartala, Dec 26: Tripura Police have rescued 24 missing youths from Arunachal Pradesh’s Siang district after a coordinated inter-state operation carried out with the help of Arunachal Pradesh Police. All the rescued youths are reported to be safe, and arrangements are being made to bring them back to Tripura. According to officials, the case began when a woman from Unakoti district lodged a complaint on December 24, stating that 24 youths from the area had gone missing. Acting on the complaint, the police immediately registered an FIR and launched an investigation. Unakoti Superintendent of Police, Sudhambika R, said that during the inquiry, the police traced the movement of the missing youths and found that they had travelled to Arunachal Pradesh. Their presence was later confirmed in Siang district.

Once the location was identified, Tripura Police contacted their counterparts in Arunachal Pradesh. The Superintendent of Police in Siang and the local police station took prompt action and traced the missing group. All 24 youths were successfully rescued. The Tripura DGP also coordinated with the Arunachal Pradesh DGP to ensure smooth communication between the two states throughout the operation. Officials said this coordination helped speed up the rescue and ensured the safety of the missing youths. SP Sudhambika confirmed that the rescued individuals are safe.

A special team from Tripura Police is scheduled to travel to Arunachal Pradesh to bring them back home. Further investigation is underway to understand how and why the youths were taken there.

This case came to light soon after Tripura Labour Minister Tinku Roy wrote to Arunachal Pradesh Minister for Labour and Employment Nyato Dukam, seeking action regarding reports that around 24 children from Tripura had been taken to Arunachal Pradesh for labour work. The minister stated that child labour is strictly prohibited under law and is a serious violation of rights. He informed that a case had already been registered at Kailashahar Police Station after reports surfaced that about 30 child labourers, along with some adults, had been taken from Rangrung Tea Garden and another tea plantation area in Kailashan under Kailashahar subdivision. The workers were reportedly lured with promises of wages and better opportunities but were later denied their proper dues.

NHRC orders independent probe into child labour death case

Itanagar, Dec 26: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has started official proceedings into a case of suspected child labour and the death of a minor in Arunachal Pradesh. The move comes after the All India Chakma Students’ Union (AICSU) filed a complaint, seeking justice and a proper investigation into the incident. According to the complaint, a minor child was reportedly working as a domestic helper when the child died in what has been described as tragic and suspicious circumstances. The NHRC has now directed that the case be independently investigated, and that authorities submit a time-bound action taken report. The Commission examined the matter under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. Based on the information received so

far, the NHRC has said that the case appears to involve serious violations of child rights. The findings also point towards exploitation and negligence in connection with the employment and treatment of the child. The decision of the NHRC means that an investigation team will visit and study the case separately from local authorities to ensure fairness and transparency. The Commission has also emphasised that the investigation should be completed within a set period and that all details must be reported back. The All India Chakma Students’ Union has welcomed the Commission’s intervention. The organisation said the NHRC’s order reflects its commitment to protecting the rights of children and holding those responsible accountable.

Young Mizoram singer Esther Hnamte honoured with National Children’s Award

Aizawl, Dec 26: A nine-year-old singing talent from Mizoram, Esther Hnamte, has received one of the highest national awards for children. She was honoured with the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2025 in the Art and Culture category. The award was presented to her by President Droupadi Murmu at a ceremony held in New Delhi on December 26. Esther is already well known across the country for her clear and powerful voice. Many people first came to know her when she was only four years old. At that young age, she sang A.R. Rahman’s “Maa Tujhe Salaam” and also performed the national anthem. These songs were shared widely on social media, and people were surprised that such a small child could sing with so much confidence and emotion. Her songs soon reached national leaders as well. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were among those



who appreciated her performances. They praised the young singer for spreading a sense of unity and patriotism through her music. At the award ceremony in Delhi, Esther was one of 16 children from different parts of India who were recognised for their achievements. The awards covered several areas, including bravery, social service, environment, sports, science and technology, and art and

culture. The event brought together children who have done something special at a very young age. President Murmu congratulated all the award winners and said they had brought pride not only to their families but also to their communities and the nation. She also said that such recognition would encourage many more children to work hard, stay disciplined, and contribute positively to society.

The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar is given every year to children under the age of 18 who show outstanding talent or courage. It is considered the highest civilian honour for children in India. Receiving this award at the age of nine has placed Esther among the youngest cultural achievers in the country. Although Esther is still very young, this is not the first time she has been honoured. In 2020, she received a special appreciation award from the Governor of Mizoram. The following year, she was given the Young Achievers Award by Dalmia Cement Bharat Limited. Also in 2021, the Mizo Zaimi Inzawmkhawm, which is the singers’ society of the state, honoured her for her work in a special music video of the national anthem created along with the Indian Army. Through this project, she once again showed her love for the country and her ability to connect with people through music.

Former Assam DGP’s Son Takes Charge as Karbi Anglong DC

Guwahati, Dec 26: A 2020-batch IAS officer, Aranyak Saikia has been appointed as the new Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Karbi Anglong district in Assam. Aranyak Saikia is the son of retired IPS officer and former Assam Director General of Police (DGP) Kuladhar Saikia. Before this posting, he was serving as the staff officer to the Chief Secretary of Assam. His father, who retired as DGP in 2019 is also a recognised literary figure and received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2015 for his collection of short stories. The senior Saikia also headed the Asam Sahitya Sabha, the state’s leading literary body. With this new appointment, Aranyak Saikia will replace Nirala Phangshopi, a 1995-batch ACS officer. Phangshopi has now been posted as Additional Secretary in the Hill Areas Department. According to a notification issued by the Assam government, the posting is part of a major administrative reshuffle involving the transfer and appointment of at least 13 Deputy Commissioners and senior officials across various districts. Among the significant changes, Sumit Sattawan has been transferred from Kamrup (Metropolitan) to Tinsukia district, while Swapneel Paul will now take charge as the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup (Metropolitan).

BJP-LED Assam Govt has plan to grant st status to six communities: Cong

■ *Leader of Opposition in Assam, Debabrata Saikia, criticized the BJP government for lacking a genuine plan to grant Scheduled Tribe status to six communities in the state.*

Guwahati, Dec 26: Leader of Opposition in the Assam Legislative Assembly, Debabrata Saikia on Friday remarked that the BJP government in the state “does not have any con-

crete plan or genuine intention to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the six communities of the state.” Addressing a media conference in Guwahati on Friday, Saikia stated that regardless of what Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma claims publicly, the government has taken no real or sincere steps towards granting ST status to the six communities. Saikia said that if the government truly had the polit-

ical will, it could have easily moved forward by issuing the required notification. He alleged that although the matter had reached the Rajya Sabha and there was no complexity thereafter, the BJP government deliberately created confusion and complications under the pretext of a Ministerial Group report. He pointed out that during the concluding session of the Assam Legislative Assembly, the report of

the Ministerial Group on the ST status of the six communities was tabled. “Earlier, during the Budget Session, I had introduced a Private Member’s Bill stating that the ST status of the six communities should be implemented as per earlier decisions. At that time, Tribal Affairs Minister Ranaj Pegu assured that the Ministerial Group report would be submitted within one month. Although this was not done

within a month, the report was finally tabled after eight months on the very last day of the session—without allowing any discussion or debate. The House was abruptly adjourned,” Saikia said. He criticised the Chief Minister’s subsequent statements claiming that ST status would not be granted before elections and that certain organisations had allegedly opposed pre-election implementation.

“We do not know which organisations the Chief Minister is referring to. If one looks at the archives of his own statements, it will be clear that before the 2019 elections, he himself publicly announced that the issue of ST status had been resolved. From 2019 to 2026, seven years have passed with no meaningful progress,” Saikia said, terming it a clear example of BJP’s deception in the

name of tribal recognition. Saikia asserted that the demand for ST status for the six communities was not a new political claim but a long-standing question of justice.

He claimed that previous Congress governments had taken genuine legal and administrative steps, while the current BJP government has deliberately delayed the issue in the name of consultations.

Esther Lalduhawmi Hnamte of Mizoram receives Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

Aizawl, Dec 26: Esther Lalduhawmi Hnamte, the child singing prodigy from Mizoram, received the prestigious Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar.

President Droupadi Murmu presented the award at a ceremony held in New Delhi today.

Her soulful renditions of “Maa Tujhe Salaam”, “Vande Mataram”, and several other patriotic songs have touched millions of hearts across the nation, inspiring deep feelings of patriotism and beautifully celebrating India’s unity in diversity. At such a tender age, Esther Hnamte truly embodies national pride and cultural harmony, making her a shining inspiration for Viksit Bharat.

Born on June 9, 2016, Hnamte began singing at the age of three, performing primarily in churches and local programmes. She gained national attention in October 2020 after a video of her rendition of AR Rahman’s



“Vande Mataram” was shared by former Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga and later by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, following which the video went viral.

In August 2021, she released a music video of the national anthem on YouTube featuring Assam Rifles personnel, who sponsored the project. The video crossed three million views within a week and has since garnered over 47 million views.

In December last year,

Hnamte performed “Vande Mataram” at the inaugural function of the Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav in the presence of Prime Minister Modi, who praised her performance. On the occasion, she also gifted the Prime Minister a Northeast mascot doll named “Poorvi”.

The youngest of three siblings, Hnamte has received several recognitions, including special appreciation from former Mizoram governor PS Sreedharan Pillai

and the Young Achievers Award presented by Dalmia Cement Bharat Limited. In 2021, she was also featured as the Amul Girl in an advertisement by the dairy cooperative.

A documentary on her life titled ‘A Star is Born’ won the Best Documentary Award (Silver) at the Northeast Film Festival in 2023.

Hnamte’s achievement has been described as a moment of pride for Mizoram and the country.

Assam’s Aishi Prisha Borah honored with Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

Guwahati, Dec 26: Assam’s Aishi Prisha Borah, hailing from Jorhat, received the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2025 in the Science and Technology category on Friday. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulated her for the prestigious achievement. In a post on social media platform X, the Chief Minister praised Aishi’s work in natural farming and her initiatives that convert waste into wealth. He noted that her efforts to promote sustainable practices at such a young age are commendable and could inspire other children to adopt environmentally responsible habits. President Droupadi Murmu presented the awards to 20 children during a ceremony at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on Friday. The recipients were recognised for exceptional accomplishments across six categories: Bravery, Social Ser-



vice, Environment, Sports, Art and Culture, and Science and Technology. During the ceremony, the President acknowledged the remarkable talents of the awardees, stating that such recognition would motivate young minds to work for the betterment of society. She added that the award-winning children have brought pride to their families, communities, and the nation. The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar is India’s highest civilian honour for children, awarded annually to individuals aged 5 to 18 for

outstanding contributions in various fields. President Droupadi Murmu on Friday concluded her two-day official visit to the border state of Manipur after launching development projects worth over Rs 1,500 crore, officials said. On the second and final day of her maiden visit to the state, President Murmu visited Senapati district, which borders Nagaland to the north, and inaugurated six development projects.

She also laid the foundation stones for five other projects in the district. Among the inaugurated

projects were a model residential school for Rs 25 crore, two upgraded Primary Health Centres costing Rs 10 crore, and two Bailey Bridges constructed at Rs 11 crore. The projects cover various sectors, including girls’ and boys’ hostels, policing and public safety, healthcare, community and tribal development, education, and other areas.

Addressing the gathering, President Murmu stated that the Government of India is working closely with local leaders, civil society, and communities to ensure development is inclusive and sustainable. She added that the government recognises the aspirations of the people of Manipur and urged everyone to work towards the peace and prosperity of the state. She added that the award-winning children have brought pride to their families, communities, and the nation. young minds to work for the betterment of society.

Markets slip in early trade two-day rally Sensex falls Nifty drops to 26,145

New Delhi: Equity bench- mark indices Sensex and Nifty declined in early trade on Tuesday after two days of sharp rally, dragged by IT stocks.The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 116.57 points to 85,450.91 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty declined by 27.15 points to 26,145.25.Market experts said that trading volumes are expected to remain subdued amid the holiday-shortened week.From the 30-Sensex firms, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Asian Paints, HCL Tech, Eternal and Bharti Airtel were among the major laggardsEquity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined in early trade on Tuesday after two days of sharp rally, dragged by IT stocks.The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 116.57 points to 85,450.91 in ear-



ly trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty declined by 27.15 points to 26,145.25. Market experts said that trading volumes are expected to remain subdued amid the holiday-shortened week. From the 30-Sensex firms, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Asian Paints, HCL Tech, Eternal and Bharti Airtel were among the major laggards.However, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, UltraT-ech Cement and Tata Steel

were among the gainers.In Asian markets, South Korea’s Kospi, Japan’s Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai’s SSE Composite index and Hong Kong’s Hang Seng index traded in positive territory. US markets ended higher on Monday.Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 457.34 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs).

Castrol India increase 9% after BP sells Stonepeak majority company

New Delhi: Shares of Castrol India witnessed a significant surge of 9% after BP Plc reached an agreement to sell its 65% stake in parent company Castrol to Stonepeak, valuing the business at an enterprise value of \$10.1 billion.BP will generate approximately \$6 billion in net proceeds from the deal, which includes accelerated dividend payments. The proceeds are earmarked to reduce BP’s net debt, which stood at \$26.1 billion at the end of Q3 2025, towards its target range of \$14–18 billion by the end of 2027. BP emphasised that the deal “strengthens its balance sheet, simplifies its portfolio, and supports its strategy to focus on downstream

operations. Castrol India stock rose 8.92% to Rs 202.50 in afternoon trade. Market cap of the firm stood at Rs 18,936 crore. The company’s ownership landscape includes LIC with a 10% stake, the Government of Singapore at 1.33%, and a robust base of over 5 lakh small retail shareholders controlling 16.6% of Castrol India.

The current transaction, expected to conclude by the end of 2026 pending regulatory approvals, will result in a new joint venture with 65% ownership by Stonepeak and 35% by BP. After a two-year lock-up period, BP will have an option to sell its remaining stake.

Samsung sees ‘tremendous’ India potential, plans AI engineering shift

Mumbai: Leading appliances and consumer electronics maker Samsung is investing in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) ecosystem in the country, besides participating in the PLI scheme for display modules, its President and CEO of Southwest Asia, JB Park, said on Tuesday.Samsung, which has completed three decades of operations in India, sees “tremendous” potential here and expects India to become among its leading global markets, supported by tailwinds, the rise of the economy and per capita GDP in the coming years.The company, part of South Korean Chaebol Samsung, is looking at “huge potential” here with a comparatively lower penetration of appliances and betting on the “future opportunities” of transforming the mass market to premium, a trend which has already started in mobile phones, said Park. Moreover, Samsung India also ruled out listing on local stock exchanges like the other Korean sister concerns such as Hyundai Motors India and LG Electronics India.Park also ruled out any such plans in future by Samsung to list its Indian entity at the Indian stock exchanges and said: “There are multiple options (for getting money to invest), but IPO is not in the plan.” On the production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes, Park said Samsung is participating in the Electronics Manufacturing Component Scheme. It has applied for investments for display under the government ECMS programme.



When asked about the PLI scheme, Park thanked the Indian government “for giving this kind of policy to enable more production in India, making the company’s Made in India products more competitive.”“We are learning from adopting how the policies are being made,” he said, adding, “I think the PLI 2.0, if they (government) make it more competitive against nations that are deriving more manufacturing investment to their country. It’s a necessity that we continue to work together with the government on a PLI platform.” Samsung India, which participated in the smartphone PLI scheme, has completed it, though it missed the target during the COVID times.

The government will use online sources and e-tailers to gather

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 released 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.For airfares, telecom services, and OTT platforms, price data is proposed to be compiled from online sources using web-based methods, MoSPI said.“The adoption of these alternative and digital data sources is expected to substantially improve the representativeness, reliability, accuracy and overall quality of the CPI,” it added.The ministry is also expanding coverage across urban and rural markets, while also incorporating e-commerce price data and other digital sources to better capture changing consumption patterns.

IndiGo allowed to operate 5 Turkish-leased B737 planes only till March 2026: DGCA

New Delhi: IndiGo has been permitted to operate five narrow-body aircraft leased from Turkey only until March 2026, with no further extensions to be granted, aviation regulator DGCA clarified on Monday amid speculation that the airline had been allowed additional time. The watchdog said IndiGo has been allowed to operate aircraft on wet lease from Turkey with a final extension valid till March 2026, after which the arrangement will end.IndiGo has been permitted to operate aircraft on wet lease from Turkey with a last extension valid till March 2026 with a sunset clause that no further extension will be given.”This is based on the undertaking submitted by Indigo airlines in the instant case wherein they have sought last time extension, since their long range aircraft (A321-XLR) are to be de-

livered by February 2026,” a senior DGCA official said.According to the regulator, the lease of five Boeing 737 aircraft taken from Turkey’s Corendon Airlines will expire on March 31, 2026. At present, IndiGo operates 15 foreign aircraft on a wet or damp lease basis, including seven from Turkey. In August this year, the DGCA had granted a six-month extension till February 2026 for IndiGo to operate two leased Boeing 777 aircraft from Turkish Airlines, subject to certain conditions.That decision came less than three months after the regulator, in May, provided a one-time final extension of three months till August 31 for operating the Turkish Airlines aircraft and had also directed the carrier not to seek any further extension. The move was taken against the back-



drop of Turkiye backing Pakistan and condemning India’s strikes on terror camps in the neighbouring country in May.”Due to grounding of aircraft because of engine related issues and the delays in delivery

of aircraft against orders from the OEMs, many Indian carriers as a stop gap arrangement are resorting to wet lease from foreign companies in order to serve Indian passengers,” the official said.

Christmas break, the Nifty falls below 26,150 and the Sensex falls 116 points

New Delhi: Domestic equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty ended Wednesday’s session in red, as sustained selling by foreign portfolio investors and profit-taking weighed on sentiment ahead of the Christmas holiday, overshadowing otherwise positive global cues.At close, the Sensex settled 116.14 points, or 0.14% lower at 85,524.84, while the Nifty declined 35.05 points or 0.13% to close at 26,142.10. Tata Motors PV emerged as top loser on the Sensex, dropping 1.05% to Rs 359.30. Sun Pharma followed with a 1.01% fall, while Asian Paints, Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever and Tata Steel declined 0.83%, 0.82%, 0.80% and 0.53%, respectively. Five stocks, namely Reliance Industries (RIL), ICICI Bank, Sun Pharma, IndiGo, and Hindustan Unilever, contributed heavily to the Sensex’s decline. Among sectoral indices, the BSE Energy index declined 0.58% to close at 12,015.37, while the BSE IT fell 0.44% to settle at 37,756.95.Over-

all, of the 4,332 actively traded BSE stocks, 1,836 closed higher, 2,343 declined, and 153 remained unchanged. During the session, 115 stocks touched their 52-week highs, while 102 fell to 52-week lows. Meanwhile, 197 scrips hit their upper circuits, and 129 were locked in lower circuits. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited, said domestic equities largely traded in a narrow range during the holiday-shortened week, as muted participation kept volumes thin toward the year-end. He added that the lacklustre momentum was in line with trends seen across major Asian markets.Nair said the RBI’s recently announced liquidity initiatives, including OMOs and a USD/INR buy–sell swap, are expected to improve systemic liquidity and help stabilise currency volatility.“On the global front, stronger-than-expected US GDP data points to economic resilience, although rising unemployment has tempered optimism. Gold extended its rally on a soft-



er dollar and elevated geopolitical risks, supported by increasing expectations of continued Fed policy easing. Meanwhile, Brent crude hovered near multi-year lows, reinforcing a benign inflation outlook. Looking ahead, market activity is likely to remain muted, though investors will be closely tracking developments on the trade front,” Nair added.

India’s 2025 tax reforms will include lower GST, a larger I-T exemption, and customs

New Delhi: India overhauled its tax regime in 2025 with significant cuts in Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates and a higher income tax exemption threshold, with attention now shifting to customs duty rationalisation and procedural simplification in the forthcoming Budget.From April 1 next year, the new simplified Income Tax Act, 2025, will come into force, replacing the more than six-decade-old Income Tax Act, 1961. In addition, two new laws—one providing for an additional excise duty on cigarettes and another levying a cess on pan masala over and above GST—will be implemented on dates to be notified by the government.The tax reforms introduced in 2025 were aimed at stimulating demand amid a challenging global economic environment. With tariff-related uncertainties affecting economic decision-making, India’s reform measures focused on strengthening domestic demand to support consumption and growth.A key element of the reforms was the reduction of GST rates on around 375 goods and services 0.7 per cent. November was the first month to capture



the full impact of the GST rate cut implemented on September 22.On the direct tax side, the government raised the income tax exemption limit, offer-

ing relief to middle-income taxpayers and increasing disposable income in the hands of consumers. The measure was widely seen as a consumption

booster, particularly for urban households, while also reinforcing voluntary compliance under the simplified tax regime.

Purchase Ambuja Cements stock as Axis Securities predicts a 14%

Mumbai: Shares of Ambuja Cements climbed in Wednesday’s trade to continue their winning run for the fourth consecutive session. At last check, the stock was trading 0.90 per cent higher at Rs 551.65 on BSE. The Adani Group stock has been in focus following a strategic push to consolidate its cement operations, prompting domestic brokerage Axis On Tuesday, the stock had closed 1.25 per cent higher at Rs 546.75. The bullish outlook is largely anchored on Ambuja Cements’ ambitious consolidation strategy. The company’s board has given the green light for the amalgamation of its subsidiaries, ACC Ltd and Orient Cement Ltd, into the parent entity. According to Axis Se-

curities, this move is set to establish a unified “One Cement Platform,” designed to streamline the group’s corporate structure and bolster its balance sheet.“The merger is expected to create operational synergies by improving manufacturing and logistics efficiency... and enabling better capital allocation to support growth and reinforce market leadership,” the brokerage said.For investors holding shares in the subsidiaries, the swap ratios have been clearly defined. ACC shareholders will receive 328 equity shares of Ambuja Cements with a face value of Rs 2 for every 100 ACC shares held. Similarly, for every 100 shares of Orient Cement, shareholders will be issued 33 shares of Ambuja Cement. The transaction is expected

to wrap up within 12 months, subject to regulatory nods from shareholders, creditors, SEBI, and the NCLT. For ACC, the appointed date is set for January 1, 2026, while for Orient Cement, it is May 1, 2025.Axis Securities highlighted that the unified structure will optimise the network and branding, potentially leading to a margin improvement of at least Rs 100 per metric tonne. The current cement capacity stands at 107 MTPA, with a clear roadmap to hit 155 MTPA by FY28. The brokerage believes that post-merger, tax incentives currently availed by ACC in states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh will continue to accrue to Ambuja, further sweetening the deal.

Rupee falls 15 paise to close at 89.86 against U.S. dollar

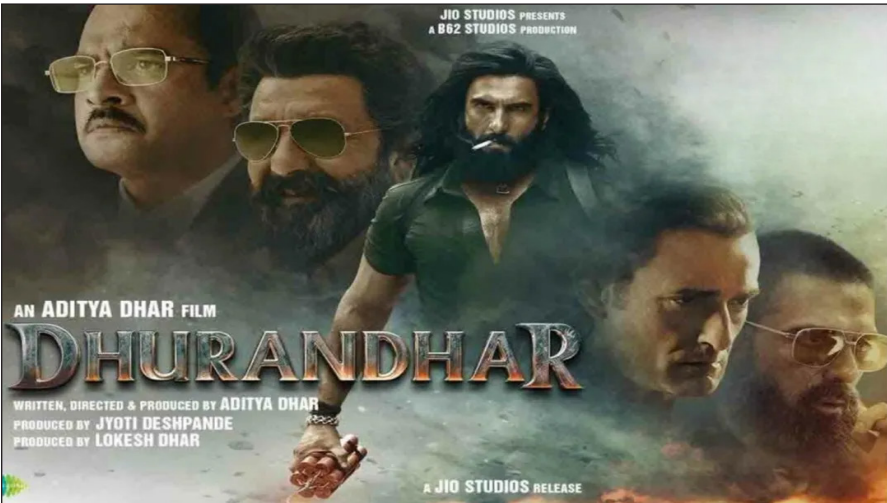


Mumbai:The rupee depreciated 15 paise to close at 89.86 z (provisional) against the U.S. dollar on Friday (December 26, 2025), tracking a negative trend in domestic equities and foreign fund outflows. The rupee depreciated 15 paise to close at 89.86 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking a negative trend in domestic equities and foreign fund outflows. Forex traders said a recovery in crude oil prices, significant dollar demand from importers, and risk-off sentiment amid trade deal uncertainties further dented investor sentiment. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 89.84 against the US dollar, then touched an intra-day low of 89.94, registering a 23-paise loss from its previous close.At the end of the trading session on Friday, the rupee pared some of its losses and was quoted at 89.86 (provisional), down 15 paise from its previous close.On Wednesday, the rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day lower by eight paise at 89.71 against the US dollar.Forex and equity markets were closed on Thursday for Christmas.

Dhurandhar enters 1000-crore club, revisiting films that crossed milestone

Mumbai: Aditya Dhar's latest spy thriller, Dhurandhar, headlined by Ranveer Singh, has set a new benchmark in the Indian film industry by grossing over Rs 1000 crore within just 21 days of its release. The film, which debuted in cinemas on December 5, exceeded box office predictions and quickly established itself as the highest-grossing film of 2025. As we celebrate the film's journey, take a look at other movies that crossed the 100-crore landmark before. In 2017, SS Rajamouli's Baahubali 2: The Conclusion rewrote box office history by becoming the first Indian film to enter the Rs 1000 crore club, earning Rs 1788.06 crore worldwide. However, after its initial release in 2016, Dangal hit Chinese theatres in May, just a month after Baahubali 2, and went on to surpass it. The Aamir Khan-Nitesh Tiwari film became the first and only Indian movie to cross the Rs 2000 crore mark globally, with a staggering Rs 2070 crore. Dangal continues to hold the record as the highest-grossing Indian film of all time.

Following these landmark successes, more films set their sights on the coveted milestone. Rajamouli returned in 2022 with RRR, which collected Rs 1,230 crore worldwide. Just a month later, Prashanth



Neel's KGF: Chapter 2 joined the elite club with Rs 1,215 crore in global earnings. The momentum continued in 2023, with Atlee's Jawan and Siddharth Anand's Pathaan also crossing Rs 1,000 crore, raking in Rs 1,160 crore and Rs 1,055 crore respectively. The makers of Dhurandhar adopted a restrained approach to publicity, relying heavily on word-of-mouth and critical endorsements after release. This strategy appears to have paid off, with the film's box office strength holding steady even in the face of competition from other major titles. Ranveer Singh's portrayal of a spy in the thriller has earned praise from audiences and critics alike. Dhurandhar has given Bollywood a rousing send-off to 2025, emerging as only the second Hindi film

after Chhaava to both dominate the box office and drive cultural conversation this year. While Vicky Kaushal's film set the momentum early with its record-breaking run, the Ranveer Singh-led spy thriller has provided a thunderous year-end finale, reigniting hope and confidence within the industry.

With its continued strong showing at the box office, Dhurandhar has set a precedent for Hindi-language spy thrillers and demonstrated the potential of blockbuster releases to achieve record-breaking collections without extensive pre-release campaigns. The film's performance is expected to remain a focal point for industry discussions in the weeks ahead. - Released on December 5, 2025, Dhurandhar exceeded all industry forecasts by grossing

₹1003.10 crore worldwide in just three weeks. - The film's India net collection stands at ₹668.80 crore, translating to an India gross of ₹796.19 crore, while its overseas gross is ₹206.91 crore, pushing the worldwide total past the four-digit milestone. - Directed by Aditya Dhar, the film is a spy thriller headlined by Ranveer Singh, who has now scored his first-ever ₹1000-crore grosser. - Industry analysts note that Dhurandhar is not just a box office success but a cultural event, redefining "event cinema" in the post-pandemic era. - Its strong repeat value and cross-market appeal have cemented Ranveer Singh's position among Bollywood's most bankable stars. Dhurandhar box office worldwide collection Day 19: Will it surpass the record of Dangal?

Rekha meets Big B's grandson Agastya, shares warm hug in resurfaced viral video amid Ikkis buzz

Bengaluru: A video featuring veteran actor Rekha warmly interacting with Agastya Nanda, grandson of Amitabh Bachchan, at the RK Film Festival last year has resurfaced online. The renewed interest comes as Agastya gears up for the release of his upcoming film Ikkis on January 1, 2025. The footage shows Rekha embracing Agastya, fondly holding his face and sharing words of encouragement,

while Agastya responds with folded hands, expressing his gratitude and respect. The RK Film Festival, an event dedicated to celebrating the cinematic legacy of Raj Kapoor, attracted several prominent Bollywood personalities earlier this year. Rekha's gesture towards Agastya drew attention not only for its warmth but also because of the longstanding public curiosity surrounding the Bachchan family and their



connections within the film industry. Agastya Nanda is the son of Shweta Bachchan Nanda and the grandson of legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan. The megastar

Katrina Kaif, Vicky Kaushal share festive Christmas celebration

Mumbai: Taking to Instagram, Katrina Kaif gave her fans and followers a sneak peek into Kaushal's and Kaif's Christmas bash. She shared an adorable picture of herself smiling with her husband, Vicky Kaushal, brother-in-law Sunny Kaushal, and brother Sebastien. Katrina looked radiant in a red sweater, exuding Christmas vibes. Vicky, Sunny and Sebastien embraced the Christmas spirit by donning Santa Caps. "Love joy and peace to all... It's a Merry Merry Christmas," she captioned the post. In November this year, Vicky and Katrina announced the arrival of their son, leaving fans and their friends joyous. "Our bundle of joy has arrived. With immense love and gratitude, we welcome our baby boy. 7th November, 2025. Katrina & Vicky," the note read. They confirmed their pregnancy in September with an adorable picture from what appeared to be a maternity photoshoot. "On our way to start the best chapter of our lives with hearts full of joy and gratitude," they wrote in a joint announcement on Instagram. Vicky and Katrina tied the knot on December 9, 2021, at Six Senses Fort Barwara in Rajasthan.

Katrina Kaif posted a cheerful picture from their Mumbai home, featuring herself, husband Vicky Kaushal, brother-in-law



Sunny Kaushal, and her brother Sebastien Laurent Michel. - The family posed in front of a beautifully decorated Christmas tree, all wearing red-and-white Santa hats to add festive charm. - Katrina looked radiant in a bright red outfit, while Vicky kept the mood light with sunglasses and a playful smile. - Sharing the post, Katrina wrote: "Love joy and peace to all... It's a Merry Merry Christmas!" - This year's celebration was especially meaningful as it marked Katrina and Vicky's first Christmas after welcoming their baby boy in November 2025. - The couple had announced the arrival of their son with a heartfelt note: "Our bundle of joy has arrived. With immense love and gratitude, we welcome our baby boy. 7th November, 2025." - The intimate celebration reflected the couple's preference for family warmth over glitzy parties, contrasting with other Bollywood stars who attended larger Christmas dinners. - Fans flooded Katrina's Instagram with love, calling the family photo "adorable" and praising her glowing look as a new mom. - First Christmas as parents: A milestone moment for the couple, cherished by fans. - Family-centered celebration: Highlights their grounded approach despite being Bollywood superstars. Katrina's post spread positivity, resonating with her millions of followers.

They confirmed their pregnancy in September with an adorable picture from what appeared to be a maternity photoshoot. "On our way to start the best chapter of our lives with hearts full of joy and gratitude," they wrote in a joint announcement on Instagram. December Senses Fort Barwara in Rajasthan. Katrina & Vicky," read. - na Kaif posted a family selfie featuring herself, husband Vicky Kaushal, brother-in-law Sunny Kaushal look. Katrina looked radiant in a bright red outfit, while Vicky added a playful sunglasses.

Preity Zinta enjoys cosy Christmas with family

Mumbai:Preity Zinta shared photos from her Christmas celebration with her family on social media. The pictures featured her husband Gene Goodenough and their twin children, capturing simple and joyful moments from the festive day.Preity shared a series of photos on Instagram along with a heartfelt message. "Merry Christmas and happy holidays from ours to yours. Wish you all loads of love, light and happiness always," she wrote.

The pictures showed the Veer Zaara actor smiling alongside her husband, their daughter Gia dancing in front of a beautifully decorated Christmas tree, and their son Jai enjoying charm.



Anirudh travels to Malaysia for Vijay's Jana Nayagan audio launch event

Bengaluru: Music composer Anirudh was spotted at Chennai airport on his way to Malaysia for the Jana Nayagan audio launch. The Vaathi Coming hitmaker expressed his excitement about performing before a massive crowd while speaking to the media at the airport. Earlier, Thalapathy Vijay, choreographer-actor Prabhudeva and Jailer director Nelson were also seen departing for Malaysia for the event.



Asked about Vijay's next film by the media, Anirudh said with a laugh, "No, this is his one last dance." The makers had earlier revealed that Anirudh's team had already reached Malaysia, sharing a video of the crew landing at the airport and expressing their excitement about performing there. Singer Adithya RK, Velu, DJ Gautam and several other members featured in the clip, which the makers captioned, "ANIRUDH'S TEAM IS HERE!" The lead actor opposite Vijay in Jana Nayagan, Pooja Hegde, was also spotted at the Mumbai airport as she departed for Malaysia. She was seen in travel attire, sporting a pair of sunglasses as she posed for the paparazzi before leaving. The film also features Mamitha Baiju and Bobby Deol in prominent roles. Jana Nayagan is Vijay's last film before he becomes a full-time politician. The film's audio launch is set to happen

on December 27 at the Bukit Jalil Stadium, which can accommodate nearly 85,000 people.

The grand event is said to be split into two segments: Thalapathy Thiruvizha and the audio launch. The Thalapathy Thiruvizha is a tribute concert and will feature as many as 30 singers, including Anuradha Sriram, SPB Charan, Saindhavi, Andrea Jeremiah and several others.

The programme is expected to start at 3.30 pm Malaysian time and could last nearly five hours. The Thalapathy Thiruvizha concert will be followed by the audio launch, which will witness the cast and crew of Jana Nayagan delivering speeches and sharing their experience of working with Thalapathy Vijay and director H Vinoth. - The audio launch is scheduled for December 27, 2025, at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. - The event is part of the larger celebration called Thalapathy Thiruvizha, marking Vijay's final film appearance before his political career. - Nearly 80,000 fans are expected to attend, making it one of the biggest Tamil cinema events ever held overseas. - Anirudh Ravichander, the film's music director, expressed excitement about performing live in front of the massive crowd. He joked to the media: "No, this is his one last dance," when asked about Vijay's next project. - Thalapathy Vijay himself will be present, accompanied by choreographer-actor Prabhu Deva, director Nelson Dilipkumar, and other stars.

The event will feature performances by singers like Anuradha Sriram and Andrea Jeremiah, alongside appearances from the film's cast including Pooja Hegde, Mamitha Baiju, and Bobby Deol. While talking to the media, Anirudh said in Tamil, "I'm very excited. The event being put together is on a huge scale, with almost 80,000 people attending. I'm excited to perform in front of that crowd." Directed by H. Vinoth, the film is Vijay's farewell project before he devotes himself to politics.

The movie is slated for a January 9, 2026 worldwide release. The Malaysian government has imposed restrictions on political commentary during the event, ensuring the focus remains on cinema and celebration. Vijay's last film as an actor makes this audio launch a landmark cultural moment. The Thalapathy Thiruvizha concert will be followed by the audio launch, which will witness the cast and crew of Jana Nayagan delivering speeches and sharing their experience of working with Thalapathy Vijay.

Kareena, Prithviraj finish shooting for Daayra film

Mumbai: Actors Kareena Kapoor Khan and Prithviraj Sukumaran have wrapped shooting for their upcoming crime-drama thriller "Daayra". The film is directed by Meghna Gulzar, known for directing films such as Vicky Kaushal-starrer "Sam Bahadur" and "Raazi" with Alia Bhatt. Sukumaran announced the wrap on the film by sharing a picture on his Instagram handle on Friday. It featured the actor alongside his co-star, Khan, and Gulzar. "That's a wrap on #Daayra. The story we've lived on set will soon come alive for audiences everywhere. Grateful for this journey and can't wait for you to witness it on screen in cinemas in 2026," he wrote in the caption. "Daayra" is billed as a crime-drama thriller that explores the age-old paradox of crime, punishment, and justice. It taps into the pulse of the people as it confronts the topical and diabolical realities unfolding in society today, as per the official logline. The filming started in September. Gulzar announced it with a montage video from the set featuring herself, Sukumaran, and Khan. "A journey of blurred and crossed lines... We begin," she wrote in the caption. - Kareena Kapoor Khan and Prithviraj Sukumaran recently completed filming for Daayra, directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Meghna Gulzar. - The production house Jun-



glee Pictures shared behind-the-scenes photos featuring Kareena, Prithviraj, and Meghna Gulzar, announcing: "Daayra! It's a wrap! Months of hard work, creativity, and collaboration have come together to bring this story to life. Immense gratitude to the cast, crew, and everyone who made this journey possible. Onward to the next chapter! In Cinemas 2026." - Daayra is described as a gripping investigative crime thriller that explores how a single disturbing act can trigger ripple effects across society, challenging conventional ideas of morality and justice.

The film is produced jointly by Jungle Pictures and Pen Studios, adding to its strong backing and anticipation. Unlike a typical whodunit, the narrative focuses on the social and moral consequences of crime, making it a thought-provoking story. Bollywood superstar known for her versatility, taking on another intense role. Malay-

alam cinema's leading star, continuing his impactful crossover into Hindi films. - Acclaimed director of Raazi and Sam Bahadur, known for socially conscious storytelling. - Shooting wrapped in December 2025. - The film is scheduled for a 2026 theatrical release, with post-production beginning immediately. The collaboration between Kareena and Prithviraj is generating strong buzz across Bollywood and South Indian cinema. - Meghna Gulzar's track record of socially relevant films raises expectations for Daayra. The film's unique theme of morality and justice positions it as one of 2026's most awaited releases. is nothing short of a dream come true and a full circle Paulo Coelho moment. But truly, if anything, this recognition makes me a little more aware of the responsibility I have towards my craft, and at the same time, it excites me for what's to come,"irector Shanoor Sharma, for their support.

Sitaaron Ke Sitaare

Mumbai :Aamir Khan's Sitaare Zameen Par, a spiritual sequel to the hit Taare Zameen Par in 2007, proved to be a massive success. After the phenomenal run, the production houses released a special documentary titled Sitaaron Ke Sitaare, directed by Shaanib Bakshi. The special documentary brings forth the stories that lie behind the "Sitaaras" of Sitaare Zameen Par. It offers a touching glimpse into the lives of parents as they navigate their children's diagnoses, slowly come to terms with reality, and continue to build a joyful, hopeful life around them. Announcing the same, the production house wrote, "Behind every shining Sitaara is a parent who always believed in and supported them. Watch the heartfelt documentary 'Sitaaron Ke Sitaare' now streaming for free on YouTube (sic)." Backed by glowing word of mouth and overwhelming audience affection, Sitaare Zameen Par witnessed an exceptional run at the box office. The documentary comes after Aamir introduced the sports comedy-drama on YouTube through an initiative titled 'Janta Ka Theater,' making it available at an affordable price of just Rs 100. The film presented 10 rising stars: Aroush Datta, Gopi Krishna Varma, Samvit Desai, Vedant Sharma, Ayush Bhansali, Ashish Pendse, Rishi Shahani, Rishabh Jain, Naman Mishra, and Simran Mangeshkar. Directed by RS Prasanna, the film released in theatres on June 20. - Sitaaron Ke Sitaare is directed using stars: Aroush Datta, Gopi Krishna Varma, Samvit Desai, Vedant Sharma, Ayush Bhansali, Ashish Pendse, Rishi Shahani, Rishabh Jain, Naman Mishra, and Simran Mangeshkar. witnessed an exceptional run at the box office. by RS Prasanna, the film released. documentary 'Sitaaron Ke Sitaare' now streaming for free on YouTube (sic)." exceptional run at the box office.

Agastya's Defining Battle

Mumbai: Directed by Sri-ram Raghavan, 'Ikkis' chronicles the life of Khetarpal, the youngest recipient of India's highest military honour. Nanda said he studied films such as 'Refugee', 'Major Saab' and 'Border' as part of his preparation. "We took a lot of inspiration and have seen a lot of lovely films like 'Refugee', 'Major Saab' and 'Border'. These were classic Indian films. I would watch them for my own study," the actor said during a media interaction on Friday evening. He added that 'Ikkis' stands apart from those films. "This is a different subject altogether; it has a different kind of segment of the army. I'm glad I got an opportunity to play a soldier," he said. In 'Major Saab' (1998), Amitabh Bachchan played Major Jasbir Singh Rana, while 'Refugee' marked the acting debut of Abhishek Bachchan as a mysterious guide helping people cross the Rann of Kutch along the India-Pakistan border. Agastya also revealed a long-standing rule in the Bachchan household: films are not discussed at the dining table. "We've a rule at home that we don't discuss movies — what films we are doing, what scenes we've shot, or what we're going to do next," he said. "Of course, they know about the film and they 'Figure it out'."

A Study Reveals That Kimchi Enhances Your Immune System; Here Is How You Can Prepare It At Home

Recent research indicates that scientists have discovered that regular consumption of kimchi can enhance immune cell functionality while maintaining equilibrium within the immune system. These findings lend scientific credibility to kimchi’s longstanding status as a health-enhancing food. Kimchi is a traditional Korean fermented side dish (banchan), renowned for its spicy, tangy flavour and probiotic punch. Primarily made from napa cabbage (baechu-kimchi) or radishes, it features hundreds of varieties using vegetables like cucumbers or green onions, seasoned with gochugaru (Korean chilli flakes), garlic, ginger, fish sauce, scallions, and sometimes fermented shrimp or oysters for umami. The World Institute of Kimchi, a government-funded research organisation under the Ministry of Science and ICT, conducted this study, and the findings were published in npj Science of Food. The research found that kimchi has “immunomodulatory properties”, meaning it can calm excessive immune reactions while also improving protective immune functions. The clinical trial involved overweight adults who were divided into three groups and over a 12-week period,



they consumed either a placebo, kimchi powder made from naturally fermented kimchi, or kimchi powder produced using a starter culture fermentation method. The team of researchers monitored changes in gene activity within the participants’ immune cells, revealing subtle immune shifts that traditional testing methods often fail to detect. Dr Woo Jae Lee of the World Institute of Kimchi, who led the research, said, “Our research has proven for the first time in the world that kimchi has two different simultaneous effects: activating defence cells and suppressing excessive response.” If you want to harness the benefits of kimchi for your own health, you can make it at home. Method:

Salt Cabbage: Chop cabbage into bite-sized pieces. Massage with 3 tbsp salt; let sit 1-2 hours until wilted. Rinse 3x, drain well. **Make Paste:** Blend ½ cup water, rice flour, and sugar into a slurry; cook on low until thickened (2 mins). Cool. Blend garlic, ginger, and onion into a paste; mix with cooled slurry and gochugaru. **Mix & Pack:** Coat cabbage, green onions, and carrots with paste. Pack tightly into a sterilised jar, pressing to submerge in brine. Leave 1-inch headspace. **Ferment:** Room temp (18-22°C), 1-5 days, burping daily. Taste for tang; refrigerate when ready. Keeps for 1 month. Enjoy with rice or as banchan! Adjust spice to taste.

New York’s Viral Matchatini: Here’s How You Can Prepare It at Home

Ingredients: 1 teaspoon matcha powder, 50 ml of white chocolate, 25 ml of vodka, 10 ml of dry vermouth, ice. Begin by placing ice into a cocktail shaker. This will guarantee that your Matchatini is ideally chilled and invigorating. Following this, you are prepared to proceed to the subsequent steps to create this fashionable beverage. Next, add a spoonful of matcha powder and a splash of chocolate liqueur to the shaker. This combination brings out the rich, earthy flavours of matcha while adding a sweet, indulgent twist to the drink. Shake well to blend the matcha and chocolate liqueur, then add



vodka and vermouth. Give it another shake to combine all the ingredients, ensuring a smooth and balanced flavour for your Matchatini. Add more ice to the shaker and give it a few more vigorous shakes. This ensures the drink is perfectly chilled and all the ingredients are well-mixed for that smooth, refreshing finish. Strain the mixture into a chilled martini glass, and your Matchatini is ready to serve.

Kaju Katli Recipe How to make Kaju Barfi

Kaju Katli is a traditional cashew fudge, and is one of the most sought after and loved Indian sweets. Whenever we get a big box at home they disappear in a matter of days. If you stay in North India during Diwali festival you might receive a box of kaju katli or dry fruits as a gift. Kaju Katli is one of the most popular sweets which is gifted to relatives and friends during the diwali festival. Kaju Katli is also called as Kaju Burfi. But, unlike thick burfi, kaju katli should be thin. In fact the word ‘katli’ means ‘thin slices.’



Now, I will not say making kaju katli at home is easy. Honestly speaking it is not. If you are making for the first time, When I started making this recipe, I tried different methods and all of them were not that good. Learning from my trials, I was able to develop this foolproof recipe of kaju katli where you do not need to check the consistency of sugar syrup.

How To Prepare Fruit Loaf At Home

Filled with dried fruits, nuts, and delicate spices, a fruit loaf is both substantial and inherently sweet. The most advantageous aspect is that it is straightforward to prepare using basic pantry items and does not necessitate advanced baking expertise. Regardless of whether you are a novice or a seasoned baker, this home-made fruit loaf recipe allows you to manage the sweetness, texture, and flavors. Adhere to this step-by-step guide to create a soft, moist fruit loaf directly in your own oven. **Ingredients:** 3 cups of all-pur-



pose flour, 2 cups of water, 2 cups of powdered sugar, 2 cups of dried fruits, 2 eggs, 2 tablespoons of butter, 1

tablespoon of baking soda, 1 tablespoon of cinnamon, and ½ tablespoon of nutmeg. Firstly, heat some water in a pan and add dried fruits and sugar till the sugar dissolves. Let the water cool for about half an hour till the fruits are plump. Whisk the dry ingredients like flour, baking soda, cinnamon, and nutmeg together. Mix the butter and eggs with the fruit mixture. Combine all the dry and wet ingredients. Now pour the batter into a greased pan and bake for about an hour. Once the fruit loaf cools down, slice it and enjoy

From Matar Paneer to Ghugni: The Finest Indian Green Peas Recipes for Winter

Indian markets are flooded with baskets of bright green pods. Unlike frozen peas, fresh winter peas carry a distinct sweetness and crunch that elevate everyday meals. Rich in protein, fiber, and vitamins, they not only warm the body but also bring a burst of color to the plate. From hearty curries to festive snacks, peas find their way into kitchens from Punjab to Bengal, Maharashtra to Tamil Nadu. **Matar Paneer:** Cubes of paneer simmered in a tomato-onion gravy with peas. It’s a winter classic, often served with hot rotis or naan. **Matar Kachori:** A crispy, deep-fried pastry stuffed with spiced pea filling. Popular in winter mornings, it’s enjoyed with tangy aloo sabzi or chutney. **Matar Pulao:** Fragrant basmati rice cooked with peas, whole spices, and ghee. A simple yet comforting one-pot dish perfect for cold evenings. **Ghugni:** A curry made with dried peas or fresh green peas, flavored with mustard oil and spices. It’s a street-food favorite, often topped with chopped onions and green chilies. **Matar Chop:** A winter snack where mashed peas are mixed with spices, shaped into patties, and shallow-fried. Served with kasundi mustard sauce, it’s a seasonal delight. **Methi Matar Malai:** A luxurious curry of peas, fenugreek leaves, and cream. Its slightly bitter-sweet flavor makes it a winter indulgence. **Pav Bhaji with Matar:** The iconic Mumbai street food often includes peas in its vegetable mash, adding sweetness to the spicy mix. **Matar Usal:** A rustic curry made with sprouted peas, coconut, and spices, eaten with bhakri or pav. **Vegetable Upma:** Semolina cooked with peas, carrots, and curry



leaves. The peas add a pop of sweetness to this breakfast staple. **Avial with Peas:** Traditionally made with mixed vegetables and coconut, avial sometimes includes peas in winter for added texture. **Peas Masala Dosa:** A twist on the classic masala dosa, where peas are added to the potato filling, giving it a seasonal upgrade. **Matar ka Halwa:** Peas even find their way into desserts. In some regions, matar ka halwa is prepared by slow-cooking pea paste with ghee, sugar, and cardamom. Its nutty sweetness makes it a rare but memorable winter treat.

How to Make Christmas Plum Cake Without Oven and Eggs

Christmas plum cake is not merely a dessert; it is a ritual that marks the warmth and also indulgence of the season. Rich with dried fruits, warm spices, and also a deep caramel flavour, this traditional cake can be prepared beautifully even without an oven or eggs. Using a simple stovetop method, this recipe delivers a moist, festive plum cake that tastes altogether just as nostalgic as the classic version. Soak the dried fruits Place all dried fruits in a bowl and pour warm juice or also tea over them. Mix well, cover, and let them soak for at least 8 hours or overnight. This step ensures the fruits are plump, soft, and also evenly distributed in the cake. Prepare the caramel syrup Heat sugar in a heavy pan on low flame until it melts and turns deep amber. Carefully add hot water little by little (it will bubble vigorously). Stir until smooth. Set aside to cool. Prepare the stovetop “oven” Take a deep, heavy-bottomed kadhai or pan. Add a thick layer of salt or sand at the bottom. Place a steel stand or inverted bowl over it. Cover with a lid and preheat on low flame for 10 minutes. Mix the wet ingredients In a large bowl, whisk yogurt and also sugar until smooth. Add oil and also vanilla essence. Mix well until the batter looks creamy and uniform. Add caramel syrup Pour the cooled caramel syrup into the batter and mix gently. This gives the cake its characteristic dark colour and deep fla-



vour. Combine the dry ingredients Sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and all the spice powders. Gradually fold this into the wet mixture using a spatula. Do not overmix. Add fruits and nuts Fold in the soaked fruits along with any remaining soaking liquid. Add chopped nuts if using. Mix gently to distribute evenly. Prepare the cake tin Grease a round cake tin and line the base with parchment paper. Pour in the batter and also tap lightly to remove air bubbles. Cook the cake Place the cake tin carefully on the stand inside the preheated pan. Cover tightly with the lid and also cook on the low-

est flame for 60–75 minutes. Check for doneness Insert a skewer or also knife into the centre. If it comes out clean, the cake is ready. Turn off the flame and also let it rest for 10 minutes before removing. Cool and rest Allow the cake to cool completely. For best flavour, wrap and rest it for 24 hours before slicing. **Serving Note** This eggless, oven-free plum cake is rich, moist, and also aromatic—perfect for Christmas celebrations. Serve it plain or with a light dusting of powdered sugar, alongside warm tea or also coffee, for a truly festive experience.

No Oil, No Spices: The Tribal Amla Pickle Prepared Using Only Two Ingredients

As winter approaches, numerous individuals start to prepare various traditional dishes and pickles at home, with gooseberries (amla) pickle being one of the most beloved. In several regions of Jharkhand, it continues to be made in a wholly traditional way, without the addition of oil or spices. Amla pickle is not only flavourful but also regarded as highly nutritious. In Hazaribagh, tribal families continue to make it using age-old methods, and once prepared, it can be enjoyed throughout the year. Sharing the recipe, Raveena Kachhap explains that this pickle is made entirely naturally. No oil, packaged spices, or preservatives are added, which is why it is gentle on the stomach and actually helps improve digestion. She further explains that fresh, large, slightly yellow gooseberries are selected first. These are washed thoroughly and sun-dried briefly to remove excess moisture. The gooseberries are then lightly boiled in salted water, a step that softens them, allows the segments to separate easily,



and helps the salt infuse into the fruit. Once softened, they are cooled and the segments are separated by hand. According to her, the real charm of this pickle lies in its simplicity. Only plain salt and a little vinegar are added to the amla slices. Both ingredients act as natural preservatives, and neither the salt nor the vinegar is used in excess, ensuring a balanced flavour. The pickle is then stored in a large glass jar and kept in the sun for 7 to 10 days. Each day, the jar is opened and gently shaken so that the mixture coats all the amla pieces evenly. Sunlight not only keeps the pickle safe but also enhances its natural taste.

This pickle remains edible for up to a year. Because it contains no oil or spices, it is light, easy to digest, and gentle on the stomach. Amla is one of the richest sources of vitamin C, which boosts immunity during winter, enhances skin health, strengthens hair, and reduces inflammation. In many regions of India, people are encouraged to consume it daily. Even today, families across Jharkhand follow this traditional method because it is not only delicious but also highly beneficial. This oil-free, spice-free amla pickle is considered a natural way to remain healthy throughout the winter season.

Achaari Lachha Paratha Recipe

Sieve and take wheat flour in a bowl, add ½ tsp salt, 2 tsp oil and mix the ingredients. Now add water in small parts and knead soft dough. Cover the dough and keep aside for 20 minutes to rest. Later when the dough sets, grease your hands with some ghee or oil and knead the dough again. Turn on the flame and put the tawa to heat. Pinch small size dough and roll into round shape. Dust with some dry flour and roll them to about 10 to 12 inches diameter rounds. Spread



1 tsp pickle masala over it and start folding it in same method as shown in images. Roll back into round shape and dust again with dry flour. Roll them out to about 7 to 8 inch diameter rounds Spread some oil over a hot

tawa or skillet. Place the parantha over it. Turn the side when the parantha gets little dark on the surface and slightly roasted from beneath. Let it roast slightly on the other side as well. Then apply some oil over the upper side, flip and apply some oil on this side as well. Now roast the paranthas until they are crispy and get brown spots on both sides evenly. The paranthas are ideally crisp as well soft. Take off from the flame and stack them in a roti basket or casserole. They taste even better when served steaming hot. Make all the paranthas likewise. Serve this tangy and delicious achari lachha parantha hot with side accompaniment of curd, green coriander chutney and relish eating

The Ultimate Guide to Traditional Sarson Ka Saag

Mustard greens are abundant in vitamins A, C, and K, as well as folate, calcium, and antioxidants. Their strong flavor pairs well with robust winter foods such as cornmeal, lentils, and root vegetables. Additionally, they enhance immunity, which is particularly beneficial during the colder months. Mustard greens are a winter superfood, and they shine in both traditional Indian recipes and creative global dishes. Here’s a detailed guide to interesting ways you can enjoy them in the colder months. **Sarson ka Saag:** No discussion of mustard greens in winter is complete without Sarson ka Saag, the iconic Punjabi dish. Cooked slowly with spices, garlic, ginger, and sometimes spinach or bathua to balance flavors, this creamy curry is best paired with Makki ki Roti (corn flatbread). It’s warming, hearty, and deeply rooted in North Indian food culture. **Mustard Greens Stir-Fry:** Beyond saag, mustard greens can be quickly stir-fried with onions, tomatoes, and green chilies. This simple dish is often eaten with chapati or rice. The sharpness of the greens mellows when sautéed, making it a comforting everyday winter meal. **Mustard Greens Dal:** Adding chopped mustard greens to lentils creates a nutrient-rich dal. The earthy flavor of moong or masoor dal pairs beautifully with the pungency of mustard leaves, offering a wholesome dish that’s both protein-packed and seasonal. **Chinese Mustard Greens Soup:** In Chinese cuisine, mustard greens are often simmered in clear broths with ginger, garlic, and sometimes pork or tofu. The result is a light yet warming soup that’s perfect for chilly evenings. The greens add a peppery depth to the broth, making it soothing and refreshing. **Mustard Greens Kimchi:** Korean kitchens use mustard greens to make a

variation of kimchi. Fermented with chili paste, garlic, and ginger, mustard greens kimchi is tangy, spicy, and probiotic-rich. It’s a great way to preserve the greens through winter while adding zest to rice or noodle dishes. **Mustard Greens Pasta:** For a fusion approach, sauté mustard greens with olive oil, garlic, and chili flakes, then toss them with pasta. The bitterness of the greens balances beautifully with the richness of Parmesan cheese, creating a rustic Italian dish with a seasonal twist. **Mustard Greens Quiche:** In French cuisine, mustard greens can be folded into a quiche with eggs, cream, and cheese. The greens add a peppery bite to the custard filling, making it a delightful winter brunch option.



A Pediatrician’s Guide: 6 Brain-Boosting Foods for Kids

Children are at that growing stage where their brains require nutrients to focus on all the learning. Nutrition is one of the building blocks for memory, concentration and overall cognitive development. So, as a parent, making your child finish homework on time or stay up to date with coursework won’t be enough to make them smart. Real smartness comes from within, and nutrition is the fuel for that. Diet for children, especially, cannot afford to be shallow with empty nutrients for convenience’s sake, like the boring and generic cereals for breakfast. To truly ensure your child thrives, add fresh foods with a robust nutrient profile which fuel their growing brains and, in turn, help to learn better at school.

Dr Kushagra Gupta, paediatrician at Fortis Hospital in Greater Noida, told HT Lifestyle that certain nutrients even help children overcome learning difficulties and support the symptoms of neurodevelopmental disorders. ADHD is one of them and is very frequent among school-aged children. As per DSM-5, ADHD or Attention



Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder means, “A persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.” Dr Gupta, regarding ADHD’s relation to nutrition, said, “Increased omega-3 intake and better blood sugar management are even more important for children with challenging learning difficulties such as ADHD. ” Even other than ADHD, school kids struggle with concentration and focus. But nutrition helps with their hyperactivity. Dr Gupta listed 6 brain-friendly foods that are

beneficial:
1. Fatty fish: Salmon, mackerel and sardines are filled with omega-3 fatty acids, which are key for brain development. These good fats are great for improving memory, lowering ADHD symptoms, and helping with neural connections. Local options are fresh river fish available.
2. Eggs: Source of the best brain food: stuffed eggs contain choline important for the production of neurotransmitters. Whether it is masala scrambled eggs or eggs in parantha, eating eggs give you superb concentration and attention.
3. Berries: Berries, blueberries and dark berries are rich in antioxidants, which help improve communication between brain cells and enhance short-term memory. Throw them in smoothies or serve as a healthy snack.
4. Leafy greens: Palak, methi, and sarson ka saag are all abundant in folate, vitamin K and iron, all nutrients

that help support concentration and prevent cognitive decline. These are easily available vegetables, and they beautifully find a place in Indian curries and lentil dishes, which I cook.
5. Seeds and nuts: Walnuts, almonds and pumpkin seeds have vitamin E and healthy fats that can help brain cells. Use as snacks or mix into homemade trail mixes. Always test for allergic reactivity in young children.
6. Whole grains: They help in giving energy over a period of time because they have both complex carbohydrates and B vitamins. This helps in sustaining focus and concentration during the time spent in school.
Lastly, he cautioned against certain snacks, “Severely processed snacks, sweet beverages that have added sugars, and sugary sweets lead to an energy rush and crash that directly affects concentration and emotion. Opt for natural alternatives that will give you lasting energy, instead.” Children naturally have a tendency to lean towards processed foods, but it becomes the responsibility of the parent to encourage healthy eating habit.

Laura Ashley: From Wales to a global fashion empire



There’s no clearer sign that the prairie look is still gaining popularity than when incongruously sported by an icon of metropolitan life: New Yorker Carrie Bradshaw of Sex and the City. In the final season of the show’s divisive sequel, And Just Like That, which concluded in August, a trip to her boyfriend Aidan’s farmhouse in rural Virginia has her running off to the local store to clothe herself in the lacy collars, puffed sleeves and long floral skirts more commonly seen on 19th-Century settlers. Her transition from witty columnist to the writer of Victorian-era romantic fiction sees her throwing off her Manolo Blahniks and dressing like her characters. And it’s not just Carrie. Nostalgia for Victoriana, and the simple way of life it embodies, has seeped into social media via tradwife influencers such as Utah farmer Hannah Neeleman of Ballerina Farm; and on to catwalks and high streets. Several decades before this 19th-Century homestead look spread across the internet, however, there was an earlier revival of nostalgic, romantic fashion, spearheaded by the British clothing and textile designer Laura Ashley, who was born 100 years ago on 7 September 1925. Widely considered an influential tastemaker, she was described as “creating an image of Englishness that women worldwide wanted to buy”. Through the 1970s and early 80s her signature rose-tinted, bucolic style was a big mood in UK fashion and homeware.

“I don’t think there’s anything very special about our things,” the Welsh designer, batting back the suggestion that she was a “trendsetter”. Instead, the designs simply gave women what they needed, and “evolved from necessity”. The business had a quintessentially British beginning in 1952, with Ashley, a secretary for the Women’s Institute, visiting the organisation’s display of traditional handicrafts at the V&A. Inspired by the patchwork textiles, she resolved to make something similar. However, the Victorian fabrics she had admired at the museum, featuring small flowers and delicate stripes, no longer existed: she would have to print her own. The result – made possible by a rudimentary printing screen fashioned by her husband Bernard – who also co-managed the business – pleased her, and, noting a gap in the market for items that were both pretty and practical, she began making scarves, tea towels, and later, aprons. Bernard had bigger ideas, envisaging reams of upholstery fabric sold wholesale, and so it was Laura’s name that went on the label, and stayed there as the orders flooded in. In 1968, customers queued at the door of the first Laura Ashley shop in South Kensington. By Laura’s death in 1985, the company had 220 shops in 12 countries, only fading out when looks such as ‘80s power dressing and ‘90s minimalism took over, reflecting women’s changing role in society. The timing of Laura Ashley’s Victorian-inspired venture was perfect, bolstered by a post-war boom in production, and offering a wholesome, high-necked alternative (always in natural fibres) to the bold hot pants and revealing miniskirts of the hedonistic Swinging Sixties scene. Feminism might have been in ascendance, but

not everybody welcomed this shifting society. Ashley was offering a retro-grade alternative, just as the tradwife trend does today. “I knew in my heart that was not what most people wanted,” she said. “I sensed that most people wanted to raise families, have gardens and live life as nicely as they can.” Laura Ashley’s aesthetic, and the values it espoused, were romantic throwbacks to what she felt was a simpler time. As Anne Sebba notes in her 1990 biography Laura Ashley: A Life by Design: “To her mind, the Victorian era symbolised gentle, gracious living, a time when standards, domestic and industrial, were at their highest and England at its best.” Her clothing was intended for women in a traditional domestic setting, that was both comfortable and charming. It was “brilliant marketing,” Sebba. Laura struggled to reconcile the demands of the business with her belief that a mother shouldn’t work when the children were around, sometimes packing the children off to bed at 4:30pm to make this possible. She would also decline her OBE – deeming it a slight on Bernard, particularly as the letter addressed her as “Ms”, which, for someone who valued the sanctity of marriage above all, felt beyond the pale. For a while, in the ‘70s and early ‘80s, Victoriana seemed unstoppable. The more fashion-conscious hippies seeking a more billowing, bohemian silhouette jumped on the trend, and children’s characters such as Holly Hobbie and Strawberry Shortcake, dressed in patchwork pinafores and bloomers, flooded the US and European markets with merchandise, from dolls and stationery to bed linen and curtains. Meanwhile, the US series Little House on the Prairie (1974-1983) became one of television’s most popular shows. Melissa Gilbert was just a child when she played Laura Ingalls with her strawberry-blonde plaits, but 50 years on, her lifestyle brand Modern Prairie, founded in 2022, answers a demand for cottagecore dresses, smock aprons and textiles reminiscent of the era. And there is a Netflix reboot of Little House on the Prairie currently in the making. The simple Victorian prints that Laura Ashley had seen in the V&A worked brilliantly in monochrome, which, coupled with imported cotton, kept costs low, enabling customers to style themselves and their homes on a budget. “They somehow clocked the aspirational desires of a whole generation,” says Sebba. “And by producing these clothes that seemed to come from the countryside and were very cheap, and the household fabrics to go with it, they enabled a whole generation to ignore social class, and that was powerful.” That their fabrics should be described as “an image of Englishness”, however, overlooks the company’s connection with Wales, where Laura was born. In 1960, now parents of three – and later, four – children, the couple relocated to a 500-acre farm in the Welsh Valleys, bringing the company with them, and providing welcome employment. A champion sheep shearer became their master garment cutter, and even when their products were stocked by Harrods and Liberty’s, “made in Wales” was printed on the labels, and the fabric dyed in the earthy browns, greens and grey-blues that recalled the landscape she loved. This connection with the British countryside was part of the packaging of the look. “It was the first company to offer this whole lifestyle,” explains Sebba. “It wasn’t simply that you were buying a dress or decorating your walls, or making curtains, you were buying into this whole notion that the rural life was preferable to urban life.” Fifty years on, Carrie Bradshaw’s milkmaid look enacts this fantasy of a country life, as well as her desire for domestic stability, described by Laura Ashley as “security at home”, and central, she said, to her clothing’s appeal. ”

LIFESTYLE Eating Right, Evolving Fast: What 2025 Taught Us About Nutrition

The way we eat is evolving. No longer just about cutting calories or tracking macros, nutrition in 2025 is about understanding how food fuels the body at a cellular level. It’s about metabolic health, longevity, gut-brain-skin connections, and nutrients that communicate with our genes.

“We’re finally beginning to understand that the way we eat has less to do with dieting and more to do with how our cells function,” says Shradha Sounil Khanna, AVP Nutrition, Well-being Nutrition. “The mitochondria, the powerhouses of the cell, are now the stars of nutrition science,” explains Khanna. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, amino acids, polyphenols from berries, olives, and green tea, as well as botanical extracts like matcha and berberine, enhance mitochondrial efficiency. The result? Cleaner, sustainable energy, fewer blood sugar spikes, and even healthier ageing. “Think less post-lunch fatigue, no brain fog, and reversing cognitive decline,” she adds. Gut health continues to dominate headlines, but the conversation has shifted. “It’s not just about more fibre,” says Khanna, “but about the optimal balance of soluble and insoluble fibres to generate short-chain fatty acids that energise colon cells and reduce systemic inflammation.” A daily mix of legumes, millets, fruits, and whole grains helps regulate blood sugar, cholesterol, and weight, while also supporting immune health.



“Protein isn’t just about quantity anymore,” Khanna notes. “The timing and type of protein, paired with compounds like leucine or Velositol, can double muscle protein synthesis.” Collagen peptides aid tissue repair, while creatine, once seen as a muscle-only supplement, now shows benefits for cognition and recovery. Personalisation is key: “It’s not just how much protein you eat, but when, what kind, and with what,” she emphasises. Micronutrients are emerging as the unsung heroes of health. “Magnesium doesn’t just relax muscles; it activates over 300 enzymatic reactions, affecting everything from glucose regulation to mood stability,” says Khanna. Iron, zinc, and vitamin D are equally crucial; missing them is like running the latest software on an outdated device.

Static diets are giving way to cyclical nutrition. “Fasting, re-feeding, or rotating nutrients can turn on autophagy, the cell’s cleaning process, and prevent metabolic plateaus,” explains Khanna.

plains Khanna. Timing these cycles with the body’s circadian rhythm optimises cellular function and overall well-being. Celebrity dietitian Simrat Kathuria adds, “One diet works for none. Personalised nutrition, based on gut microbiome and genetics, is far more effective than one-size-fits-all plans.” She notes the rising importance of protein-fibre synergy to stabilise blood sugar, improve satisfaction, and aid weight control. Sustainability is also central: choosing local, minimally processed foods is not just healthy, it’s responsible. Ria Pawar, Coaching Specialist at Elevate Now, sums it up: “Nutrition in 2025 is about the basics done right – complete proteins and fibre-rich whole foods. True longevity comes from personalisation and timely interventions to help your body function at peak performance.” Correct eating in 2025 is precision nutrition: it’s not a trend, it’s cellular self-care. The focus has shifted from chasing quick fixes to supporting long-term metabolic, cognitive, and immune health. In short, eating right now means eating smart, sustainable, and in tune with your body.

Genelia D’Souza Stuns in Kalamkari and Rich Browns for Festive Season

Genelia D’Souza has always had a way of making traditional wear feel fresh, relatable, and aspirational all at once. This time, she stepped into the festive spotlight in an earthy-toned lehenga look that celebrated both heritage and modernity. With a hand-painted Kalamkari dupatta as the hero and statement silver jewellery to match, her ensemble wasn’t just about looking glamorous; it was about telling a story through craft, colour, and culture.

For her latest look, Genelia D’Souza wore a regal lehenga set by Aamra by Lavanya. The look centred around a brown lehenga set priced at Rs 54,000, paired with a standout Kalamkari dupatta. The lehenga featured subtle striped shimmer detailing, which caught the light and gave the silhouette a luxurious, fluid movement. But it was the dupatta that became the focal point of the ensemble. With hand-drawn Kalamkari artistry depicting birds, the drape added not just visual appeal but also a touch of storytelling and symbolism. It was a nod to heritage craftsmanship, rein-



terpreted for today’s festive wardrobe. To complement the earthy richness of the lehenga, Genelia chose a bold choker set with matching earrings, stacked bangles, and a statement ring that created layers of traditional glamour. The silver and gold tones offset the warm browns of the outfit beautifully, while also amplifying the artisanal detailing of the dupatta. Her glam stayed true to her signature style: fresh, glowing, and unfussy. With softly defined eyes, a dewy base, and a neutral lip, the makeup balanced the richness

of the outfit and jewellery. Her hair was styled in soft waves and pulled back partially, framing her face while letting the dupatta and choker command attention. Genelia’s look struck the perfect balance between heritage and high fashion. The earthy brown base was understated yet powerful, while the intricate Kalamkari dupatta brought depth, culture, and individuality. Paired with statement silver jewellery, it was a masterclass in how to wear Indian crafts with contemporary relevance.

Understanding and managing monsoon-related joint pain easily

The sound of raindrops brings joy to many, but for those living with arthritis or chronic joint pain, the monsoon season often signals discomfort. Stiffness, swelling, and inflammation seem to rise with the rains, leaving many to wonder whether the weather is to blame. Doctors confirm that this is more than just a coincidence; there are scientific explanations behind the flare-ups. “People often complain that their knees or shoulders hurt more during the rainy season, and it’s not in their heads. There are physiological changes triggered by weather shifts that directly impact joint health,” says Dr. Prateek Gupta, Consultant – Orthopaedics, Manipal Hospital, Ghaziabad.

Drop In Atmospheric Pressure – When the air pressure dips, joint spaces expand, creating strain in already sensitive joints. “This widening effect can worsen pain for those with arthritis, osteoporosis, or old injuries,” explains Dr. Gupta.

High Humidity Levels – Moist air causes tissues around the joints to swell and stiffen. High humidity acts like a trigger, leading to increased discomfort and reduced mobility.

Temperature Drops – Cooler temperatures tighten muscles and restrict free movement. This explains why sudden weather dips often bring on stiffness.

Reduced Physical Activity – “During the monsoon, people tend to stay indoors and cut down on their exercise routines,” says Dr. Gupta. This leads to poor circulation, muscle stiffness, and lower flexibility.

Old Injuries Resurface – Injuries from years ago may ache again. Weather changes can flare up scar tissue or weak joints, making dormant pain feel active.

Vitamin D Deficiency – Less exposure to sunlight reduces vitamin D synthesis. “Low vitamin D can weaken bones and worsen aches,” Dr. Gupta emphasises.



Increased Risk Of Infections – Damp weather also promotes viral or bacterial infections. For those with autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, this can further fuel joint inflammation.

The good news is that a few simple adjustments can help ease the discomfort. “Keeping joints warm with compresses, doing gentle indoor stretches, and maintaining regular movement are very effective,” says Dr. Gupta. Low-impact exercises like yoga or light walking indoors promote circulation and prevent stiffness. The good news is that a few simple adjustments can help ease the discomfort. “Keeping joints warm with compresses, doing gentle indoor stretches, and maintaining regular movement are very effective,” says Dr. Gupta. Low-impact exercises like yoga or light walking indoors promote circulation and prevent stiffness. Alongside medical advice, simple lifestyle tweaks can help manage the season better. Warm soaks, turmeric-infused drinks, and light stretching routines can go a long way in keeping pain at bay. Avoid sitting for too long, dress warmly, and keep joints covered during damp spells.

SPORTS

Recommendation for Khel Ratna; Divya, Tejaswin and Mehuli for Arjuna Hockey star Hardik Singh

Mumbai: The selection committee here on Wednesday chose 24 candidates for the Arjuna awards, including trailblazing decathlete Tejaswin Shankar and teenage chess star Divya Deshmukh. Hardik Singh, the vice captain of the Indian men's hockey team, was the only candidate recommended for this year's Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna honor. The 27-year-old Hardik has been India's mid-field mainstay and was a part of both the 2021 Tokyo and 2024 Paris Olympic Games medal-clinching teams. This year, he was a part of India's Asia Cup gold-winning side.

In a first, a Yogasan athlete, Aarti Pal, has been recommended for the Arjuna award, five years after it was formally recognised by the Sports Ministry, said a source. In the sport that will serve as a



showcase sport at the 2026 Asian Games, Aarti is the current national and Asian champion. The awards selection panel met here on Wednesday and decided on twenty-one additional names for the Arjuna. Among those on the panel are former hockey player MM Somaya, former badminton player Aparna Popat, and Indian Olympic Association (IOA)

Vice-President Gagan Narang. The 19-year-old Deshmukh is the first Indian woman to win the World Cup. Fellow chess player Vidit Gujrathi has also been recommended for the Arjuna alongside Tejaswin Shankar, who won a historic silver medal in the Asian Games in 2023 and followed it up with a second-place finish in the Asian Championships earlier this

year. Rifle shooter Mehuli Ghosh, a two-time World Championship bronze-winner besides being a multiple-time medallist at the Asian Championships, gymnast Pranati Nayak and India's numero uno women's badminton combo of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand are also among the recommendations for the Arjuna.

Gayatri is the daughter of national badminton coach and former All England champion Pullela Gopichand. The list, however, does not feature any cricketer. Pacer Mohammed Shami was the last cricketer to receive the honour, in 2023.

The Khel Ratna, which is the country's highest sporting honour, comes with a medallion, a citation and a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh, while the Arjuna award makes the winner richer by Rs 15 lakh.

Ashes, 4th Test: England pacer Tongue, Aussie quicks Nesar shine on bowling paradise at MCG as England

Mumbai: Fiery bowling spells from Michael Nesar and hometown hero Scott Boland helped Australia regain their footing in the Boxing Day Test after a short batting stint, leaving England behind at the end of the first day of the fourth Test at Melbourne, in what was a bowling paradise for both teams. At the end of the day, Australia was 4/0, with Scott Boland (4*) and Travis Head (0*) unbeaten. England was skittled out for 110 in reply to Australia's first innings total of 152 runs, with



Nesar (4/45) and Boland (3/30) being at their most unplayable. England trails by 46 runs.

England started the final session of the day with openers Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley walking out to bat. Duckett, engulfed in off-the-field controversies, continued his poor run with the bat, handing an absolute gift of a catch to Michael Nesar at mid-on, once again falling to could not capitalise on a relatively inexperienced Aussie bowling, as it was Nesar who got him caught behind by Alex Carey for a five-ball one. England was two down for eight runs in 3.4 overs.

PV Sindhu elected chair BWF Athletes' Commission

Mumbai: Two-time Olympic medallist and former world champion PV Sindhu has been elected Chair of the BWF Athletes' Commission for the 2026-2029 term, as per Olympics.com. In this role, Sindhu will also serve as a member of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) Council, providing players with a direct voice in the organisation's global governance. "To be entrusted with this responsibility by fellow athletes is an honour I carry with humility and gratitude. I would also like to sincerely acknowledge Greysia Polii for the exceptional work she has done in the previous term," Sindhu said as quoted by Olympics.com. The double Olympic medallist has been named Chair of the BWF Athletes' Commission for the 2026-2029



term, earning a seat as a full voting member of the BWF Council and giving athletes a strong voice at the top table.

Greysia Polii from Indonesia, a Tokyo 2020 Olympic gold medallist and Asian Games women's doubles champion, retired from badminton in 2022. She served on the BWF Athletes' Commission twice, most recently from 2021 to 2025. I'm deeply looking forward to working closely with BWF to represent every single player and to fight for meaningful, lasting change that truly matters," Sindhu, who has been serving on the BWF Athletes' Commission since 2017 and as an Integrity Ambassador since 2020, said on social media.

Indian women's cricket gets its crowning moment

Mumbai: The Indian Women's cricket team scripted history in 2025, producing one of the most remarkable comebacks the game has ever witnessed to clinch their maiden ICC Women's World Cup title. From being written off midway through the tournament to lifting the trophy, it was a year that redefined belief, resilience and Indian women's cricket. India's World Cup journey began on a shaky note. Three consecutive defeats in the middle of the tournament, first against South Africa, then Australia, and finally England, left the team staring at an exit. With momentum completely against them, the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side needed nothing short of a miracle to stay alive in the competition. That turning point arrived against New Zealand, when they defeated them by 53 runs. Later, in the semi-finals facing Australia, India produced a



record-breaking performance, chasing down 339, the highest successful run chase against the Aussies in any men's or women's World Cup knockout match. The victory not only stunned the defending champions but also announced India's resurgence on the biggest stage. Overall in 2025, India played 23 ODIs, winning 15, losing seven, with one no result, finishing the year with an impressive win percentage of 65.22. The numbers reflected consistency, but the moments reflected character. At the heart of India's historic year was Smriti Mandhana, who enjoyed one of the greatest calendar years by an Indian batter. In 23 ODIs, Mandhana scored 1362 runs at an average of 61.90 and a staggering strike rate of 109.92, smashing five centuries and five half-centuries. She finished as the highest run-scorer in ODIs in 2025.

Gurjant adds Soorma is aiming high for this HIL

Mumbai: The club finished second in the league phase only to lose in the semifinals before winning the third-place match to finish on the podium.

Striker Gurjant Singh said the team will learn from the last outing. "We had a dream run, but could have scored more goals in the semis," said Gurjant. "The upcoming season will be exciting. We have the same batch and there are some minor changes. Last year, we played as a group for the first time and came up with a pretty satisfactory performance, and we are eyeing improvement this year," he added. The men's HIL is set to start from January 3 and will be played in Chennai, Ranchi and Bhubaneswar. Gurjant hoped for the league to spread across various regions, especially in the states which are being represented by the teams. Last year, the side attended a pre-tournament coaching camp in Chandigarh and Panchkula, before shifting to the tournament venue Rourkela. Many national and international players are part of this HIL, and it will be a treat to watch for the hockey lovers and for the players to perform in front of the home crowd. Last year, the matches were held in Rourkela, and this time it has been expanded to three cities," he added. Recently in Chennai, Soorma Hockey Club unveiled their new jersey. The club also organised hockey clinics led by Rani Rampal and Sardar Singh. "Hockey has seen a massive change in recent years and with the introduction of HIL, it's becoming more popular. The club culture is really needed to uplift a sport, and to attract youngsters. Performing as a unit with the support of foreign players under a new coach is a real experience to carry forward. The club also backs youngsters heavily, and in the last edition we saw many of them making their mark," he added.

Philippe Goldberg, head coach of the



club, also supported Gurjant's thoughts. "For me, what's most important is that the team always comes first. We have big names and a lot of talent. The focus is on building something together, on and off the field, and playing as one unit. If we do that, the results and the joy of the game will follow, and we can inspire young kids in India through the way we play," said Goldberg.

"The revival of the HIL is really a boon for the young hockey players. We have grown up watching our seniors, and the same are the expectations of young players. I feel the tournament should be expanded to various states which are being represented by the participating teams, so as to allow them to play in front of the home crowd," he said.

Disappointed after missing out, archers question awards criteria

Mumbai: After none of the archers figured in this year's Arjuna awards list, the athletes have been left wondering what it will take for them to win. Compound archers V Jyothi Surekha and 2024 Paralympics gold medallist Harvinder Singh had applied for Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award, while Parneet Kaur had filed for Arjuna awards.

In the final assessment, the fight came down to choosing one amongst Harvinder and hockey star Hardik Singh. The committee led by Justice (retd) Arun Kumar Mishra failed to come to any consensus and chose not to recommend any name for the country's highest sporting honour. To the archers' surprise, the list has two names from kabaddi (Surjeet Narwal, Pooja), one from polo (Padmanabh Singh), a kho-kho athlete (Nirmala Bhati) and a first Arjuna award to yogasana (Aarti Pal). Following the disappointment, compound coach and Dronacharya winner Jiwanjot Singh Teja questioned the decision and wrote a petition to the President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya with a request to review the evaluation criteria. "... It is understood from recent media reports and deliberations of the Awards Committee for the 2025 session that no Khel Ratna Award has been recommended this year, and that no Archery athlete has been recommended for any National Sports Award. During informal interaction with a member of the Committee, it was conveyed that Compound Archery is not part of the Olympic programme, and therefore names from this discipline were not recommended," Teja



wrote in his correspondence. Speaking to The Tribune on Thursday, the compound coach said this was unfair on the archers. "We were surprised to know that athletes from kho-kho, kabaddi, polo and yogasana have been recommended. I have nothing against these sports, I agree that indigenous sports need to be promoted but not at our cost," he said. "This is the second year in a row where no archer is on the awards list. We were told that a committee member objected to Jyothi and Harvinder's claim for the Khel Ratna because it is a non-Olympics event. Firstly, it is part of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics programme now and secondly, these archers have won many medals, including the World Championship medal, and not to mention winning medals at the Asian Games. How can they not give us the awards when as per their point criteria we are up there with many individuals," he added.

Parneet, who has won both the junior

and senior World Championship gold besides the Asian Games and Asian Championship gold, said she still has not understood what happened. "As of this moment, I am very confused. We had the points but even then none of us were part of the award list. It is not that we have not performed. We have won many medals so all I want to say is we would have been deserving candidates," she said. Jyothi, who is world No. 2 and has won nine World Championship medals, said she was expecting the snub. Jyothi had approached the Delhi High Court after she was ignored by the committee last year and got a favourable order that said that the ministry should consider her case. Without saying much, she said she would carry on. "I already knew that I will not be part of the award list. But it is still disheartening to miss out. As athletes we cannot stop. All we can do is to shoot to win medals. If we stop (after the snub), it will be our loss," she said.

Ninjas win opening match of UPKL season 2 against Kanpur Warriors

Mumbai: The Uttar Pradesh Kabaddi League (UPKL) Season 2 commenced on Thursday at the Noida Indoor Stadium, marking an exciting start to the new season. The opening match was played between JD Noida Ninjas and Kanpur Warriors, where the home team emerged victorious, as per a UPKL release. Noida Ninjas defeated Kanpur Warriors by a narrow margin of 39-36 in a closely contested encounter on Thursday evening. Kanpur Warriors put up a strong performance, accumulating 36 points through a combination of raid points, tackle points, and bonus points. JD Noida Ninjas responded with a balanced effort across raids and tackles to finish with 39 points, sealing the first win of the season. A large number of fans from both sides were present at the venue, creating an energetic atmosphere



as they cheered for their respective teams. Following the match, JD Noida Ninjas owner Deepak Nagar congratulated the players on their opening-day victory.

Speaking on the occasion, Sambhav Jain, Founder and Director of SJ Uplift Kabaddi, stated that the league was originally scheduled to begin on 24 December, but the start was deferred by one day following directions related to pollution control issued by the Supreme Court and the Sports Directorate. A total of 12

teams are competing in UPKL Season 2. Each team will play 11 matches in a round-robin format. The season will feature 69 matches, including one exhibition match. Several international-level players, including Vinay Tewatia, Arjun Deshwal, Mohammad Aman, Abhimanyu, and RP Singh, are participating in the league.

Entry for spectators is through tickets priced at 299 for general and 399 for VIP seats, encouraging fans to witness top-quality kabaddi action live at the venue.

Smriti Mandhana 28 runs away from joining Mithali Raj in 10,000-run club

Thiruvananthapuram: The Indian women's cricket team vice-captain Smriti Mandhana is just 28 runs away from becoming only the second Indian woman to score 10,000 international runs in cricket. Smriti Mandhana will be in action for the Women in Blue in the third T20I of the series on Friday in Thiruvananthapuram against Sri Lanka. The 29-year-old left-handed batter from Maharashtra will have a chance to become the second Indian women's cricketer, after the legendary Mithali Raj, to score 10,000 runs in women's cricket. As of now, Smriti has scored 9,972 runs in 279 international matches across formats, while Mithali retired in 2022 with a career total of 10,868 runs in 333

matches. Chasing a modest target of 129, Shafali Verma led the charge with a blistering unbeaten 69 off 34 balls, including 11 fours and a six. Smriti Mandhana provided brief support with 14 runs before being dismissed early, while Jemimah Rodrigues contributed 26 off 15 balls. India reached the target in just 11.5 overs, with captain Vaishnavi Sharma and Shree Charani, took two wickets each, along with Kranti Gaud, Sneha Rana, and Amanjot Kaur with crucial run-outs, kept Sri Lanka under control throughout the innings. Early breakthroughs, disciplined bowling, and sharp fielding helped India restrict Sri Lanka to a below-par total, setting up an easy chase.