

CM lays foundation for Mara Girls' Hostel, new schools and school upgrades in Aizawl

Aizawl, Dec 16: Chief Minister Pu Lalduhoma today laid the foundation stone for a Mara Girls' Hostel, eight new schools and the upgradation of six existing schools in Aizawl, marking a major push to strengthen education infrastructure for the Mara community in Mizoram. The foundation stone-laying ceremony was held at the Mara Boys' Hostel complex at Zotlang Veng, Aizawl. All the projects will be taken up under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJKV), a central scheme aimed at improving basic facilities in minority-concentrated areas. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister described the day as an important moment for the Mara community and a step forward for the state's education sector. He said that once the projects are completed, around 3,200 Mara students are expected to benefit directly from improved schooling and hostel facilities. Pu Lalduhoma said the state government has been giving special attention to education and student welfare since assuming office. He noted that apart from the projects launched in Aizawl,

work on a Mara Girls' Hostel in Delhi has already been taken up by the government to support students pursuing higher education outside the state. The Chief Minister said the new projects reflect the government's focus on the development of the Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) area and on creating better opportunities for women through access to safe accommodation and quality education. He stressed that education infrastructure plays a key role in reducing inequality and ensuring long-term development. Highlighting the issue of quality in public works, Pu Lalduhoma said the government is determined to put an end to incomplete and poor-quality construction. He informed that a Project Monitoring Committee, which includes public representatives, has been set up to closely track government projects. So far, the committee has reviewed 87 projects, and several others are currently under examination. He said that the projects whose foundation stones were laid on Monday will also come under close monitoring to ensure that work is com-



pleted on time and as per standards. The Chief Minister urged all departments, engineers and executing agencies to work sincerely and take full responsibility for timely delivery. Pu Lalduhoma also expressed his appreciation to the Ministry of Minority Affairs for extending financial support under the PMJKV scheme, saying that such cooperation between the Centre and the state is crucial for development in remote and border areas. The programme was also addressed online by Pu M. Laikaw, Chief Ex-

ecutive Member of the Mara Autonomous District Council, from Siaha. He described the occasion as historic for the Mara people and said the projects would have a lasting impact on education in the region. Recalling recent developments, Pu Laikaw said that on July 6 this year, Minister of State for Minority Affairs George Kurian had inaugurated two projects related to the Mara community. With the addition of three more projects launched on Monday, the total value of ongoing and approved

projects has now crossed ₹30 crore. He also thanked the Chief Minister for taking personal interest in the construction of the Mara Girls' Hostel in Delhi and said the Mara community is grateful to the Mizoram government for consistently supporting their educational needs. Dr. K. Beichhua, MLA from Siaha constituency, also spoke at the programme and conveyed his sincere thanks to the Chief Minister and the state government for approving the projects.

In Brief

Vijay Diwas observed in Tripura

Agartala: Vijay Diwas was commemorated in Tripura with tributes to the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, highlighted by Governor Indra Sena Reddy Nallu, who noted the historic surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers. He emphasized the need for peace and stability in the region, describing the current situation in Bangladesh as a "temporary phase". The Governor acknowledged Tripura's critical role during the war, as a base for Indian forces and support for refugees and Mukti Bahini fighters. He paid homage to the martyrs and expressed respect for soldiers' sacrifices. The event included various dignitaries, including Minister Kishore Barman and senior Army officials.

Two Youths Seriously Hurt in Bokakhat Crash

Bokakhat: On Monday night, there was a traffic accident near Latabari, Bokakhat. A Pulsar motorcycle with the registration number AS05T6603 and a Baleno car with the number AS05Y2045 crashed head-on. In the collision, two young people suffered severe injuries. Babul Munda, a young Borbheta resident, was the motorcyclist who suffered serious injuries. Anjib Munda, another young person, was hurt while strolling from Bokakhat to the Borjuri side. The Bokakhat Government Hospital administered first assistance to both. Babul Munda was sent to JMCH, Jorhat for additional care because of his serious condition.

Gogoi Alleges Systemic Neglect

Guwahati: Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi has criticized the Modi government for neglect and political interference in central universities in the Northeast, particularly following the resignation of Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor S. Umdor from North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU). Gogoi described the resignation as indicative of significant governance failures, impacting students, faculty, and staff due to what he called absentee leadership and deteriorating accountability. He echoed concerns raised by Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, arguing that political interference in vice-chancellor appointments has compromised academic institutions' integrity, undermining academic autonomy, destabilizing environments, and damaging the overall higher education framework and democracy in India. Umdor resigned on December 15, 2025, citing an untenable administrative situation, having managed university operations in the Vice-Chancellor's lengthy absence amid increasing unrest and the exodus of senior staff. Gogoi also highlighted similar challenges at Tezpur University, hinting at a widespread dysfunction in the region's higher education institutions.

Vijay Diwas observed in Tripura

Agartala, Dec 17: Vijay Diwas was observed with solemn tributes and reflections on the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War in Tripura on Monday, as Governor Indra Sena Reddy Nallu recalled the historic surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers and underlined the importance of peace and stability in the region. The 54th Vijay Diwas programme was held at the Albert Ekka War Memorial on the outskirts of Agartala. The Governor said that the current situation in Bangladesh was a "temporary phase" and expressed hope that peace and stability would soon return there. He stressed that peace in the neighbouring region would be beneficial for both India and Bangladesh. During the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, Tripura played a crucial strategic role, serving as a

major base for Indian forces and providing shelter to Bangladesh's Mukti Bahini fighters as well as to a large number of refugees who had fled from East Pakistan. Paying tribute to the martyrs, the Governor said that the people of Tripura had stood firmly alongside the Indian Army at one of the most significant moments in the nation's history. "On this Vijay Diwas, I offer my deep respect to all the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the country and to those who continue to serve with dedication and courage," he said. The programme was attended by Higher Education Minister Kishore Barman, Director General of Police Anurag, Major General Sameer Sharan Kartikeya, General Officer Commanding of the 57 Mountain Division, senior Army officials and veterans.

Bangladesh Leader's Remarks on 'Seven Sisters' Raise Security Concerns

Aizawl, Dec 16: Hasnat Abdullah, a leader of Bangladesh's National Citizen Party (NCP), has stirred controversy with remarks suggesting that Dhaka could offer shelter to forces hostile to India, including separatist groups, and support efforts to "sever the seven sisters" — a term used to collectively describe India's northeastern states.

Addressing a gathering at Dhaka's Central Shaheed Minar, Abdullah claimed that Bangladesh could provide sanctuary to "separatist and anti-India forces" and use such support to cut off India's Northeast from the rest of the country. His statements reportedly drew loud applause

from sections of the audience.

The "seven sisters" comprise Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Of these, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram share a land boundary with Bangladesh, making the region strategically sensitive in the context of bilateral security. India has previously accused militant and separatist groups operating in the Northeast of using Bangladeshi territory as safe havens, transit routes and logistical bases, particularly during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Indian security agencies had linked outfits such as the National Libera-



tion Front of Tripura (NLFT) and the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) to camps and support networks across the border during that period. Bangladesh was also flagged as a base for certain Islamist extremist organisations allegedly impacting India's security. However, the situation changed significantly after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned to power in

2009, when Dhaka launched a sustained crackdown on insurgent and extremist groups, leading to closer security cooperation between India and Bangladesh. Separately, Abdullah criticised the Bangladesh Election Commission, calling it "spineless" and questioning its decision to describe the attack on electoral candidate Osman Hadi as an "isolated" incident.

Guwahati Event Highlights Assam's Support During Bangladesh Liberation War



Guwahati, Dec 16: Vijay Diwas was observed at the office of the Assistant High Commissioner in Guwahati on December 16 with a cake-cutting ceremony and a series of cultural programmes. During the event, the message of Bangladesh's Chief Adviser, Muhammad Yunus, was read out by veteran freedom fighter Tashir Uddin Ahmed, the father of Assistant High Commissioner Zikrul Hasan Fahad. Recalling the historical ties between Assam and Bangladesh during the Liberation War of 1971, speakers noted that nearly 3.38 lakh people from Bangladesh had taken refuge in Assam during the conflict. The region also served as a key base where Indian forces prepared for operations inside Bangladesh, while members of the Mukti Bahini received training in guerrilla warfare. Expressing gratitude, Assistant High Commissioner Fahad acknowledged the immense support extended by Assam and the Northeast during the Liberation War, describing it as a vital contribution to Bangladesh's independence. The programme featured cultural performances by children and teenagers, including songs and mime acts. Bangladeshi students studying in Guwahati participated through recitations and musical presentations, while local artists also performed. The Consul General of Bhutan was present at the event. As part of the celebrations, a painting competition on the theme of independence was organised for students across different age groups. Prizes were distributed to the winners on the same day.

Supreme Court Flags Lapses in Forensic Probe of Leaked Audio Linked to Manipur Violence

Imphal, Dec 16: The Supreme Court on December 15 expressed concern over the selective submission of leaked audio recordings linked to the 2023 Manipur ethnic violence for forensic analysis, despite the full material being available before the court.

A Bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kumar and Alok Aradhe said it was "little disturbed" by an affidavit filed on November 20 on behalf of the petitioners, which suggested that only portions of the audio recordings had been sent to the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU), Gandhinagar. The court questioned why the entire 48-minute audio clip placed on record was not forwarded for examination. The issue assumes

significance as the NFSU had earlier reported that the audio clips it analysed were tampered with, a finding that weakened allegations against former Manipur chief minister N. Biren Singh. Singh stepped down on February 9 amid internal BJP dissent and mounting pressure for a leadership change in the violence-hit state.

During the hearing, the Bench noted that the affidavit, which the respondents claimed had not been served on them, clearly indicated selective submission of material. Senior advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioners, said it was possible that the complete set of recordings had not been sent to the NFSU. The court remained unconvinced, observing that once the

entire audio was available, it should have been examined in full. Bhushan informed the court that the original recordings ran to about 56 minutes, of which 48 minutes were submitted, while the remaining portion could reveal the identity of the recorder and pose a risk to his safety.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati sought a week's time to respond, following which the court listed the matter for further hearing on January 7.

The case stems from a petition by the Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust seeking an independent probe into the leaked recordings, which allegedly indicate the involvement of the former chief minister and state machinery in the violence.

TSE, TISF to hold torch rallies across Tripura on Dec 18

Roman script demand

Agartala, Dec 16: The Tipra Indigenous Students' Federation (TISF) and the Tipra Students' Federation (TSF) on Tuesday announced a state-wide torch rally on December 18, demanding the adoption of the Roman script for Kokborok. Leaders of both organisations said they will organise torch rallies across all districts and subdivisions of Tripura in the evening. They said the central protest rally will begin at Swami Vivekananda Maidan in Agartala and proceed to the State Museum. The organisations announced the protest in response to Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha's recent remarks advising indigenous communities to adopt an Indian script in-



stead of a foreign one. TISF leader Sajra Debbarma said the organisations decided to launch the state-wide protest to press their long-pending demand. "Through these rallies, we want to send a clear message to both the state and central governments

about our sentiments," Debbarma said. He alleged that the script issue has dragged on for years without any concrete outcome. Debbarma criticised the state government for what he described as a lack of seriousness in addressing the gen-

uine demand of indigenous communities. He said TSF leaders have extended full support to the movement and activists of both organisations will participate in the protests in unity. Reacting strongly to the Chief Minister's comments, Debbarma said the government should act responsibly and focus on resolving the issue.

He said the state has the authority to appoint linguistic experts and take concrete steps to settle the script issue instead of prolonging discussions. Observers note that the upcoming protest could mark a turning point in Tripura's language politics, as the demand for Roman script has long been a rallying cry for indigenous organisations.

Tripura to Open State's First Tea Auction Centre Next Financial Year

Agartala, Dec 16: In a significant boost to Tripura's tea sector, the state is set to launch its own tea auction centre from the next financial year, with infrastructural work for the facility nearing completion. Chairman of the Tripura Tea Development Corporation (TTDC), Samir Ranjan Ghosh, said at a press conference that all essential infrastructure has already been put in place and the auction centre is expected to become operational shortly. He said the initiative would help tea growers secure better prices

for their produce through a transparent and competitive auction mechanism.

At present, tea produced in Tripura is transported to auction centres in Assam and West Bengal. Ghosh noted that due to the high volume of tea available in those markets, growers from Tripura often fail to receive fair prices despite producing quality tea. "With the establishment of a local auction centre, transportation costs will come down and the time taken to sell tea will be significantly reduced, directly

benefiting the growers," he said.

Ghosh also said that Tripura's tea industry had remained neglected for years but has seen steady progress since the present government assumed office in 2018, following the implementation of targeted policies and development initiatives.

As part of efforts to promote Tripura tea, TTDC, in collaboration with the Tea Board of India, will organise the annual 'Run for Tea' event on December 17. The run will begin

at 6.30 am from the TTDC office and will be flagged off by Industries and Commerce Minister Santana Chakma, Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Tinku Roy, Mayor and MLA Dipak Majumder, along with heads of various public sector undertakings and other dignitaries.

A three-kilometre run has been planned, with cash prizes for the top three finishers. The event is open to all and is expected to see participation from sportspersons, journalists and members of the public.

Priyanka attacks Modi govt over G Ram G bill in Lok Sabha

New Delhi, Dec 16: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra vehemently opposed the Indian government's new bill intended to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) during a parliamentary session. She accused the Modi administration of attempting to substitute the robust MGNREGA law with a significantly weakened version for "someone's obsession." This protest was triggered by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's request to introduce the Viksit Bharat Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025, also referred to as the VB-G RAM G bill.

In her speech, Priyanka Gandhi emphasized the importance of MGNREGA, which has supported millions and bolstered the rural economy for nearly twenty years since its inception by the Congress-led UPA government in 2005. She raised concerns about hastily passing the bill without comprehensive discussions and suggested it should be referred to the Standing Committee for further examination. She articulated that the new bill undermines core guarantees of the original act, which ensured 100 days of employment for the rural poor.

Gandhi highlighted the unnecessary costs associated with renaming schemes and questioned the government's failure to increase wage rates despite superficial improvements in the new legislation, which allegedly suggests extended working days. She criticized the shift of decision-making power from local gram panchayats to the central government regarding work and fund allocation under the scheme. The opposition indicated that the VB-G RAM G Bill of 2025 fundamentally undermines rights-based guarantees by enforcing a less favorable scheme for states and workers. As outlined in the bill, it proposes a legal guarantee of 125 days of wage employment to rural households where adults volunteer for unskilled manual labor, altering the financial dynamics established by MGNREGA.

Congress leader Shivashankarappa laid to rest



Bengaluru, Dec 6: The final rites of Shamanuru Shivashankarappa, a veteran Congress leader and long-serving legislator from Karnataka, were conducted on Monday in Davanagere following his death at 94. Shivashankarappa, who had battled age-related ailments, was cremated in accordance with Veerashaiva Lingayat customs after a procession from his residence. The ceremony was attended by key political figures, including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, as well as spiritual leaders. In the state assembly, a condolence resolution was adopted, highlighting Shivashankarappa's extensive public service since his entry into politics in 1969, including his significant contributions to education and social transformation in Davanagere. He is remembered for his dedication to public life and left a legacy as the oldest serving MLA in India, survived by his family, including his son S S Mallikarjun, a horticulture minister.

A case of defamation Akbar's appeal against Priya Ramani's acquittal is being heard by the High Court

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday advanced from May next year to March the hearing on former union minister M J Akbar's plea challenging the acquittal of journalist Priya Ramani in his criminal defamation case over allegations of sexual misconduct. Justice Ravinder Dubeja allowed Akbar's application to advance the date from May 7, 2026 and has now listed the matter for further proceedings on March 16.

Akbar's counsel had urged the court to fix the matter in February instead of May. Ramani's counsel did not object to the application but said it could be heard in March since there was no urgency in the matter. Akbar has challenged the trial court's February 17, 2021 order acquitting Ramani in the case on grounds that a woman has the right to put grievances before any platform of her choice even after decades.



On January 13, 2022, the high court agreed to examine Akbar's appeal against the trial court's order and admitted the appeal on which the notice was issued to Ramani in August 2021. Akbar contended in his appeal that the trial court decided his criminal defamation case on the basis of surmises and conjecture. He said the trial court failed to appreciate the arguments and evidence on record.

The trial court had dismissed the defamation complaint filed by Akbar and acquitted Ramani, saying no

Justice Yashwant Varma's appeal contesting the inquiry panel's constitution will be heard by the Supreme Court

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Supreme Court has decided to hear a plea filed by Justice Yashwant Varma of the Allahabad High Court. The plea challenges the formation of an inquiry committee by the Lok Sabha Speaker, which has been established to investigate allegations of corruption involving Justice Varma.

The inquiry committee consists of Supreme Court judge Aravind Kumar, Madras High Court Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava, and senior Karnataka High Court advocate B V Acharya. Additionally, a bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Augustine George Masih has issued notices to the office of the Lok Sabha Speaker and the secretaries-general of both Houses, requesting their responses. The next hearing in the case is scheduled for January 7, 2026.

A significant incident occurred on March 14 when



Supreme Court (SC) has agreed to hear a plea by Justice Yashwant Varma, challenging the constitution of an inquiry panel.

wads of burnt cash were discovered in the store-room of the judge's official residence in the national capital. This hearing is a result of a plea filed by Justice Varma, who is contesting the legality of a three-member committee that was formed exclusively by the Lok Sabha, in accordance with the procedures established by the Judges Inquiry Act. The document discusses a legal

plea requesting a writ to declare the action taken by the Hon'ble Speaker of the Lok Sabha on August 12, 2025, as unconstitutional.

This action involved constituting a committee under Section 3 of the Judges Act, 1968. The plea argues that this formation is in violation of Articles 124, 217, and 218 of the Constitution of India, 1950, and contravenes the procedural requirements delineated

in the Judges Act, 1968. Additionally, the counsel representing Justice Varma emphasized that the introduction of a removal motion in Parliament necessitates the establishment of a three-member committee formed jointly by both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

In this context, the unilateral action taken by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha is contested as improper and not in accordance with the established constitutional framework. The Judges Act of 1968 establishes a protocol for the removal of judges.

When a motion for removal is admitted in either House of Parliament, the speaker or chairman will form a three-member committee tasked with investigating the grounds for the proposed removal. This process aims to ensure that any allegations are systematically examined before any further action is taken.

National Herald: The court declines to consider the ED charges against Gandhis

New Delhi, Dec 16: A Delhi court, presided by Special Judge Vishal Gogne, declined to accept the Enforcement Directorate (ED)'s chargesheet in the National Herald case, which cites senior Congress leaders Sonia and Rahul Gandhi. The judge noted that the prosecution complaint is based on a private individual's complaint rather than a first information report (FIR), making it legally impermissible for the court to take cognizance. The court highlighted that the Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing has already filed an FIR; therefore, it is premature to review the ED's chargesheet details at this stage. However, the court permitted the ED to present further arguments at the next hearing.

Additionally, the court ruled against providing copies of the EOW FIR to the accused, although it allowed access to certain case information. The ED's chargesheet, filed in April, outlines how the accused allegedly acquired the financially troubled firm Associated Journals Ltd. (AJL), which published the National Herald newspaper, through the Young Indian (YI) company—owned by the Gandhis—in a covert manner to secure its assets valued over ₹2,000 crore for a mere loan of ₹50 lakh. The ED claims to have

traced about ₹988 crore in illegal proceeds related to the alleged money laundering carried out by YI, despite it being registered as a charitable entity, of which the intended benefits never materialized.

The ED's counsel, Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, argued that YI engaged in money laundering, while Sonia Gandhi's lawyer, RS Cheema, contended that the acquisition process did not result in any financial transfers to YI or the Gandhis, who merely held shares, asserting there was no money laundering involved. Other defendants named include Sam Pitroda and former journalist Suman Dubey. The ED also identified Dotex Merchandise as a shell company linked to the alleged conspiracy by providing loans to YI.



The Luthra brothers, who owned a Goa club where a fire claimed 25 lives, were deported from Thailand to Delhi

New Delhi, Dec 16: Gaurav and Saurabh Luthra, owners of the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Goa, were extradited from Thailand to Delhi following a fatal fire that killed 25 people on December 5.

Their escape to Thailand occurred shortly after the incident, and the Indian government ini-

tiated deportation procedures, including issuing a Blue Notice through Interpol.

The brothers were detained in Phuket and are set to be transferred to Goa police custody. An FIR charges them with culpable homicide and negligence related to the fire. A legal team has already visited them in detention.



Also implicated are six others, including five managerial staff and business partner Ajay Gupta, while British property owner Surinder Kumar Khosla remains at large.

The Indian Embassy had issued emergency certificates for the Luthras after their passports were canceled by authorities.

National Herald investigation: ED will appeal the court's ruling

New Delhi, Dec 16: As a Delhi court declined to take cognizance of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) charge sheet against former Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Lok Sabha opposition leader Rahul Gandhi related to the National Herald case, the ED plans to challenge this decision. The court ruling indicated that the charge sheet, which was filed in April 2023, was based on a private complaint by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy rather than a first information report (FIR) from a predicate offense. The ED's investigation was initiated under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) as a result of an earlier court order from June 2014, stemming from Swamy's complaint. Despite the court's refusal to recognize the charge sheet, the Delhi Police's economic offenses wing has already registered an FIR based on the ED's complaint and is expected to complete its investigation soon, which would provide the ED with a basis for proceeding with its case. The ED charge sheet named Sonia and Rahul Gandhi as accused under sections pertaining to money laundering and company offenses, a charge that could lead to a maximum of seven years in prison. Additionally, Sam Pitroda and Suman Dubey, close associates of the Gandhis and directors of Young Indian Private Limited—which holds a significant stake in the troubled media company—were also included in the charge sheet. The ED

● In October, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) reported that the Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has registered a First Information Report (FIR) based on an ED complaint.

argues that the Gandhis are the beneficial owners of the Associated Journals Limited, which published the National Herald, and claims that assets worth ₹2,000 crore were acquired by them for just ₹50 lakh. As part of the investigation, the ED identified proceeds of crime amounting to ₹988 crore and previously attached assets valued at ₹751.9 crore, which included the National Herald building. The recent court ruling poses a challenge for the ED, as it may have to repeat parts of the investigative process, including questioning individuals and potentially re-filing its charge sheet based on the outcomes of the ongoing police investigation. This scenario mirrors a previous case in which the ED's probe into Chhattisgarh liquor contract irregularities was quashed by the Supreme Court, leading the agency to re-initiate its investigation based on a new FIR. Founded in 1937 by Jawahar Lal Nehru, Associated Journals Limited (AJL) published National Herald and other newspapers but ceased operations in 2008, resulting in substantial debts and a subsequent takeover by Young Indian in 2010, where Sonia and Rahul Gandhi control a majority stake.

Sajid Jatt, the Pahalgam attack handler receives an NBW from an NIA court



Agency: A Jammu court has issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against Saifullah alias Sajid Jatt, a leader of the Pakistan-based terrorist organizations Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and The Resistance Front (TRF), at the behest of the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

This warrant follows a 1,500-page charge sheet filed by the NIA that establishes a connection between Pakistan and the conspiracy behind the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack. Jatt, who was designated a terrorist by the Indian home ministry in

2022, is believed to operate from Pakistan, having previously been active in Kashmir since joining LeT in 1998. He left Kashmir in 2006, abandoning his family, and has been linked to several other terrorists involved in the Pahalgam attack that resulted in the deaths of 25 tourists and a pony operator.

The attack escalated tensions between India and Pakistan, prompting India's Operation Sindoor, which targeted terrorist and military assets in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir before a ceasefire was declared on May 10.

Ashoka requests that the House session be extended

Bengaluru, Dec 16: Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka has requested Speaker U T Khader to extend the winter session of the Karnataka state legislature by an additional week, citing numerous unresolved issues that require more legislative attention. In a letter, Ashoka noted the current session, which runs from December 8 to December 19, is insufficient for discussions on pressing public matters and pending legislation. The assembly has faced interruptions, notably due to condolences for departed legislators, which resulted in a shortened session. Ashoka highlighted ongoing challenges and urged that pressing concerns remain undiscussed, affecting the state significantly. The current session in Belagavi, significant for its border location with Maharashtra and historical claims, has seen low attendance, with only about 50 members present during recent proceedings out of a total of 224. This concern extends beyond attendance to the effectiveness of addressing North Karnataka's issues, as even topics relevant to the region's development have experienced limited participation. The Assembly's performance has raised questions about the value of conducting sessions away from Bengaluru, especially when legislative action on introduced bills is lagging.

A singer's statue was erected in Hyderabad despite activists' threats

Hyderabad, Dec 16: The Telangana government recently installed a statue of the late playback singer S P Balasubrahmanyam, widely known as SPB, at the Ravindra Bharati cultural centre, despite imminent threats of vandalism from activists. The statue, standing 7.2 feet tall and made of bronze, was crafted in East Godavari district. Originally intended to be unveiled by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, the unveiling was instead conducted by Duddilla Sridhar Babu, the state minister for information technology and industries, due to a last-minute change in the Chief Minister's schedule. During the unveiling, Sridhar Babu remarked on SPB's profound impact on the history of Indian film music. However, the statue's installation was met with considerable opposition from a group of activists led by Sangamreddy Prithvi Raj, the president of Telangana Kranti Dal. They threatened to damage the statue, citing SPB's refusal to sing a pro-Telangana song during the Telangana agitation as a reason against its installation. Kalvakuntla Kavitha, president of Telangana Jagruthi, echoed this sentiment, stating that while she respected SPB, she could not support the erection of his statue in Telangana due to his past decision not to participate in the Telangana anthem. She expressed that he did not merit a statue in Hyderabad's central area, highlighting the contentious emotions surrounding the singer's legacy within the context of regional pride and identity in Telangana.



Nagaland introduces e-challan system, ends cash fines in traffic enforcement

Kohima, Dec 16: Nagaland has officially moved away from cash-based traffic fines with the launch of a new e-challan system, marking a significant change in how traffic violations will be enforced across the state. The digital system was introduced on Sunday with the aim of improving transparency, reducing corruption, and making traffic enforcement more efficient and accountable. The e-challan service was formally launched at the District Transport Office (DTO) in Dimapur by the Commissioner and Secretary of the Transport Department, Robert Longchari. With this system in place, traffic violations will now be recorded and penalised electronically, replacing the long-standing paper challan and cash payment process. Speaking at the launch programme, Longchari said the shift to digital enforcement was an important step towards clean and transparent governance. He pointed out that cash handling during

traffic enforcement often leads to complaints and misunderstandings, and the new system would help remove such issues. According to him, the e-challan platform will ensure that fines are issued fairly, with proper records, and without direct cash transactions. He also highlighted that the success of the system depends on close coordination among different departments. Longchari acknowledged the efforts of the Traffic Police, the Home Department, and the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for working together to bring the system to Nagaland. He said such coordination is necessary to ensure smooth implementation and effective enforcement on the ground. The Transport Commissioner noted that the e-challan system would help improve compliance with traffic rules. Since violations will be digitally recorded and tracked, drivers are expected to become more cautious and responsible on the

road. He added that the government plans to gradually extend the system to all districts of Nagaland and introduce automatic surveillance cameras in the future to further strengthen traffic monitoring. Longchari also said that the data generated through the system would be useful for planning and policymaking in the transport sector. Reliable data on traffic violations can help authorities identify problem areas, improve road safety measures, and support evidence-based decisions. He added that the system would also contribute to state revenue while supporting the broader goal of digital governance under the vision of “Viksit Nagaland”. Delivering the keynote address, Senior Technical Director and State Informatics Officer of NIC, Lanusungkum Aier, spoke about the journey of transport digitalisation in India. He explained that digital platforms such as Sarathi and Vahan laid the foundation for modern transport services.

PM Modi’s Two-Day Assam Visit to Focus on Infrastructure, Industry and Political Outreach

Guwahati, Dec 16: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will begin a two-day visit to Assam from December 20, with a focus on major infrastructure projects, a landmark industrial investment and political engagement ahead of the state elections scheduled in the coming months. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday reviewed preparations for the visit, describing it as significant for the state’s development roadmap. The Prime Minister is expected to arrive in Guwahati at 2.45 pm on Saturday. The visit will commence with the inauguration of a statue of Assam’s first Chief Minister, Gopinath Bordoloi, at Borjhar, followed by the inauguration of the new terminal



building at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport. Modi is also slated to address a public rally near the airport, where Sarma inspected logistical arrangements. Later in the day, the Prime Minister will visit the BJP’s Assam headquarters to interact with party leaders and workers from across the state. He will stay overnight at the state

guesthouse in Koinadhora. On Sunday morning, Modi will participate in Pariksha Pe Charcha with selected students aboard a vessel on the Brahmaputra river. He will then visit the newly constructed Swahid Smarak Kshetra before travelling to Namrup in Dibrugarh district. The highlight of the second day will be the laying

of the foundation stone for a ₹12,000-crore ammonia-urea plant at Namrup, a project expected to significantly boost Assam’s industrial growth. Sarma had earlier reviewed preparations for the Namrup programme on December 10. “In a few days from now, Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji will lay the foundation stone of the 12 lakh MT Ammonia-Urea plant in Namrup, which will further accelerate Assam’s industrial landscape,” Sarma said in a post on X. “Assam awaits this historic moment and Adarniya Modi Ji’s arrival.” The Prime Minister is also scheduled to address a public meeting in Namrup before concluding his visit.

Fresh Gunfire Erupts in Manipur Just Days After Meitei-Kuki Dialogue Efforts

Imphal, Dec 16: Hopes of restoring peace in Manipur suffered a setback on Tuesday night as fresh gunfire broke out in the Torbung area, located along the boundary between Meitei-dominated Bishnupur district and Kuki-dominated Churachandpur district, barely 48 hours after Meitei and Kuki legislators were brought together for talks in New Delhi. According to local officials and eyewitnesses, shots were fired after 9 pm in and around the Torbung and Phougakchao Ikhai areas, triggering panic among residents in the conflict-prone region. Security forces responded by deploying additional personnel, and exchanges of fire were reported as authorities worked to contain the situation. The two communities have offered sharply contrasting accounts of the incident. Kuki groups alleged that armed Meitei outfits, including Arambai Tenggol and Meitei Leepun, along with other Meitei militants, crossed the buffer zone under the pretext of facilitating the return of internally displaced persons to their villages.

They claimed Kukis were forced to open fire to prevent armed intrusion into their areas. Meitei organisations, however, countered that Meitei villagers had returned to Torbung as part of a government-supported resettlement process.

They alleged that Kuki militants launched attacks on Meitei villages under cover of darkness, prompting retaliatory firing by security forces.

Vijay Diwas observed at Lunglei War Memorial

Aizawl, Dec 16: Vijay Diwas, commemorating India’s victory in the 1971 India-Pakistan War, was observed today at the War Memorial in Lunglei, Mizoram.

The programme was organised under the aegis of the Lunglei District Sainik Office, with participation from personnel of the 20 Assam Rifles, officers and cadets of 2 Mizo Battalion National Cadet Corps (NCC), and members of the Mizoram Ex-Services League (MESL), Lunglei. The solemn observance paid tribute to the brave martyrs who laid down their lives for the nation and honoured the courage and sacrifice of the armed forces.

Lunglei District Sainik Welfare & Resettlement Officer, Maj. Rebecca L. Chhakchhuak (Retd), delivered the opening address, followed by a brief account of the significance of Vijay Diwas presented by the 2 Mizo Battalion NCC. The National Anthem was sung, after which floral tributes were laid at the War Memorial in honour of the martyrs by the Commanding Officer of 2 Mizo Bn NCC, Col. Sagar K. Mohanty; ECHS Officer-in-Charge, Col. Arun Sharma (Retd); Commanding Officer, 20 Assam Rifles, Col. Jaswinder; District Sainik Welfare & Resettlement Officer, Maj. Rebecca L. Chhakchhuak (Retd);



the President of MESL Lunglei; and several officers and ex-servicemen.

Vijay Diwas is observed every year on December 16 to mark India’s decisive victory in the 1971 war against Pakistan, which led to the liberation of East Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh as an independent nation. The day also commemorates the unparalleled bravery of the Indian Armed Forces, which culminated in the surrender of approximately 93,000 Pakistani troops in Dhaka.

During the 1971 India-Pakistan War (Bangladesh Liberation War), around 320 courageous

soldiers from Mizoram served with distinction under various regiments and corps of the Indian Army. Of these, 11 soldiers attained martyrdom and about 24 sustained injuries during the conflict.

The Lunglei War Memorial, established in 2000, is located at Chanmari locality in the heart of Lunglei town. It bears the names of 103 soldiers who laid down their lives in the World War II and five personnel who were martyred during insurgency-related operations. The memorial is maintained by the Lunglei District Sainik Welfare & Resettlement Office.

Two Youths Seriously Hurt in Bokakhat Crash
Bokakhat, Dec 16: On Monday night, there was a traffic accident near Latabari, Bokakhat. A Pulsar motorcycle with the registration number AS05T6603 and a Baleno car with the number AS05Y2045 crashed head-on. In the collision, two young people suffered severe injuries. Babul Munda, a young Borbheta resident, was the motorcyclist who suffered serious injuries. Anjib Munda, another young person, was hurt while strolling from Bokakhat to the Borjuri side. The Bokakhat Government Hospital administered first assistance to both. Babul Munda was sent to JMCH, Jorhat for additional care because of his serious condition.

Gogoi Alleges Systemic Neglect, Political Interference in Central Universities of Northeast

Guwahati, Dec 16: Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi has accused the Modi government of systematic neglect and political interference in central universities across the Northeast, following the resignation of the Pro Vice-Chancellor of North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in Meghalaya. Describing the resignation as a reflection of “deep governance failures,” Gogoi said students, teachers, and non-teaching staff were bearing the brunt of what he termed absentee leadership and a steady erosion of accountability in central universities. Referring to warnings earlier raised by Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi in Parliament, Gogoi said political interference in the appointment of vice-chancellors had “hollowed out academic institutions.” He added that such interference was undermining academic autonomy, de-



stabilising campuses, and weakening the foundations of India’s higher education system and democracy. Professor S. Umdor resigned as Pro Vice-Chancellor of NEHU on December 15, 2025, citing an untenable administrative environment.

His decision came after several months during which he had been overseeing the university’s academic and administrative affairs in the prolonged absence of the Vice-Chancellor from the campus and from Megha-

laya. The period also witnessed growing campus unrest and the departure of several senior officials. Professor Umdor formally announced his resignation at a meeting with deans and officers on December 12, with the resignation taking effect on Sunday afternoon. Gogoi also drew attention to similar administrative challenges at Tezpur University in Assam, suggesting that the developments point to a broader pattern of dysfunction in central universities across the Northeast.

Relief for state travellers to Delhi as CM lays base for new Meghalaya House

Shillong, Dec 16: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma today laid the foundation stone for the construction of a new Meghalaya House Annexe at 9, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Road, New Delhi. The ceremony was held in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong and General Administration Department (GAD) Minister Sosthenes Sohtun. The new complex will be constructed in two phases. The first phase will comprise 24 guest rooms along with a meeting hall and will be built at an estimated cost of ₹ 22 crore. The annexe will come up within the premises of the existing old Meghalaya House complex, originally built in 1971, spread over a 1.99-acre plot. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that Meghalaya House in Delhi must primarily serve the people of the State by ensuring a

comfortable and welcoming stay for visitors and officials alike. He noted that the addition of new rooms would cater to the growing number of people from Meghalaya visiting Delhi for official meetings, interviews, examinations, medical purposes and other engagements. He directed the officials to ensure that the new building is constructed with the highest standards of quality, keeping in mind modern amenities and facilities. “We are hopeful that we will have very good infrastructure with proper service,” he said. The Chief Minister remarked that Meghalaya House should become the first choice for residents of the State while staying in Delhi. “Once completed, the 24 guest rooms will significantly enhance our capacity to accommodate visitors from Meghalaya. I look forward to the timely completion of the project,” he added.

Emphasising the importance of cultural representation, the Chief Minister stated that the building should be iconic and reflect the culture and traditions of the people of Meghalaya. He stressed that the public spaces created must be oriented towards serving the people of the State in the best possible manner. Highlighting the role of human values alongside infrastructure, he urged the staff to focus on warmth and hospitality. “New infrastructure alone is not enough. The human touch is equally important. A smile, a warm welcome to someone visiting Delhi for the first time from Meghalaya can make all the difference during their stay at Meghalaya House,” he said. The construction of the Meghalaya House Annexe is expected to significantly strengthen the State’s presence in the national capital and improve facilities for visitors from Meghalaya.

Assam launches automated SMS system to track student absenteeism

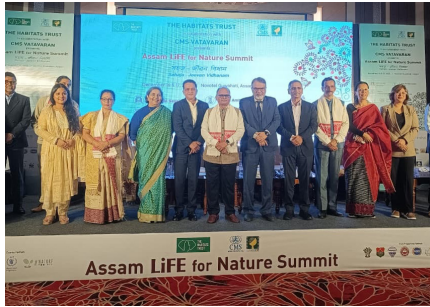
Guwahati, Dec 16: Cabinet Minister Ranoj Pegu on Monday inaugurated the Automated SMS Absenteeism Alert System, a digital initiative aimed at tracking student attendance and reducing dropout rates in schools across Assam. Pegu said the system will send SMS alerts to class teachers and parents when a student remains absent without permission. He said authorities have integrated the system with the Shiksha Setu App to ensure real-time monitoring of attendance. The system will automatically generate alerts if a student stays absent for five consecutive days. An SMS will go simultaneously to the class teacher and the parent or guardian, Pegu said.

The system will continue sending alerts after every five days of absence, including on the 10th, 15th day and beyond. Addressing a press meet, Pegu said the initiative strengthens data-driven governance in the education sector. He said the government has integrated Shiksha Setu data with UDISE data after seeing positive results from the app. The minister said the system will generate messages in two major local languages in each district. In BTC areas, the system will send messages in Assamese and Bodo to ensure parents understand the alerts, he added. Pegu said the initiative will help authorities monitor dropout and transition rates more effectively. Sharing enrolment figures, he said the gross enrolment rate in lower primary earlier stood at 119.6 per cent. After rationalisation, the rate dropped to 108 per cent for the 2024-25 academic year, he said. Assam’s combined lower and upper primary GER stands at 101.5 per cent, higher than the national average of 90.6 per cent.

Two Agri-Entrepreneurs from Kaziranga Landscape Honoured with Assam Green Ambassador Awards 2025

Guwahati, Dec 16: Two agri-entrepreneurs from the Kaziranga landscape—Neelam Dutta and Roopjyoti Gogoi—were conferred the prestigious Assam Green Ambassador Awards 2025 in recognition of their grassroots contributions to biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture and community-led environmental stewardship. The awards were presented at the Assam LiFE for Nature Summit, organised by CMS VATAVARAN in collaboration with The Habitat Trust. The summit was supported by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), UN Environment Programme (UNEP) India, IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC), #NatureForAll and UN World Food Programme (WFP) India. The Assam Green Ambassador Awards honour individuals from the state who have dedicated at least five years to voluntary environmental and conservation action. Awardees

are selected based on evidence-based documentation of long-term impact in areas such as biodiversity and wildlife conservation, ecosystem restoration, climate action, sustainable farming, environmental education and community stewardship. Neelam Dutta, a pioneer of organic agriculture, was recognised for her role in reviving indigenous seed varieties and empowering small farmers across Northeast India. She founded Pabhoi Greens, India’s first organic seed initiative in the region, which promotes farmer-led seed conservation and self-reliant, sustainable farming practices. Her work has significantly strengthened ecological farming systems, biodiversity conservation and rural livelihoods. Roopjyoti Gogoi, a resident on the fringes of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, was honoured for her innovative work in upcycling plastic waste into eco-friendly woven utility products. Through her ini-



tiative, she has addressed plastic pollution in the fragile Kaziranga landscape while creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for local women. Her efforts have fostered environmental awareness, economic independence and community resilience aligned with conservation goals. In addition, a Special Jury Mention was awarded to Dr Oinam Sunanda Devi, Scientific Officer at the Assam State Biodiversity Board, for her sustained contributions

to biodiversity conservation, community engagement, capacity-building, vermicomposting initiatives and effective implementation of the Biological Diversity Act. The Assam LiFE for Nature Summit brought together senior policymakers, environmental experts, youth leaders, media and civil society organisations to advance Assam’s vision for climate resilience, regenerative development and Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment). State partners included the Assam Pollution Control Board, Assam Agroforestry Development Board and Assam Science, Technology & Environment Council (ASTEC), with the Assam Press Club as Media Partner and Assam Skill University as Knowledge Partner. The summit will culminate in a White Paper on Assam’s LiFE and Nature Strategy, outlining actionable recommendations for sustainable and community-driven development across the state.

Arunachal Governor honours Assam Rifles

Itanagar, Dec 16: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) KT Parnaik on Tuesday presented the Governor’s Citation to the 11th Battalion of the Assam Rifles at Lok Bhavan in Itanagar. The Commandant of the battalion, Col Vivek Tripathi, Sena Medal, received the citation along with Subedar Major Lekh Raj and Rifleman Neelesh Kumar on behalf of all ranks.

Parnaik praised the 11 Assam Rifles for its exceptional professionalism, effective counter-insurgency operations, and humanitarian support to civil authorities and local communities. He said the battalion’s constant vigilance and robust security measures have ensured peace and boosted public confidence in its area of responsibility. The Governor noted that the unit’s Sadbhavana activities have strengthened trust and harmony between security forces and local residents. Congratulating the commandant and personnel, Parnaik expressed confidence that the battalion would continue to uphold high standards of service and dedication. He said the contributions of the armed forces support the vision of a ‘Viksit Bharat’ and reinforce the spirit of ‘Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat’ in Arunachal Pradesh. Despite challenges, the 11 Assam Rifles has played a key role in promoting peace, stability, and development in the state, he added.

BUSINESS

As it prepares for listing, BHIVE will complete the ₹400 crore pre-IPO round

New Delhi: In order to support its next phase of expansion and improve its balance sheet, Bengaluru-based co-working operator BHIVE Workspaces plans to close a ₹400 crore pre-initial public offering (pre-IPO) fundraising, the business said in a statement on Tuesday. A sizable debt component from a group of lenders and an equity infusion of about Rs 100 crore that is nearing completion make up the fundraising.

High-net-worth individuals, family offices, and a number of current investors have expressed interest in the equity round. “Bengaluru is India’s largest and most competitive co-working market, and BHIVE has built a clear leadership position here by consistently delivering unmatched value to both start-ups and enterprises,” stated Shesh Rao Paplikar, founder and CEO of BHIVE Workspaces. In addition

to facilitating quick development into important growing cities like Pune, Hyderabad, and Chennai, this fundraising expedites our path towards an IPO.

In the future, the firm plans to generate more than Rs 500 crore in revenue by FY28 and Rs 1,000 crore by FY30 thanks to its campus-led expansion strategy, deeper enterprise penetration, and a diverse portfolio that includes managed offices, virtual offices, co-working spaces, and flexible access products.

Blume Ventures partner Ashish Fafadia stated: “BHIVE has the potential to be one of the standout performers in the co-working and flex working space, having navigated a challenging market during Covid and little after.”

The company’s growth trajectory will be strengthened with superior unit economics thanks to the lead-



ership’s solid foundation. Given the vertical’s and the company’s long-term potential, we want to go public with BHIVE at some point in the near to medium future. With more than 32,000 seats spread over more than 28 locations in Bengaluru and Mumbai, BHIVE offers

nearly 1.8 million square feet of first-rate workspace.

The company, which was founded in 2014, claimed to have outperformed the industry average of roughly 41% with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 150% during the previous four years.

Stock markets decline in early trade dragged by foreign fund

Mumbai: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined in early trade on Tuesday as persistent foreign fund outflows and weak global market trends dented investors’ sentiment. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 363.92 points to 84,849.44 during initial trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 106.65 points to 25,920.65. However, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, and Titan were among the gainers. However, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, and Titan were among the gainers. US markets ended in negative territory on Monday.Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,468.32 crore on Monday, while Domestic institutional investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs



1,792.25 crore, according to exchange data.“Major equity indices on Wall Street closed lower amid a risk-off sentiment ahead of key economic data releases, including non-farm payrolls, retail sales, and inflation figures, which could influence the future course of monetary policy. Asian markets also opened lower, with cautious traders paring positions ahead of the Bank of Japan’s crucial monetary policy decision later this week,” Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online

trading and wealth tech firm, said.On the domestic front, persistent FII outflows and continued pressure on the rupee near record lows remain key near-term headwinds, he said.“However, strong participation from domestic institutional investors and retail flows continues to provide a cushion against deeper downside risks. In this backdrop, markets are expected to respect key technical levels rather than exhibit aggressive trending behaviour,” Ponnudi R added.

Gold and silver prices surge: Will govt regulate retail rates amid rally

Mumbai: The gold and silver have seen a major rally in calendar year 2025. Both gold and silver prices reached record highs, driven by global economic uncertainty, inflation concerns, and strong industrial demand for silver. Silver, in particular, saw a more significant percentage surge than gold. In 2025, gold prices surged 63% for the year, while silver posted an even sharper rise of 118%. For Indian households, gold and silver symbolise savings and tradition. Yet, over the past decade, physical purchases have plummeted despite soaring import bills, driven by global price spikes.Parliamentary data revealed that gold imports fell 17.3% in volume from 9.15 lakh kg (\$34.4 billion) in 2014-15 to 7.57 lakh kg (\$58 billion) in 2024-25, a 69% value surge. Silver imports dropped sharply, 33% from 77.1 lakh kg (\$4.52 billion) to 51.6 lakh kg (\$4.83 billion), up 6.7% in value.Domestic prices mirror international benchmarks, rupee-dollar rates, and taxes, the Finance Ministry explained in Lok Sabha. Recent rallies stem from geopolitical tensions, global growth worries, safe-haven buying, and central bank hoarding.

Shares of HDFC Bank and IndusInd Bank decline as the RBI approves the HDFC group

New Delhi: Following the Reserve Bank of India’s approval for HDFC Bank’s group entities to purchase an aggregate stake of up to 9.5 percent in IndusInd Bank, shares of HDFC Bank and IndusInd Bank were trading slightly down in early trade on Tuesday, December 16. The stock of HDFC Bank was down 0.1 percent at Rs 995.1 at approximately 9.30 am. With an 11.7 percent increase so far this year, the stock has beaten the overall market, while the Nifty 50 has risen by 9.2 percent. The market capitalization of the lender is approximately Rs 7.63 lakh crore.Shares of IndusInd Bank continued their poor performance this year, falling 0.5 percent to Rs

846.95. The stock has a market capitalization of about Rs 66,000 crore and is down 12.6% year to date. Following HDFC Bank’s announcement that the RBI had given the company permission to purchase up to 9.5% of private sector lender IndusInd Bank, the stock moved. HDFC Bank explained in an exchange statement late on Monday that the approval covers a “aggregate holding” by its group companies, which include HDFC Mutual Fund, HDFC Life Insurance, HDFC ERGO General Insurance, HDFC Pension Fund, and HDFC Securities. According to HDFC Bank, it has no plans to make a direct investment in IndusInd Bank. However, it had

requested to the RBI for an expanded ceiling because the total investments of its group firms were probably going to surpass the previous statutory barrier of five percent. In accordance with the RBI’s Commercial Banks (Acquisition and Holding of Shares or Voting Rights) Directions, 2025, the application was filed on behalf of the group companies on October 24, 2025. The total holding cannot, at any time, surpass 9.5 percent of IndusInd Bank’s paid-up share capital or voting rights under the December 15 decision. The RBI has stipulated that the approved shares must be obtained within the one-year period, ending on December 14, 2026, otherwise the approval



will expire. HDFC Midcap Fund, a division of HDFC Mutual Fund, held a 4.03 percent interest in IndusInd Bank, valued at Rs 2,668 crore based on Monday’s closing price, according to the September quarter holdings pattern. Nearly 23% of IndusInd Bank is owned by mutual funds collectively. The Government of Singapore, Government Pension Fund Global, BNP Paribas, and LIC are some of

the other notable shareholders. Following governance and accounting problems earlier this year, which resulted in the bank’s largest-ever quarterly loss in the March quarter due to a \$230 million impact to its accounts, IndusInd Bank has been under pressure. Former CEO Sumant Kathpalia and deputy CEO Arun Khurana resigned as a result of the incident, which also received criticism from investors for board oversight and the delay in disclosing losses from derivative portfolios. In an attempt to bolster capital and rebuild trust, IndusInd Bank announced earlier this year that it would raise up to \$3.47 billion and permit promoters to designate two directors to its board.

Antique anticipates a multi-year earnings upcycle and a 30% increase

New Delhi: Antique Stock Broking began covering Adani Power with a “Buy” recommendation, stating that the Adani group company is about to undergo a multi-year profits upcycle driven by strong power demand tailwinds, a fast expansion in capacity, and improved earnings visibility. The stock is valued at 15 times the expected FY28 Ebitda, and the brokerage has set a target price of Rs 187. The target indicates a potential upside of thirty percent. Adani Power is expected to increase capacity by 2.3 times, from 18.15 GW in FY25 to 41.9 GW by FY33, according to Antique. This represents a significant shift from a previously challenged thermal IPP to what it considers to be India’s most efficient private baseload power producer. According to the brokerage, India’s structural power upcycle offered a robust medium-to-long-term tailwind for coal-based production, underpinned by a projected 6% demand CAGR over FY22–32

and increased peak requirements from EVs, data centers, AI, and manufacturing. Citing Adani Power’s supremacy in state-led thermal power procurement, it highlighted the company’s cost competitiveness and execution capability by pointing out that it had acquired around 70% of granted capacity, or 12.4 GW out of 17.7 GW. Antique continued, “With about 90% of operational capacity and 67% of the expanded 41.9 GW portfolio tied up under long-term PPAs, Adani Power’s earnings visibility is strong.” It stated that while fuel supply risks are reduced by SHAKTI-linked fuel supply agreements, new PPAs carry higher fixed rates. With 23.72 GW being built across nine brownfield phases and four greenfield projects, Adani Power is carrying out the biggest private-sector thermal expansion program in India, according to the brokerage. approximately 60% of the pipeline was made up of brownfield expansion, which reduced capital



expenditures to approximately Rs 8 crore per MW and decreased execution times to about 3.5 years as opposed to the usual 5–6 years for public-sector projects. With peak demand expected to increase significantly over the next ten years, Antique said that this plan was in line with India’s tighter baseload requirements. Additionally, it stated that captive coal output of roughly 14 million tons annually was anticipated to boost dispatch competitiveness and support about 3 GW of merchant capacity.

Cibil flags early stress in micro loans and two wheeler credit

Mumbai: Credit information company TransUnion Cibil has flagged early signs of stress in select retail loan segments, even as overall demand for credit has improved following the GST rate rationalisation.In its Credit Market Indicator report released on Monday, Cibil said asset quality in large property loans showed improvement, with 90-days-plus delinquencies declining 29 basis points year-on-year to 1.4 per cent as of September 2025. However, stress is building in micro loans against property, particularly in the ₹2 lakh to ₹10 lakh ticket-size segment, where delinquency levels rose 45 basis points year-on-year to 3.3 per cent. Two-wheeler loans also witnessed deterioration in asset quality, with delinquencies exceeding 90 days increasing 22 basis points to 2.2 per cent during the quarter ended September. However, younger borrowers appear to be exercising greater caution. The share of loan enquiries from



borrowers aged 26-35 declined to 38 per cent in the September quarter from 40 per cent in the same quarter over the past two fiscal years. Enquiries from those below 25 years eased to 19 per cent from 20 per cent a year ago.In contrast, the share of borrowers aged 36-45 rose. The proportion of new-to-credit customers in origination volumes slipped by one percentage point to 16 per cent, reflecting lender preference for existing customers.

India engages Mexico over tariffs as exporters brace

Mumbai: India is engaging with Mexico over the Central American nation’s decision to unilaterally raise tariffs on a number of products to find mutually beneficial solutions, even as New Delhi reserves the right to take appropriate measures to safeguard the interests of its exporters, a government official said on Saturday. The duties were announced against countries that do not have free trade agreements (FTAs) with Mexico, such as India, China, South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia. The official said India was engaged with Mexico when a bill was tabled in this regard. The embassy of India in Mexico had then raised the issue with the Mexican ministry of economy on September 30, seeking special concessions to shield Indian exports from the new tariffs. India’s exports to Mexico stood at \$5.75 billion in 2024-25, while imports were \$2.9 billion. The major export items for India are automobiles and auto components, machinery, electrical and electronics, organic chemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles and plastics.“India values its partnership with Mexico and stands ready to work collaboratively toward a stable and balanced trade environment that benefits businesses and consumers in both countries,” the official added.

Further, both the countries were looking



to start negotiations for an FTA, and terms of reference (ToR) to initiate the talks formally are expected to be finalised soon. Experts said that the trade agreement will help insulate Indian companies from these tariffs, which were imposed under pressure from the US to align with America on increasing tariffs against China and prevent transshipment to America. Mexico’s Senate approved the new tariff measure on December 11, 2025, and it has since been cleared by both chambers of Congress. Under the decision, Mexico will impose tariffs ranging from 5 per cent to 50 per cent on about 1,463 tariff lines from countries that do not have FTAs with Mexico.

Why the Rule of 100 fails modern investors what smarter asset allocation looks like

The Rule of 100 (or 110/120) fails modern investors because it's an oversimplified, age-based guideline that ignores personal goals, risk tolerance (ability/willingness to take risk), income needs, longer lifespans, and changing market dynamics.

Mumbai: In the la-la land of myths and mysteries surrounding investing, the “Rule of 100” sits somewhere near the very top. Discuss asset allocation even casually with investors, and this imaginary theory rears its head all of a sudden. Its staunchest adherents concede that it is tragically flawed — and, yes, it certainly does not merit a universal underpinning. In this article, we will not only argue against the so-called Rule of 100, but also we will discuss superior alternatives.

For starters, we will ask you to imagine a middle-aged man in an urban setting, investing for self and family, trying to juggle his EMI, parents’ medical bills and a school-going child’s tuition fees.



Let’s assume he is a 40-year old householder. The Rule of 100 urges us to subtract an individual’s age from hundred and allocate the sum so derived (as a percentage of his total investments) to equities. Our 40-year old, therefore, will be advised to invest 60 per cent of his surplus in the stock exchange. And,

as he grows older, the equity component of his portfolio (that is, the riskier part) will get reduced. Debt, the less risky component in conventional terms, will automatically increase as the individual ages. A confession at this stage will be in order. The topic came up during a meeting with a new acquaintance, which has

actually set the tone for today. It began with a straight question — is the “Rule of 100” a fable or does it really hold a deeper meaning? More than a mere fable, it is a fallacy, we told him. Here’s why.

Instead, he tries to achieve what he thinks balances between the “right” and the “wrong” asset classes.

Samantha Ruth Prabhu Hails Ranveer Singh as a ‘Shapeshifter’ After Watching ‘Dhurandhar’

Mumbai: Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu has become the latest celebrity to shower praise on Dhurandhar, the Ranveer Singh-led spy thriller that continues to dominate both the box office and social media conversations. The actor joined a growing list of film personalities including Hrithik Roshan, Allu Arjun, Akshay Kumar, Bhumi Pednekar, and Adivi Sesh who have publicly applauded the Aditya Dhar directorial.

Featuring Ranveer Singh in the lead, Dhurandhar also stars Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal, and R Madhavan in pivotal roles. Supporting performances by Gaurav Gera, Danish Pandor, and Rakesh Bedi have also been widely appreciated. Since its release, the film has generated strong word-of-mouth, driven by its scale, performances, and

high-stakes narrative. Samantha shared her reaction after watching the film, offering a glowing review that highlighted both the immersive experience and the ensemble cast’s performances. Taking to her Instagram Stories, Samantha expressed her admiration for the film and its cast, reserving special praise for Ranveer Singh’s transformation in the role. She wrote, “Still buzzing after #Dhurandhar. The big-screen experience, the immersion, the thrill. And @ranveersingh – Unreal. A shapeshifter, a joy, forever a fan. Every department in perfect sync. Just stunning to watch. @adityadharfilms Biggest congratulations. Akshaye Khanna – the brilliance. @rampal72 Goosebumps. @actormaddy Never stop surprising @duttсанjay.”

Her review quickly caught fans’ attention, adding to the



film’s already massive on-line buzz. Viral clips, audience reactions, and fan-made reels have played a key role in sustaining Dhurandhar’s momentum well into its second week. At the box office, Dhurandhar has cemented its status as one of Bollywood’s biggest blockbusters in recent years. The film has earned Rs 364.60 crore net in India and grossed Rs 552.70 crore worldwide within its first ten days. Despite its lengthy runtime of over three and a half

hours, audiences have embraced the film for its gripping screenplay, impactful music, precise casting, and layered performances. Director Aditya Dhar is set to continue the story with Dhurandhar Part 2: Revenge, scheduled for a theatrical release on March 19, 2026, coinciding with Eid. The sequel will face stiff box office competition from Yash’s Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups and the Adivi Sesh–Mrunal Thakur–Anurag Kashyap action drama Dacoit.

Anupam Kher Celebrates 50 Years in Mumbai: 41 Years, 550 Films, One Emotional Note

Mumbai: Veteran actor Anupam Kher has taken to his social media account to celebrate his 50 glorious years in the city of dreams, Mumbai. The actor mentioned how he was reminded of this special milestone by a very dear friend of his. “MY GOLDEN JUBILEE IN MUMBAI”, wrote Anupam. “My friend and classmate #SuhasKhandke from the #NationalSchoolOfDrama sent me a beautiful message this morning (2nd Pic) about my first ever visit to Mumbai (then Bombay) and informed me that I came to this beautiful #CityOfDreams first the time today, i.e 15th of December 1975!”

He further elaborated, “Exactly FIFTY years ago. I was in the first year of Drama School. I stayed with Suhas for 10 days! As a 20-year-old young boy, I was completely mesmerised by the energy and the magnanimity of #Bombay!” The actor further penned, “Suhas lived on #WalkeshwerRoad. So I watched the vastness of the ocean for the first time in my life! I felt the people of this city were very different



from other parts of the country! Today I have a word for them – CHILLED!” The Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge star further mentioned how the city of dreams has given him everything. “When I reflect on these years, I realise that this city of #Mumbai has given me EVERYTHING! It gave me DREAMS and then helped me make them COME TRUE!” Highlighting his journey of four decades in the industry, Anupam wrote, “41 years in cinema, almost 550 films, friends, success that humbled me, failure that taught me so many things! Thank you, MUMBAI, for your blessings and kindness! And the ordinary person on the streets of Mumbai is actually extraordinary! They

are the heartbeats of this city. I salute them.” Anupam shared a few pictures and took a trip down memory lane. He also shared a picture from his first theatre play ever, followed by a screenshot of his conversation with his friend. The message sent by Suhas Khandke, Anupam Kher’s friend, read, “Hey brother, today marks the completion of 50 years, since you first stepped into Mumbai. For our winter vacation in 1st year, we boarded the train on 14th Dec 1975, to arrive in Mumbai on 15th December. It proved to be an extremely auspicious day for you. Congratulations dear Anupam for your successful Golden Jubilee in the city of dreams.”

‘Akhandha 2’ Box Office: Modest 4-Day Collection for Balakrishna’s Film

Mumbai: The box office collections of Balakrishna’s latest release, Akhandha 2, saw a huge drop on Monday. The Boyapati Srinu directorial may face a litmus test at the ticket window, and as expected, Akhandha 2 underperformed on the first Monday. The film reportedly collected Rs 5.1 crore on the fourth day, taking the overall tally of film’s collections to Rs 66 crore (net) in India. So far, the film’s strong weekend performance underlines Balakrishna’s massive fan following and his ability to pull audiences to theatres. But Akhandha 2 fumbled on its first Monday, nearly completing its major theatrical run. As a result, Balakrishna had reportedly shifted focus on to his next ambitious proj-



ect. Balakrishna reunites with director Gopichand Malineni, marking their second outing together after delivering a successful Veera Simha Reddy earlier in 2023. This time, the duo is stepping into a completely different zone, as the upcoming project is said to be a grand period drama. The film promises to showcase Balakrishna in

a powerful and regal avatar, backed by a rich narrative and large-scale presentation. Adding to the excitement, Nayanthara has been finalized as the female lead, making this pairing one of the most talked-about combinations in recent times. Her presence is expected to bring both star value and emotional depth to the story. According to industry buzz, Balakrish-

Jaideep Ahlawat & ‘Black Warrant’ Sweep Filmfare OTT Awards

Mumbai: Mumbai saw a sparkly night on December 15 as the sixth edition of the Filmfare OTT Awards celebrated the shows and films that kept audiences glued to their screens all year. With familiar faces like Alia Bhatt and Vicky Kaushal in attendance, the evening felt more like a big celebration of stories that truly connected with viewers. From intense dramas to light-hearted comedies, the event honoured the best of India’s OTT space.

One name that dominated the night was Paatal Lok Season 2. The gritty series took home numerous awards. Jaideep Ahlawat won Best Actor (Male), Series – Drama, while the show also took home Best Series (Critics). Adding to the celebration, Tillotama Shome won Best Supporting Actor (Female), Series – Drama for her powerful performance. Another big winner was Black Warrant, which impressed with its



sharp direction and strong performances. The show won Best Director (Series) for Vikramaditya Motwane along with his team. Zahan Kapoor received Best Actor (Male), Series – Critics (Drama), while Rahul Bhat won Best Supporting Actor (Male), Series – Drama). The suspense thriller Khauf also had a strong display. Monika Panwar won Best Actor (Female), Series – Drama, while Rasika Dugal was honoured in the critics’ category for Shekhar Home. Khauf also stood out in the technical categories, winning awards for cinematography and ed-

iting, and taking home the honour for Best Story as well. As for the comedy, Raat Jawaan Hai won Best Comedy (Series/Special), while Barun Sobti and Sparsh Shrivastava shared Best Actor (Male), Series – Comedy. Ananya Panday won Best Actor (Female), Series – Comedy for Call Me Bae, while Dupahiya and Gram Chikitsalay picked up supporting actor awards. Angry Young Men won an award in the non-fiction category and IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack was honoured for direction and dialogue at the Filmfare OTT Awards 2025.

‘Yamla Pagla Deewana’ Re-Releases in Theatres to Honor Dharmendra

Mumbai: The demise of veteran actor Dharmendra on November 24 sent shockwaves across the Indian film industry. Fondly remembered as the “He-Man of Bollywood,” the legendary star passed away at the age of 89, leaving behind a towering legacy that spanned decades. Now, more than a month later, one of his most loved films, Yamla Pagla Deewana (2011), is reportedly set to return to cinemas as a tribute to the iconic actor.

According to a source close to Bollywood Hungama, the re-release has been planned to honour Dharmendra’s immense contribution to Indian cinema and his enduring appeal across generations. The source said, “The re-release of Yamla Pagla Deewana will serve as a tribute to the man who was unanimously loved and who left an indelible mark in the world of cinema. The film seems apt for a re-run as it’s not very old, still looks fresh and entertaining and also stars Dharmendra along with his two sons, Sunny Deol and Bobby Deol.” The 2011 comedy-drama holds a special place among fans, not just for its humour but also for bringing together Dharmendra with Sunny and Bobby Deol in a full-fledged family entertainer. Over the years, the film has continued to enjoy strong recall value through television reruns and digital platforms. The source further revealed that the re-release date has undergone a change due to current



box office dynamics. “Earlier, the plan was to re-release Yamla Pagla Deewana this Friday, December 19. But due to the Dhurandhar wave, NH Studioz, which holds the rights to the film, has decided to change the plan. Yamla Pagla Deewana is now expected to arrive in cinemas on January 1, 2026. A final decision will be taken in a few days from now,” the source added.

Directed by Samir Karnik, Yamla Pagla Deewana derives its title from the iconic song Main Jat Yamla Pagla Deewana from Dharmendra’s 1975 film Pratigya. A remixed version of the track featured in the 2011 film and went on to become a chartbuster. Dharmendra’s final on-screen appearance will be in Ikki, a war drama that is slated for a theatrical release on December 25, 2025. The film will also feature Amitabh Bachchan’s grandson Agastya Nanda and Akshay Kumar’s niece Simar Bhatia, marking the late actor’s swan-song in cinema.

Rishab Shetty on Daiva Mimicry: ‘It Makes Me Uncomfortable’ Rishab speaks on Ranveer

Chennai: The recent controversy involving Ranveer Singh at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa has once again brought the conversation around cultural sensitivity into the spotlight. During the event earlier this month, Ranveer landed in trouble after mimicking the daiva ritual from Kantara on stage. The act did not go down well with many, especially given the deep spiritual importance of the tradition.

Now, Kantara actor-director Rishab Shetty has broken his silence on the issue. Speaking at a Behindwoods event in Chennai, Rishab addressed the larger concern without directly naming Ranveer. He spoke honestly about the risks that come with making culturally rooted films. According to him, when a film like Kantara becomes hugely popular, there is always a danger that sacred traditions may slowly turn into pop culture acts. Rishab revealed that while making Kantara,



he took advice from several elders to ensure that the rituals and beliefs were shown with utmost respect. However, once the film reached a wide audience, people began copying and performing the daiva sequences casually. “That makes me uncomfortable,” he said, adding that the daiva is not just a cinematic performance but a sacred and emotional element deeply tied to people’s lives. He mentioned that he often requests people not to recreate or mock it on public stages.

The controversy originally began when Ranveer met Rishab at IFFI and mimicked the daiva twice, even after being asked not to. The incident triggered backlash online, with many calling it disrespectful. Ranveer later issued an apology on Instagram, clarifying that his intention was only to praise Rishab’s powerful performance in Kantara. He also said he deeply respects all cultures and traditions and expressed regret if his actions hurt anyone.

‘Funky’ preponed to Valentine’s for youth

Hyderabad: The Telugu film Funky, a comedy starring Vishwak Sen and directed by Anudeep KV (of Jathi Ratnalu fame), has strategically moved its theatrical release date forward to February 13, 2026, from the original April 3, 2026. This decision capitalizes on the Valentine’s Day weekend, aim-

ing to attract young audiences, couples, and families with its fun, light-hearted premise. Produced by Sithara Entertainment in association with Fortune Four Cinemas and presented by Sri Kara Studios, Funky is described as a quirky, self-aware comedy that cleverly satirises the film industry itself.

Shraddha praises ‘Dhurandhar,’ demands Part 2

Mumbai: Actress Shraddha Kapoor has added her voice to the growing praise for the spy action thriller Dhurandhar. Taking to Instagram on Monday, the actor shared a detailed and emotional review of the film, applauding director Aditya Dhar and the entire team. Shraddha Kapoor shared her review of Dhurandhar through a series of Instagram Stories, beginning with a dramatic opening line that immediately caught

attention. On the first slide, she wrote, “Truly terrible of Aditya Dhar to make a film like ‘Dhurandhar,’ before clarifying her thoughts on the next slide. She continued, “and then make us wait three months for Part 2. Don’t play with our emotions, prepone the release please. What a phenomenal experience. Subah shoot nahi hoti toh kasam se abhi hi dobara dekhnne jaati (had I not had a shoot in the morning, I would have gone

again to watch the film). Chhaava, Saiyaara, Dhurandhar, all in 2025 Hindi cinema.” Shraddha also addressed the challenges the film faced before and after its release, including online negativity and manufactured controversies. She wrote, “From Yami Gautam having to call out the rampant negative PR machinery to manufactured controversies, Dhurandhar endured it all and came out shining. No bad force can

pull a good film down. In audiences, we trust.” Director Aditya Dhar responded warmly to Shraddha’s post, sending her lots of love and appreciation for the strong support and kind words. Dhurandhar is a spy action thriller inspired by real-life events. The story follows an undercover Indian spy who infiltrates the gang of Rehman Daka in Lyari, Pakistan. His mission is not only to break the crim-

inal network from within but also to provide Indian intelligence agency RAW with crucial information about the gang’s links with the ISI, aiming to curb terrorist activities. The film features a powerful cast including Ranveer Singh, Arjun Rampal, Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt and R. Madhavan in lead roles, with Sara Arjun, Rakesh Bedi and Danish Pandor in key supporting parts.

TRAVEL

You’re fine. Just don’t look down.” I hold my breath, take the captain’s outstretched hand and board the boat. The waves glimmer beneath my feet; the only thing separating me from the sea is a pane of glass. As our tour sets sail, the vast Bay of Cartaromana opens up before us. Jagged cliffs shoot up from the waves; sunbathers sprawl on the inlet bridge leading to the 2,500-year-old Aragonese Castle, attached to the island like the tail of a whale periscoping through the waves. After just 10 minutes at sea, we reach a network of buoys marking the ruins below. I press my hands against the vessel’s transparent bottom. Through the turquoise-blue water, between waving fields of seagrass and small striped fish, I glimpse a pile of rocks. Then the seagrass parts and I see that the rocks are arranged into a long rectangular form, its sides encased in wooden planks. This is an ancient city’s quay; buried in the cool dark for centuries and perfectly preserved. Ancient Rome, almost close enough to touch. I am on the Italian island of Ischia, where sometime around AD180, the Cretaio volcano erupted, and the ensuing shockwaves sank the Roman port city of Aenaria beneath the sea. At least, that’s what archaeologists think happened. Unlike the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD79 – documented by Pliny the Younger in the hours before it devastated Pompeii – there are no records of the explosion, and very little written about the settlement itself. For nearly 2,000 years, there was no physical trace of it either. The ruins lay submerged in the Bay of Cartaromana hidden for centuries beneath layers of sediment and volcanic material. The first hints of its existence were in 1972, when two scuba divers found Roman-era pottery shards and two lead ingots off Ischia’s eastern shore. The find intrigued archaeologists, but the ensuing investigation, helmed by local priest Don Pietro Monti and archaeologist Giorgio Buchner, yielded nothing. Officials cordoned off the bay. The case went cold for nearly 40 years. Then, in 2011, passionate local sailors reopened the excavation, this time digging into the sea floor. Soon, they were able to confirm that 2m beneath the bay’s volcanic seabed lay the ruins of a massive Roman-era quay. Further digs found coins, amphorae, mosaics, seaside villas and the wooden wreckage of a ship. For centuries, Aenaria had existed somewhere between history and myth. Today, its rediscovery is reshaping Ischia’s story – and offering travellers the rare chance each summer to dive into a piece of history once thought lost to the sea. As far as anyone had ever known, Ischia’s DNA was Greek. The island was renowned as the site of the first Greek colony in the Italian peninsula, established around 750BC in the north of the island. The Greeks called the island Pithecusae and harnessed the healing powers of its volcanic thermal springs to found its first spas. Today, with its lush beauty, laid-back vibe and revered thermal spa culture, Ischia is Italy’s quintessential wellness retreat – despite sitting atop the Campi Flegrei supervolcano. But it’s precisely that volatile

volcanic geology that has shaped the island’s verdant landscapes and wild beaches. It’s also what archaeologists long assumed had scared the Romans away from permanently settling here. When the Romans seized Pithecusae sometime around 322BC, they renamed the island Aenaria – a name that appears in ancient texts from Pliny the Elder to Strabo, often in relation to military events. But unlike the Greeks, who left behind a necropolis, kilns and troves of pottery, the Romans left only a few modest tombs, engravings and scattered opus reticulatum. Scholars settled on the theory that they’d come to the island but never properly settled it – perhaps avoiding it due to its constant volcanic rumblings. “The name was documented,” echoes local resident Giulio Lauro. “But no one could find the place.” Archaeologists had been looking for Roman Ischia on dry land, but it was buried below the sea. Lauro is the founder of the Marina di Sant’Anna; the cultural branch of the Ischia Barche sea-tourism cooperative. Along with various affiliated cultural groups – comprised of Ischian seafarers, history enthusiasts and archaeologists – they have self-funded the excavations for the past 15 years. Lauro is quick to tell me that he’s no scientist. “But I love the sea,” he said. “In 2010, I got the idea to look again ... People said maybe there was something there, because in the ‘70s they found artefacts. I thought, why not try?” The plan was to launch underwater tours “to create a cultural attraction”, says Dr Alessandra Benini, the project’s lead archaeologist. “[Then] it was, ‘let’s see if there’s truly a deeper history of our island’.” There were challenges, recalls Lauro: “Getting authorisations, training people, sourcing funds. We started from zero. We were lucky to believe in it. And then to actually find it.” Finally, the narrative could be rewritten. “It was believed that the Romans never built a city on Ischia,” says Benini. “It was the opposite.” Each day in the Bay of Cartaromana, swimmers dive off the rocks and sailboats bob in the waves. Do they know what’s beneath the sea, I wonder? “Most locals do, thanks to [the archaeologists],” says local tour guide Marianna Polverino. “But not many visitors know about Aenaria’s existence, or that you can visit it.” Each summer, Benini and her team excavate the sea floor. Progress is painstaking due to a perennial shortage of



Italy’s sunken city returning from the sea

funds. “They invest in Herculaneum, in Pompeii,” remarks consulting archaeologist Maria Lauro, and because of the ocean’s seasonal turbulence, they can only operate from May to October. During the site’s active months, curious visitors can take glass-bottomed boat tours, as well as snorkelling and scuba excursions to get even closer to the ruins. “You can see the underwater archaeologists at work, the equipment they use and everything involved,” says Benini. All tours start with viewing a 3D video in the cooperative’s small auditorium, where artefacts from the site are displayed beneath glass flooring, arranged on a layer of sand evoking the seabed. My shoes tread over amphorae, oil lamps, herringbone-patterned clusters of opus spicatum tiles – a tile pattern “typically found in [Ancient] Roman shops”, says Benini. The video – featuring a submarine that winds up in a digitally reconstructed Aenaria – is geared towards children, but I’m enthralled. The quay hugs the coastline and just beyond is a Roman city resplendent

with cobblestoned lanes and columned buildings. To think during the eruption nearly 2,000 years ago, someone – maybe a Roman soldier – may have been standing on that massive quay, terrified as it crumpled beneath their feet. Benini has her own vision of that fateful day. “There might’ve been a tsunami-like wave, or maybe an earthquake, that swept across the structures and pulled everything out to sea,” she says. “That’s the movie in our minds.” Each summer, a clearer picture of Aenaria emerges – although there remains some confusion as to what the ancient settlement actually was. Were the ruins a city? Benini explains: “[The name] Aenaria referred to the island as a whole. So it’s not that we haven’t found the Aenaria mentioned by the ancients: Aenaria is Ischia – that’s unquestionable. We’ve found a Roman-era settlement with a port that was well connected to the entire Mediterranean and, presumably, had an inhabited area behind it.” Radiocarbon dating of the quay’s wooden stakes puts it at roughly 75 to

AD30. The discovery of the shipwreck in 2020 unearthed naval equipment, like a bronze mooring post in the shape of a swan’s head – typical of Roman military vessels – as well as items like lead sling bullets, suggesting that Aenaria may have been a crucial military outpost controlling the Gulf of Naples. Recovered amphorae also suggest Aenaria’s wide reach; the 142 clay variants come from 12 Mediterranean production zones, stretching from Campania to the Levant. The most recent analyses showed that the site’s lead came from Spain, painting an even clearer picture of how deep Aenaria’s intercultural network was. “It’s likely there was also a small town nearby [the port],” says Benini. “We found thousands of mosaic tiles, roof tiles, wooden combs for hair, needles for mending nets, decorated plaster... These aren’t just ship or trade related. They suggest a residential area.” Since the initial digs, two seaside villas have been uncovered, with grand tunnel-like galleries, alcoves and traces of Roman baths. “The ruins



of Aenaria give insight into the lives of the ancient people who lived on the island,” says Polverino. “It was truly the centre of trade in the Mediterranean. You understand how important Ischia was – and still is – without ever forgetting the history that lies behind it.” I ask Benini what she hopes to find this summer. “My dream is to find the foundations of the

residential city,” she says. “If we’ve found the port, then we know there was a city.” The team hopes to introduce Lidar, Georadar and sub-bottom profiler instruments into the digs, but Benini points out, “That’s expensive. We need more investors.” Funding aside, the true challenge for those involved has always been reaching a wider audience: “[We are] sharing a part of

Ischia’s history that, until now, had been missing,” says Benini. “What we’ve found is 99% underwater. It’s like Pompeii: until it was excavated in the 1700s, no one knew it was there. But that doesn’t mean it wasn’t important or didn’t exist.” “We rewrote history,” adds Lauro. “They gave up on finding something in the bay. But we found something.”



A new 5,500km bike trail connecting one of Europe’s most remote regions

The asphalt vanished as the road gently climbed through the pastures. Two small dogs ran towards me from a wooden Montenegrin shepherd’s hut, happily wagging their tails.I was tempted to play with them, but a long gravel ascent lay ahead and I wanted to be on the other side of the Sinjajevina mountain before the looming storm. “Go home!”, I told the dogs, worried they would get lost if they followed me, but they didn’t listen. Quickly moving their tiny paws, they tirelessly kept me company until I reached the pass. The first thunder caught me in Tušinja, a small Montenegrin village with just a handful of houses and an Orthodox church on a hill. I had no energy to pedal up another steep incline, so I hopped off and began pushing my bike when I heard a man shouting and waving at me, inviting me to his garden. “Coffee? Rakija?” he asked, as I leaned my bike against an apple tree and followed him inside his home. He covered the kitchen table with tomatoes, bread and cheese for me and his two workers who were laying tiles on the floor in the



others’ lesser-known corners. While crowds of tourists flock to coastal resorts in Croatia and Montenegro, the craggy mountains, untamed rivers and dramatic canyons of the Western Balkans remain unknown to most travellers. Unspoiled nature isn’t the only appeal of the Dinaric Alps. More than 30 years after the disintegration of Yugoslavia into six separate states – and a series of ethnically driven conflicts that followed in the 1990s – the region is now a patchwork of cultures, with Catholics, Muslims, Serbs, Croats, Albanians, Slovenes and other peoples now living together as neighbours. Examples of this Balkan multiculturalism are everywhere on the Trans Dinarica, such as in Theth, a remote village in northern Albania. Following centuries of Ottoman rule, Albania is now a predominantly Muslim nation, yet this far-flung settlement has preserved its Catholic identity. As I pedalled towards Theth’s soaring church spire surrounded by majestic peaks of the Accursed Mountains, I couldn’t help but feel like I was arriving in a typical Alpine village in Switzerland.Elsewhere, ancient Hellenistic ruins, Orthodox monasteries and Ottoman cities bear witness to the Balkans’ tangled history, while natural wonders – such as Montenegro’s Tara River Canyon (the deepest canyon in Europe) and Lake Ohrid (Europe’s oldest lake) – are found along the route. ”I was the last generation of kids who grew up in Yugoslavia, learning Serbo-Croatian with [Yugoslavian president Josip Broz] Tito’s picture on the wall in the classroom,” Jan Klavora, CEO of Slovenian outdoor adventure agency Visit Good Place and one of the creators of the Trans Dinarica, told the BBC. “I hope that Trans Dinarica can connect the region in a new way.”Until recently, cycling long distances in the Balkans was highly complex. During my first cycling tour through Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia in 2018, finding information on scenic and safe routes was nearly impossible. As a result, many cyclists I met during my journeys would stick to the coastal roads, missing out on the tranquility and immersive cultural experiences to be had by travelling slowly through the mountains. But the Trans Dinarica route effective-

ly opens up one of Europe’s most remote areas to cyclists for the first time. ”From a database containing 27,000km of cyclable roads and trails, we chose the best 5,500km and mapped it, adding points of interest along the route,” says Klavora. Yet, the Trans Dinarica’s goal isn’t just to encourage cyclists to visit; its creators are also hoping to revive depopulated areas where residents have left in search of better job prospects.“We believe that [the] Trans Dinarica can have a regenerative effect on these regions. With tourism and services starting to develop, people will have the chance to stay,” says Jana Apih, the founder and sustainable tourism expert of GoodPlace. Klavora believes that projects like the Via Dinarica and the new Trans Dinarica can help the Balkans develop sustainably and enhance community-based tourism. “We, cyclists, are slow and hungry. We visit places others do not. We are good customers,” he jokes. Yet, managing tourism in these relatively remote communities is a balancing act, and Klavor and Apih are both concerned that recent developments in the region, such

as the new Vlorë airport in Albania, which is scheduled to open in summer 2025, could cause more harm than good. As Apih explains, the natural landscape in much of the Balkans remains relatively untouched, and the opening of a large international airport alongside hotels, resorts and the hordes of visitors that will come with it run the risk of straining the local environment and communities. ”Thanks to [the Trans Dinarica], people understand that tourists come to the Balkans because of this pristine nature. We want to show that tourism and investment don’t have to ruin the region’s uniqueness,” says Apih.Cycling through the Unesco-inscribed Durmitor National Park, one of Europe’s wildest and least-visited mountain ranges, I understood what she meant. These twisting mountain roads rival the most picturesque passes in the Swiss, French or Italian Alps, but with none of the crowds. Yet, I could easily imagine how, with extensive

developments, ski resorts or massive hotels, this place could lose its unique sense of peace.After a few exhausting days in Montenegro, climbing some of the highest passes of the entire Trans Dinarica, I finally crossed the border to Bosnia and Herzegovina and slowed down. In the small village of Tušila, I spent two nights at a mountain hut called Dom Vrela. I had informed Dino, the hut’s caretaker, that I was a vegetarian, and when I arrived he surprised me with a hand-written list of veggie dishes available for dinner – his version of meat-free čorba (a thick bean stew) was the perfect food for a rainy day. ”We have a lot of cyclists here,” he told me, and a few hours later, two American couples entered the hut asking if they could charge their e-bikes.After this two-day pause, I set out on the last stage of my adventure, across the vast Bjelašnica plateau that was sprinkled with the first snow of the season in September. Shepherds have been bringing their livestock up to this lush, open pasture for centuries. The clouds hung low above the villages of Umljani and Lukomir, with stone houses and mysterious stećci (ancient, engraved tombstones) resting on the edge of a dramatic cliffside.Despite the moody, unwelcoming weather, Lukomir was filled with jovial chatter. Colourful woollen socks, hats and slippers hanging on wooden fences brightened the grey and foggy landscape. Invited by the warm smile of an elderly woman, I came closer to buy a pair of socks. “It’s all handmade, 100% wool,” she said. “Feel how thick and warm they are!” These socks came in handy on the last long descent of my trip. I passed the hills where skiers raced during the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo and a thick, evergreen forest on the slopes of the Igman mountain plateau. The panorama of the city unfolded in front of my eyes – a mosaic of terracotta roofs, mosques, churches and skyscrapers; the perfect representation of the Balkans’ diversity.“We, cyclists, don’t care about borders,” Klavora says. “We don’t care who is Bosniak, Croatian or Serb; we don’t care about ethnicity or religion. We just want to explore.”

Jordy Navarra's festive Filipino feast



Softly spoken, gentle in nature and almost always smiling, Jordy Navarra is as far removed from the notion of a shouty, egotistical chef as you could imagine. Having trained in famed restaurants including Heston Blumenthal’s The Fat Duck near London, as well as Bo Innovation in Hong Kong, both of which attained the culinary holy grail of three Michelin stars, Navarra would be forgiven for having developed an oversized culinary ego. Instead, he remains a modest but highly respected chef and restaurateur in his home country of the Philippines, someone who proudly flies the flag on the global stage for his nation’s food and culture. Since opening in 2016, his Manila-based restaurant Toyo Eatery has won consistent critical and public acclaim, including being named the Best Restaurant in the Philippines by Asia’s 50 Best Restaurants. Just as significantly, the 39-year-old from Parañaque in Metro Manila has also ensured that Toyo (as it’s commonly known) is one of Southeast Asia’s most sustainable places to eat, working with a network of small farmers and producers to champion biodiversity and ingredients from across the Philippines’ more than 7,000 islands. Christmas is a big deal for Navarra, as it is for almost every Filipino. Shopping malls around the country famously have Christmas decorations up more than six weeks before Halloween, thanks to a 100-day Christmas countdown that starts on 16 September.The intensity, commercialisation and duration of the festive season – with carols playing for more than a quarter of the year – can mean that expectations to deliver the perfect Christmas are raised sky-high. But the chance for families to come together, especially when millions of Filipinos live and work overseas, is priceless.“I have fond memories of Christmas as I grew up without my brother and sister around as they were living in the US,” Navarra explains, “so the holiday season was when they’d get to come home and visit. It was all about gathering, sharing food and catching up.”As in Spain and much of Latin America, Filipinos primarily celebrate Christmas on Christmas Eve. With 85% of the population being Roman Catholic, attending mass is a crucial part of the celebrations, either in the evening or at midnight. Thereafter, the traditional Noche Buena (Good Night) feast takes centre stage. It’s a meal indelibly associated with Christmas, the treasured cultural equivalent of a roast turkey lunch or dinner which is served in many countries on 25 December. A help-yourself table is generously decked out with plates including honey-cured ham, Edam cheese known locally as queso de bola, pan de sal (sweet soft bread rolls) and fluffy, sugar-topped ensaymada buns. To follow, there’s tropical fruit salad that is often sweetened with condensed milk, fruit cake and tsokolate hot chocolate to drink, made from round tablets of roasted cocoa beans called tablea.Families love to add other dishes to their festive Noche Buena table, and for Navarra this includes grilled seafood such as shrimp, grilled cuts of pork, or, if a lot of people are coming, lechon (a whole roast pig) that is a common showstopper at Christmas around the Philippines. However, as a chef who has championed his country’s rich indigenous food culture like few others, after Christmas Eve’s Noche Buena feast has been cleared away, Navarra chooses to serve a special meal on Christmas Day that celebrates ingredients and cooking techniques from across the country.At home with family and friends, Navarra, enjoys the proudly Filipino tradition of communal eating, kamayan. Meaning “with hands” in Tagalog, the Philippines’ most widely spoken language, kamayan denotes food that is served family-style atop banana leaves that are spread across tables. It’s a form of dining that is often seen at communal celebrations throughout the year, from birthdays to family reunions – but rarely at Christmas. Navarra wanted to change that, not only at home but also at his restaurant Toyo, as he feels that the kamayan experience is defined by togetherness and sharing.“We wanted to celebrate the way of eating and feeling you get with a Filipino vibe, a happy Christmas feeling with food that is all about sharing,” he explains. “Using your hands to eat is a very Filipino, very intimate way to eat.”

Are there health benefits to eating turmeric and other spices?

Spices have been a part of our diets for thousands of years – it’s second nature to sprinkle our chips with pepper, sip on ginger tea and add chillies to our meals. But recently, some spices have been unofficially promoted from everyday culinary staples to all-healing superfoods.Hillary Clinton reportedly ate one chilli pepper a day while on the campaign trail in 2016 as an attempt to ward off illness. Turmeric, which has been used in Asia for millennia, has found its way into coffee shops around the world in the form of “golden lattes” – and, during the pandemic, into viral messages that claim it can “boost your immune system” and protect you from getting sick. It’s now, according to one celebrity chef, “everywhere”.Meanwhile, cayenne pepper still hasn’t recovered since the ill-advised “Beyoncé diet” back in 2013, which suggested consuming a concoction of cayenne pepper, maple syrup, lemon and water to lose weight. (Also see our story on whether “boosting” your immune system can really protect you).But do spices really add any health benefits to our food, or help us ward off illness? And can any of them actually do us harm? One of the most well known and widely used spices are chilli peppers. Many studies have examined their potential effects on our health – but have found both beneficial and adverse results. Capsaicin is the main active ingredient in chillies. When we eat chillies, capsaicin molecules interact with the temperature receptors in our bodies, sending signals to the brain to create the feeling of heat. Some studies point to the idea that capsaicin may help you live longer.One 2019 Italian study found that people who ate food seasoned with chilli peppers four times a week had a lower risk of death compared to those who never ate chillies. (Researchers controlled

for lifestyle factors including smoking, exercise and overall diet quality.) And in 2015, researchers in China, who examined the chilli consumption and health of nearly 500,000 Chinese adults, found that eating chillies was associated with lower risk of death. Those who consumed spicy foods almost every day had a 14% lower risk of death than those who ate spicy foods less than once a week. ”The major findings were that higher intake of spicy foods is related to a lower risk of mortality,

particularly deaths due to cancer, heart disease, and respiratory diseases,” says researcher Lu Qi, professor of nutrition at Harvard’s school of public health.This does not, however, mean that starting to eat large quantities

of chilli peppers will protect your health – or protect you from respiratory illness – in the short-term. It’s important to remember that the China study followed people for a median time of seven years each. So even if chillies had a protective effect on participants’ health, rather than the people who ate chillies happening to be healthier to begin with, the effect likely built up over time – not within weeks or months.Qi tried to separate the effects of chilli consumption from everything else by controlling for age, sex, education level, marital status, diet and lifestyle factors including alcohol intake, smoking and physical activity. He says the lower risk of disease relating to eating chillies may be partly due to capsaicin.“Certain ingredients in spicy foods, such as capsaicin, have been found to improve metabolic status, such as lipid profiles” – cholesterol in the blood – “and inflammation, and these may partly account for the observations in our study”, says Qi.A number of studies also have shown that capsaicin can increase the amount of energy we burn and can decrease our appetites. Zumin Shi, associate professor at Qatar University’s human nutrition department, has found that chilli consumption is associated with lower risk of obesity and is beneficial for high blood pressure. So when she studied the effects of chilli pepper consumption on cognitive function, she expected a hat trick. But when she measured Chinese adults’ cognitive function against their chilli consumption, she found that people who ate more chillies had poorer cognitive function. This effect was strongest with memory: chilli intake above 50g (1.8oz) per day was associated with almost double the risk of self-reported poor memory. Still, it’s worth noting that self-reported data is widely considered unreliable.The burning sensation that comes with eating chillies has long fascinated scientists. It also gives us some insight into why chillies may be associated with cognitive decline: the sensation is the result of plants evolving to protect themselves against diseases and pests.



Ice cream man scoops council’s 100s and 1,000s



An ice cream firm has been handed a slice of taxpayers’ cash which could put the icing on its manufacturing cake.Liberal Democrat-controlled South Cambridgeshire District Council has given Jack’s Gelato, which sells ice cream in Cambridge, £40,000 to help pay for a “specialised waffle cone making machine”.Jack’s Gelato, which produces food in Gorton, Cambridgeshire, is one of seven south Cambridgeshire “projects” to get a grant from a government fund.Owner Jack van Praag said the firm made its own ice cream and the machine would mean it could make its own waffle cones too. The council has allocated money from a fund set up to help rural communities and businesses build “long-term resilience”.It has given grants totalling more than £360,000 from the Rural England Prosperity Fund and said the aim was to “boost rural life” in south Cambridgeshire.Other projects funded include creating activity space at a community centre, improving accessibility at an arts centre and refurbishing tennis courts. Jack’s Gelato’s owner Jack van Praag said the machine would mean the firm could make the waffle cones it needed.“It’s the last thing we don’t make ourselves,” he said.“We make everything else.”This is the last piece of the jigsaw,” he seven “projects” getting funding:

- Cambourne Town Council - £90,000 towards “creating shared activity space” in a “scout hut and men’s shed modular building”
- Wysing Arts Centre - £80,000 towards improving accessibility for visitors and enhancing biodiversity practices
- Cottenham Community Centre - £38,000 to create a “second activities space”
- Allia - £32,555 to cover the costs of audio visual equipment, solar panels and CCTV at the co-working café within the new social enterprise hub at Papworth Printworks
- Jack’s Gelato - £40,000 towards a specialised waffle cone making machine
- Impington Sports Centre - £53,000 towards resurfacing tennis and netball courts
- Willow Grange Farm - £50,000 towards cost of solar panels, heat recovery system and automatic doors to allow the business to expand operations and drive energy efficiencyLiberal Democrat Peter McDonald, the council’s lead cabinet member for economic development, said the grants were designed to breathe “new life” into the district.“By investing in rural businesses and local community groups, we’re not just stimulating economic growth but also building a stronger sense of identity and belonging in these areas,” he said.

SPORTS

IPL 2026 Mock Auction Cameron Green Sold For Whopping Rs 30.50 Crore To This Team

Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026

New Delhi: IPL 2026 Mock Auction LIVE Updates: Australian all-rounder Cameron Green has been sold to Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) for Rs 30.50 crore in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 mock auction, hosted by broadcaster Star Sports. After a huge bidding war with Chennai Super Kings (CSK), Green was ultimately sold to KKR. Indian batter Prithvi Shaw has also made a return to the IPL, going to Delhi Capitals (DC) for Rs 2.75 crore. A total of 30 players - 21 capped and 9 uncapped - are going under the hammer in the mock auction. Australian batter Jake Fraser-McGurk is SOLD at base price to



Punjab Kings! Sanjay Bangar, representing IPL 2025 runners-up PBKS, picks up the hard-hitting opener at his base price of Rs 2 crore. Aus-

tralian all-rounder Cameron Green - expected by many to be the highest-bid player of the IPL 2026 auction - is now up in the mock auction. CSK and KKR, the two teams with the highest purses, should be going hard for him. Delhi Capitals, represented by Mohammad Kaif, and Kolkata Knight Riders, represented by Robin Uthappa, are in a bidding war for Indian opener Prithvi Shaw, who has been in good form off late. A number of players from England are set to be in high demand in the IPL 2026 auction, and it should be no different in the mock auction. All-rounder Liam Livingstone and wicket-keeper batters Jamie Smith.

Ashes: England security clash with camera operator at Brisbane airport

Perth: A chaotic incident took place at the Brisbane airport after a member of England's security staff was involved in an altercation with a Channel Seven camera operator amid the ongoing Ashes series on Saturday, according to ESPNcricinfo. The incident happened when the England squad were departing for Adelaide ahead of the third Ashes Test, beginning on Wednesday. According to ESPNcricinfo, the broadcaster's footage showed England security personnel trying to push away the camera operator. It has been learnt that England has urged its security staff to be more vigilant, particularly given the number of well-meaning requests they have received for selfies when out and about. Earlier, Cricket Australia (CA) had directed all media to



respect both teams when travelling between Tests, including at airports during the Ashes series. It contains "The Australian and England teams will not be available for interview while

in transit between matches during the NRMA Ashes series. All airport, hotel and transit is vision only, to be captured from a respectful distance," as quoted by ESPNcricinfo.

GS Delhi Aces clinch maiden title as TPL season 7 concludes in Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad: Tennis Premier League (TPL) Season 7 marked the business end of the tournament at the Gujarat University Tennis Stadium, culminating in a high-stakes grand finale, where GS Delhi Aces emerged victorious to clinch their maiden title, as per a TPL release. In the grand finale, GS Delhi Aces and Yash Mumbai Eagles battled it out for the Tennis Premier League Season 7 title. The tie opened with the Women's Singles, where Sofia Costoulas took on Riya Bhatia. Costoulas once again produced a commanding performance, cruising to an emphatic 18-7 win to maintain her unbeaten record in singles. The momentum continued in the mixed doubles, as Sofia Costoulas partnered Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan against Riya Bhatia and Niki Poonacha. The Delhi Aces duo controlled the contest from the outset, combining sharp returning with confident net play to secure a 16-9 victory and extend their advantage in the final. The men's singles saw 30-year-old Billy Harris take on Damir Dzumhur. World no. 57 Dzumhur produced a strong performance and claimed a 16-9 win. However, despite the result, GS Delhi Aces continued to maintain a healthy 11-point lead. The men's doubles brought the finale to a close, with Billy Harris and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan taking on Niki Poonacha and Damir Dzumhur. The GS Delhi Aces pair delivered a composed and controlled performance, securing an 8-4 win to seal a dominant 51-36 overall victory. Earlier in the day, two



high-intensity semi-finals set the stage for the final. In the first semi-final, GS Delhi Aces locked horns with Rajasthan Rangers. The tie opened with the Women's Singles, where 20-year-old Sofia Costoulas delivered a dream start for the Aces with a commanding 19-6 win over Ekaterina Kazionova, the biggest margin of victory recorded in a tie this season. Costoulas then partnered Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan in the Mixed Doubles, but the Rangers duo of

In the grand finale, GS Delhi Aces and Yash Mumbai Eagles battled it out for the Tennis Premier League Season 7 title. The tie opened with the Women's Singles, where Sofia Costoulas took on Riya Bhatia.

Kazionova and Dhakshineswar Suresh responded strongly to edge a tight 13-12 win. The men's singles proved decisive as Billy Harris produced a dominant performance against world No. 26 Luciano Darderi, registering a 17-8 win to put GS Delhi Aces firmly in control. Billy Harris then teamed up with Jeevan in the Men's Doubles, where the Delhi Aces pair secured a 3-1 win over Dhakshineswar Suresh and Darderi to close out the tie. GS Delhi Aces completed a commanding 51-28 overall victory to book their place in the final of Tennis Premier League Season 7. The second semi-final saw SG Pipers Bengaluru take on Yash Mumbai Eagles. The tie opened with the women's singles, where Shrivalli Bhamidipaty faced Riya Bhatia. Bhatia produced a strong comeback to edge out Bhamidipaty 13-12. In the mixed doubles, Bhamidipaty paired with Rohan Bopanna against Riya Bhatia and Niki Poonacha. The SG Pipers duo held their nerve to secure a 13-12 win, keeping the semi-final finely balanced. Yash Mumbai Eagles finished ahead on aggregate, sealing a narrow 51-49 overall victory to book their place in the final of Tennis Premier League Season 7.

Shafali Verma claims ICC Women's Player after her match-winning performance

The Women's CWC final

New Delhi: India's Shafali Verma has been named the ICC Women's Player of the Month for November, following her decisive performance in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 final against South Africa. Her remarkable all-round display, which included a fluent 87 off 78 balls and crucial wickets, was pivotal to India's maiden World Cup title. Drafted into the squad as a late replacement for the injured Pratika Rawal, the 21-year-old delivered a standout all-round performance on the biggest stage. The right-hander struck a fluent 87 off 78 balls, which is the highest score by an Indian opener in a World Cup final, as per the ICC website. Her aggressive start, combined with a record 100-run opening stand with Smriti Mandhana, powered India to 298/7 in the title clash. Shafali's impact extended with the ball as well. She dismissed Sune Luus and Marizanne Kapp in successive overs, breaking crucial



partnerships during South Africa's chase to finish with tidy figures of 2/36 from seven overs. "My first ICC Women's Cricket World Cup experience didn't go as I expected, but it ended far better than I could

have ever wished or imagined," said Verma. I'm grateful that I could contribute to the team's success in the Final and that I was able to be a part of making history in winning the World Cup for the first

time and in front of a home crowd. I'm truly honoured to be named the Women's Player of the Month for November. I dedicate this award to my teammates, coaches, family and everyone who has supported my journey until now. We win and lose as a team; the same goes for this award," she added. Her all-round brilliance in the final earned Shafali the Player of the Match award that sealed India's maiden Women's Cricket World Cup title, making them only the fourth team to lift the coveted trophy. The recognition caps a remarkable turnaround for Shafali, who was earlier dropped from India's ODI squad and returned to domestic cricket to regain form before earning her World Cup recall. Her November exploit showcased not only her resurgence but also her growing big-match temperament, cementing her place at the heart of India's historic triumph in the final.

Shaheen Afridi, Mohammad Rizwan Engage In Hilarious

Pakistan cricketers Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Afridi got into a hilarious war of words ahead of the Big Bash League (BBL) match between Melbourne Renegades and Brisbane Heat.

New Delhi: Pakistan cricketers Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Afridi got into a hilarious war of words ahead of the Big Bash League (BBL) match between Melbourne Renegades and Brisbane Heat. The teammates were on opposing teams, as Rizwan represented the Renegades while Shaheen was a part of Brisbane Heat. Ahead of the match, the host told Afridi that Rizwan warned him that he would hit him out of the park. Shaheen was quick to come up with his response, as he responded: "I will not allow him to do that." It has to be pointed out that both cricketers share a good bond with each other.

India's squash team is congratulated by President Droupadi Murmu Maiden World Cup win

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu on Monday congratulated the Indian Squash team for winning the maiden Squash World Cup. The President hailed the Indian side for defeating the top-seeded team, Hong Kong, in the final and winning the semifinal against Egypt, which had won the Cup twice in recent years. "Heartiest congratulations to India's squash team which won the Squash World Cup for the first time. The team, comprising women and men, has done India proud with its superlative performance, defeating the top-seeded team Hong Kong in the final and winning the semifinal against Egypt which had won the Cup twice in recent years. I wish Indian squash a very bright future



ahead," Droupadi Murmu said in a post on X. India secured their first-ever World Cup title by defeating top-seeded Hong Kong 3-0 in Chennai on Sunday. This triumph marked a significant milestone for India in the Squash World Cup, surpassing their previous best of a bronze medal in the 2023 edi-

tion. "Congratulations to Team India on winning the first-ever Squash World Cup, scripting a glorious history for the nation. The display of your indomitable sporting prowess with which you defeated even the most formidable opponents will become the inspiration for our new talents,"

Gautam Gambhir Goes For Tactic In 3rd T20I vs South Africa

New Delhi: Indian cricket team head coach Gautam Gambhir came up with a stunning strategy that handed his side a massive advantage during the third T20I encounter against South Africa on Sunday. South Africa struggled massively against the Indian bowlers, and although they were not able to register a big total, the batters looked to score big in the final over of the innings. While Hardik Pandya looked all set to bowl the over, Gambhir suddenly sent a message to the team through Sanju Samson, and skipper Suryakumar Yadav opted for Kuldeep Yadav instead. The decision caught a lot of people by surprise, but the results were instant. Kuldeep responded with two crucial wickets as South Africa were bundled out for just 117. Meanwhile, India captain Suryakumar

Indian cricket team head coach Gautam Gambhir came up with a stunning strategy that handed his side a massive advantage during the third T20I encounter against South Africa.

Yadav admitted he is searching for runs to flow from his bat, but insisted he remains confident in being back to his pristine touch and breaking a lean patch. In India's seven-wicket win over South Africa at the HPCA Stadium on Sunday, Suryakumar But yes, I'm looking for runs, not out of form, but definitely out of runs," said Suryakumar in the post-match presentation ceremony. Asked about the team's turnaround after a 51-run defeat in New Chandigarh, Suryakumar stressed on the importance of returning to fundamentals in preparation for Sunday's clash.

Abhinav Bindra How Messi's GOAT India Tour Unfolded

New Delhi: GOAT India Tour: Olympic gold medallist shooter Abhinav Bindra was left "uneasy" at the manner in which Lionel Messi's GOAT India Tour was handled. Messi was scheduled to land in the national capital earlier this morning, but his charter flight was held up due to foggy conditions here. He straightaway proceeded to the Leela Palace Hotel, where he will have a meet-and-greet session for around an hour with a select group of people. Bindra expressed his "quiet sadness" on social media over the millions of dollars spent for "moments of proximity, photographs and fleeting access," adding that the same funds should have been used to support grassroots initiatives and promote sports in India.



India's IDCA sweeps T20 Deaf Cricket Series 3-0

Mumbai: The Indian Deaf Cricket Association (IDCA) team clinched a clean 3-0 victory over the Inclusive Warriors Deaf Dubai (IWDD) team in the three-match T20 Deaf Cricket Series held at Sharjah's DCS You Selects Arena, as per a press release from the IDCA. The three-match series kicked off on December 11, with IDCA winning the first by 89 runs. The Indian team won the second by eight wickets the next day, and the final by 63 runs on December 13th. While IDCA's Santosh Kumar Mahapatra won the Player of

the Match award for the first two matches, Virender Singh won the Player of the Match award for the third match, along with the Player of the Series and Best Bowler awards. Meanwhile, the Best Batsman award went to Santosh Kumar Mahapatra, and the Best Fielder award went to Vaibhav Paranjpe. Congratulating the team on Saturday, Jaswinder "I congratulate all cricketers on their remarkable performance. Your determination and passion for the sport are truly inspiring, and we're proud to support your journey."