

Assam Oil Burst Floods Homes

Tingkhong, Jan 06: A crude oil spill inundated residential areas of Halmari Dighalia Gaon in Assam’s Dibrugarh district after an Oil India Limited (OIL) pipeline burst late Monday night, triggering panic among local residents. According to villagers, a loud sound was heard before crude oil began gushing from the damaged pipeline and spreading into nearby houses. Residents rushed out of their homes after noticing oil flowing across the area. OIL fire tenders reached the spot soon after and managed to contain the spill, preventing further escalation.

Local residents expressed concern over the condition of oil infrastructure in the area, stating that several ageing pipelines pass through the village. The locality reportedly has around 50 oil wells, two Oil Collecting Stations and one Drilling Collecting Station in close proximity to habitations. Villagers demanded immediate inspection and replacement of old pipelines to avoid future incidents. Attempts to contact OIL spokesperson Bhairab Bhuyan for comments were unsuccessful. The incident comes months after a fatal pipeline-related accident in February 2024 at Duliajan in the same district, where one worker was killed and four others were injured during repair work due to high pressure. Following that incident, OIL had announced internal inquiries and preventive measures.

Poppy Fields Raided In Senapati

Senapati, Jan 06: A joint operation was carried out today to destroy illegal poppy cultivation in the Upper and Lower Khabung Hill Ranges of Senapati district. The operation was conducted by a combined team comprising personnel from the Senapati Forest Division, Manipur Police, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), along with village volunteers from Khabung. During the operation, illicit poppy crops spread across approximately 12.9 hectares of land were destroyed. One temporary hut found at the cultivation site was also burned and dismantled. Officials said efforts are underway to identify and apprehend individuals involved in the illegal cultivation.

The operation forms part of ongoing measures to curb narcotic drug production and trafficking in the region. Authorities reiterated that illicit poppy cultivation poses a serious threat to public health and safety and is a punishable offence under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. The joint team appealed to the public to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in eradicating the menace of illegal poppy cultivation.

IIT Guwahati Hosts Annual AI Confluence for Online B.Sc. Data Science and AI Students

Guwahati, Jan 06: Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati hosted the Annual AI conference with 400 students enrolled in its online B.Sc. (Hons) Degree program in Data Science and AI. The programme is offered by the Mehta Family School of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence at IIT Guwahati. Drawn from across India, the two-day event created a shared physical space for a cohort that typically learns online, enabling students to interact with faculty, meet peers, and experience the campus environment together. The cohort included early-career professionals, students who have completed Class XII, and learners from a wide range of academic and professional backgrounds. For many participants, AI Confluence was an opportunity to meet classmates and instructors in person, reinforcing a sense of connection to the institute beyond the digital classroom. AI Confluence is a platform that complements online learning

with direct engagement and community-building. Over two days, students attended invited talks, participated in discussions, presented work, and took part in collaborative and cultural activities alongside peers and faculty.

Underscoring the growing relevance of Data Science, Prof. Devendra Jalohal, Director, IIT Guwahati, said, “Data science encompasses every domain of modern-day business. IIT Guwahati recognises the value of creating opportunities for online learners to meet, collaborate, and feel connected to the institution. AI Confluence reflects the institute’s continued efforts to complement online education with shared experiences that foster community, collaboration, and personal growth.” The event included invited lectures focused on data-driven approaches in the life sciences, software engineering, privacy and security in large-scale AI systems, and discussions on skills that remain essential

in an increasingly automated world. These sessions reflected the programme’s emphasis on both technical depth and broader contextual understanding. Alongside academic sessions, students engaged in poster presentations, AI film-making challenges, inventathon activities, and panel discussions on business and entrepreneurship. Cultural programmes and student-led showcases provided additional opportunities for interaction, teamwork, and informal learning—elements that contribute to a fuller educational experience. Speaking during the event, Prof. Ratnajit Bhattacharya, Head, Mehta Family School of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, IIT Guwahati, said, “The demand for both data science and artificial intelligence is growing. We have come to a paradigm where decision-making by analysing data is becoming very important.” The online B.Sc. (Hons) Degree program in Data Science and AI at IIT Guwahati is designed to sup-



port students and working professionals whose geographies, career paths, or personal circumstances may not allow for full-time, on-campus education. Highlighting the program, Prof. Hemant B. Kaushik, Dean of Online Education & Skilling (OES), IIT Guwahati, said, “High-quality technical upskilling should be accessible for early-career professionals and ambitious young students. The online

B.Sc. (Hons) programme in DS & AI at IIT Guwahati focuses on widening access while ensuring that academic standards, faculty engagement, and assessment rigour remain uncompromised.” Students in the programme may choose their pace of study and benefit from a flexible academic structure with multiple entry and exit options, enabling them to balance learning with professional and personal commitments. Teach-

ing is conducted fully online by IIT Guwahati faculty through recorded lectures, live sessions, and discussion hours.

As the footprint of IIT Guwahati’s online B.Sc. (Hons) in DS & AI programme continues to grow, the Institute remains committed to investing in thoughtful models of technical education that combine academic rigour with accessibility, flexibility, and meaningful engagement.

Nagaon hosts Congress’ People’s Manifesto launch ahead of 2026 elections

Nagaon, Jan 06: The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), headed by senior politician Ripun Bora, convened a consultation session in Nagaon on Monday in an attempt to develop a people-centric plan for Assam’s future. The goal of the meeting was to develop a “People’s Manifesto” in advance of the Assam Assembly elections in 2026.

A wide range of stakeholders, including local residents, social organizations, and civic entities, actively participated in the closed-door discussion held at the Tourist Lodge in Nagaon. The Nagaon Muktiyuddha Sammilan, Nagaon Medicine Dealer Association, District Koch-Rajbanshi Sammilan, Nagaon District Cooperative Milk Producing Union, Nagaon Nagarik Sabha, Lachit Sena, AAMSU, Uttar-Pub Parivahan Santha, Garia-Maria-Deshi Jatiya Parishad, Nagaon Traders’ Association, Jami-at Ulama e Hind, Sachetan Nagarik Mancha, Nagaon Gana Natya Sangha, Nagaon Lekhak-Lekhika-Kabi Sammelan, and senior citizens were among those in attendance.



Former minister Atowa Munda, MLA Nurul Huda, State Mahila Congress President Mira Barthakur, and DCC

President Runumoni Bora were among the people who accompanied Ripun Bora. The Congress team highlighted the party’s dedication to inclusive governance and participatory democracy by gathering insightful recommendations and comments from the attendees. “This time, our manifesto won’t be crafted behind closed doors,” Ripun Bora told the journalists following the meeting. The people’s voice will be accurately reflected. The public’s thirst for change is demonstrated by the huge response we are receiving throughout Assam.

Bora also responded to Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister of Assam, who recently claimed that the Congress was selling party tickets. “These assertions lack merit. The increased support for our Congress-led alliance is obviously unsettling the Chief Minister, according to Bora. He reaffirmed that the Congress will spread this message throughout Assam and is committed to drawing attention to the anti-people policies of the BJP-led administration. “To overthrow the BJP, we are putting together a powerful, cohesive front. The people will make the decision this time, he continued.

Bora stated that the Congress party intends to field new candidates in the next 2026 elections as a sign of support for youth leadership. He declared, “We will give young leaders the opportunity to represent the aspirations of a new Assam, just as we have done in the past.”

The Congress’s larger statewide effort to reestablish relationships with grassroots groups and create a manifesto that accurately reflects the needs and goals of the populace includes the consultations in Nagaon.

Congress raises concerns over Assam draft voter list; Chief Minister rejects allegations

Guwahati, Jan 06: A fresh political debate has started in Assam after Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly, Debabrata Saikia, wrote to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar alleging serious problems in the draft electoral rolls published after a Special Revision ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections. Saikia has asked the Election Commission to stop the finalisation of the voter list until all the reported issues are checked and solved. In his letter, Saikia said that there were “unknown” and unauthorised names appearing in the rolls. He said these concerns were based on news reports as well as feedback from the ground, which suggested that proper verification had not been followed. According to him, there were cases where people who do not speak Assamese had been included without verification, and in some homes, names were added without the knowledge of the actual residents. He mentioned specific examples in Guwahati, saying that four non-Assamese people were listed as voters at House Nos. 44 and 15 on Tayabulla Road even though the families living there were not aware of it. He also said that voter names had been entered against a “Household No. 00” in the Nazira constituency, which does not exist. Saikia warned that if such entries remain undetected, they could allow unknown persons to vote on polling day, which would weaken trust in the electoral process. The Congress leader said these issues are not just technical matters, but also



affect democracy and the constitutional rights of the people of Assam. He linked the matter to earlier complaints by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi about possible vote manipulation, saying this could be part of a wider problem. Saikia also pointed out that more than 10 lakh names have already been removed from the rolls for different reasons, but new discrepancies show that the entire revision exercise may have been affected. He said the alleged problems go against Clause 6 of the Assam Accord and also ignore Supreme Court directions meant to protect the identity and rights of the people of Assam. Saikia requested the Election Commission to carry out a transparent inquiry and make the findings public. He also said that the final voter list should not be published until all wrong entries are removed and verification becomes stronger and more uniform across the state. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma dismissed these allegations. He said there is already a clear system for making corrections and objections.

Anyone with concerns, he said, could submit Forms 6, 7 and 8 to add, delete or correct names in the rolls. He added that instead of making statements in the media, the Opposition should use the proper procedure if it believes there are genuine issues. According to figures released by the Election Commission, Assam’s voter numbers have gone up by 1.35 per cent. The draft roll published on December 30 shows a total electorate of 2,52,01,624. From January 6 to December 27 last year, there were 7,86,841 new additions and 4,47,196 deletions. The Special Revision process also identified 4,78,992 deceased voters, 5,23,680 shifted voters and 53,619 multiple entries. However, the Commission clarified that these names will only be removed after formal applications are processed during the claims and objections period, which is open from December 27 to January 22. Special campaign dates have been set for January 3–4 and January 10–11. The final voter list is expected to be published on February 10.

Arunachal Pradesh unveils new tourism campaign to promote experiential travel

Itanagar, Jan 06: Arunachal Pradesh has launched a new tourism brand campaign called “Take a New Turn in Arunachal”, which aims to present the state as a place for meaningful and real-life travel experiences, rather than just a scenic holiday destination. The campaign has been developed by the Department of Tourism and marks a major shift in how the state is promoted to travellers across India. The campaign was formally launched at Arunachal House in New Delhi in the presence of Tourism Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona, who also handles the portfolios of Education, Parliamentary Affairs and other departments. Speaking at the event, he said that Arunachal Pradesh is home to a rich mix of cultures, landscapes and traditions that give visitors a chance to discover stories, communities and everyday life, not only natural beauty. The new campaign builds on the state’s refreshed identity, “Beyond Myths and Mountains,” and encourages travellers to look past the usual images of mountains and monasteries.



Instead, it highlights real interactions with local people, traditional practices, festivals, and the diverse ways of life found across the state. Places such as Tawang, Ziro, Anini, Namsai, Dong and Mechukha have been showcased as key destinations, each representing a different cultural and emotional experience for visitors. The minister said that Arunachal

Pradesh has strong tourism potential because of its ancient heritage, Himalayan landscape, rich forests, wildlife, Buddhist heritage and vibrant tribal traditions. The state already attracts visitors interested in heritage tourism, adventure activities, wildlife, nature tourism and local festivals. Tourist arrivals in Arunachal Pradesh have grown sharply since the pan-

democratic years. The state received more than one million visitors in both 2023 and 2024, which is higher than the pre-COVID period. Officials believe this growth is the result of better connectivity and stronger tourism promotion along with increasing interest in experiential travel. The government’s latest tourism policy also focuses on better roads, improved air links, upgraded facilities for visitors and an expansion of available accommodation by nearly 50 per cent. The policy also promotes eco-tourism, tribal and cultural tourism, spiritual travel, adventure tourism, farm tourism and border tourism so that travellers have more options to choose from. The “Take a New Turn” campaign presents travel as something shaped by emotions, conversations and discovery. For example, Tawang is shown as a spiritual centre, Ziro as a home of indigenous music and culture, Anini as a quiet natural retreat, Namsai as a river-side spiritual hub, Dong as the first sunrise point of India, and Mechukha as a mix of peace and adventure.

3 PLA, 1 KCP (T) cadres arrested in Manipur

Imphal, Jan 06: Security forces arrested an active cadre of RPF/PLA, identified as Mahesh Sarangthem (19) of Kairembikhok Maiyai Leikai under Thoubal-PS, Thoubal district in Manipur from his residence on January 4. On the same day, security forces also arrested an extortionist RPF/PLA active cadre, identified as Laishram Kullabi Meitei (35) @ Ronel of Liwa Road Kha Maibam Leikai from his residence under Singjamei-PS, Imphal West district. Two Mobile phones were seized from him. Another active cadre of RPF/PLA was also arrested by security forces from his locality on January 3. The arrested cadre has been identified as Laishram Jiban Singh (45) of Heirok Part-II, Chingol under Heirok-PS in Thoubal district. A mobile handset with sim card was recovered from him. On January 4, security forces also arrested an active cadre of KCP (Taibanganba) from Kongba Khunou area under Iribung-PS, Imphal East district. He has been identified as Tensubam Bangkim Singh @ Chak-thekpa @ Mangang Punshiba (25) of Nambol Leitonjam Makha Leikai, Bishnupur district. One 9 mm pistol along with four live rounds and one mobile phone were seized from him. Meanwhile, security forces continued to conduct search operations and area domination in the fringe and vulnerable areas across districts. A total of 111 Nakas/Checkpoints were installed in different districts of Manipur, both in the hills and the valley, however none was detained.



Sea of devotees gather at Gavi Mutt in Karnataka Annual chariot festival

Koppal, Jan 06: Around 10 lakh devotees gathered at the Gavi Siddeshwara Mutt in Koppal on Monday to witness the annual chariot festival. The historic fair, often referred to as the “Kumbh of the South” due to the massive turnout, drew devotees from both rural and urban parts of the state. The chariot festival was inaugurated by Meghalaya Governor C H Vijayashankar in the presence of Union Minister V Somanna, Gavi Mutt seer Abhinav Gavisiddeshwar Swami, district in-charge minister Shivraj Tangadgi, MPs Jagadish Shettar and Basavaraj Bommai, among other dignitaries. Devotees began arriving weeks in advance, with many villagers bringing offerings such as jowar rotis, wheat, toor dal, rice and vegetables in tractors and mini goods vehicles over the past two months. As part of the festivities, Sindhanur Vijay and a

group of friends made 10 lakhs of Mysuru pak this year. Hundreds of stalls put in front of the mutt premises got a good number of footfalls for the last one week and many stall owners expressed happiness. A big stage was made in the mutt premises and lakhs of devotees watched the programmes sitting on the natural hillock and other places. During the chariot utsav, one can see countless heads everywhere in the large mutt premises. Devotees who were working for seva in the kitchen said, “We work here as seva during the fair. In the kitchen area a total of 70 skilled mysuru pak makers have arrived from Koppal district and a total of 100 workers are assisting them. put in front of the mutt premises got a good number of footfalls for the last one week and many stall owners expressed happiness.

Karthigai Deepam row: Madras HC upholds order allowing lamp lighting at Deepathoon

Chennai, Jan 06: The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Tuesday upheld an earlier order permitting the lighting of Karthigai Deepam on the Deepathoon atop Thiruparankundram hill, dismissing the state’s apprehensions of disturbance to public peace as an “imaginary ghost”. The court backed the December 1, 2025 order of Justice G R Swaminathan, which directed that the ritual be conducted at the Deepathoon located near the Sikkandar Badusha Dargah. Observing that the state’s concerns were unfounded, the Bench said such fears appeared to be projected in a manner that could pit one community against another. “It is ridiculous and hard to believe the fear of the mighty State that

by allowing representatives of the devasthanam to light the lamp at the stone pillar near top of the hill located within its territory of devasthanam land, on a particular day in a year, will cause disturbance to public peace. Of course, it may happen only if such disturbance is sponsored by the State itself. We pray no State should stoop to that level to achieve their political agenda,” a bench of justices G Jayachandran and KK Ramakrishnan said. Disposing of a batch of appeals filed by the state and other stakeholders, the Bench however framed some guidelines for lighting the lamp on the above pillar to ensure that both communities are able to celebrate their festivals on the hill without disturbing each other. While the district collector

should coordinate and supervise the event. The ASI should also impose conditions to preserve the monument. The judges hoped that by implementing the above directions, which can be suitably modified whenever festival of respective community falls, there will be “only light and no fight”. Earlier, the bench observed that the appellants have failed to provide any evidence that lighting the deepam at a place which is not straight on top of the deity in Sanctum sanctorum would be against Agamas. “Being at vantage point, the stone Pillar called as Deepathoon, which is on the different rock summit and lower to the peak on which the Dharga located, is the ideal place to light Deepam,” the bench said.



It also opined that the inquiry under Section 63E of the HR and CE Act is neither an alternative nor an efficacious remedy. The judges also rejected the “mysterious” submission made by the TN Waqf Board that the pillar belongs to them and said the submission only led to the other side becoming skeptical about the board’s mediation offer. They also rejected the contention that the issue was res judicata.

Chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh has ordered a multi-level investigation Boundary highway problems



Itanagar, Jan 06: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister on January 6 said that the state government has initiated multiple measures to address the problems related to the Frontier Highway project in East Kameng district, including administrative reviews and an anti-corruption investigation. Interacting with the media, the Chief Minister said a one-man committee had earlier been constituted to assess the situation concerning the Frontier Highway. He informed that the committee has submitted its report to the state government, which is currently under examination. In parallel, the Chief Minister said the matter has also been referred to the Anti-Corruption Department, which is conducting a separate investigation into the alleged irregularities linked to the project. He added that the government is treating the issue with seriousness and has adopted a multi-pronged approach to ensure accountability. From the state

government’s side, four additional committees have been constituted to re-assess various aspects of the project, including implementation and oversight mechanisms. The Chief Minister said these committees will independently review the findings and submit their recommendations. Assuring strict action, he said anyone found guilty during the investigations would be held accountable as per law. “Those responsible will not be spared,” the Chief Minister said, reiterating the government’s commitment to transparency and proper execution of key infrastructure projects in the state. Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has ordered a multi-level investigation, including a fresh on-ground re-verification of land and compensation claims, into alleged massive irregularities regarding the Lada-Sarli stretch of the strategic Frontier Highway project in East Kameng district.

NIA takes over probe into twin blasts in Manipur’s Bishnupur

Agartala, Jan 06: The investigation into the twin blasts that rocked Manipur’s Bishnupur district on January 5 has been handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), officials said on January 6. Two persons were injured in the consecutive explosions that occurred at Ngaukon village under the Phougakchao police station area. The first blast, suspected to have been caused by an improvised explosive device (IED), took place around 5.45 am at an abandoned house. The second explosion occurred nearly 200 metres away at around 8.45 am, when local residents gathered at the site after learning about the earlier blast. Confirming the transfer of the case, Manipur Police said in a statement that the matter has been forwarded to the NIA for further investigation. It added that combing and search operations are being conducted in the adjoining areas and security has been strengthened to prevent any further escalation of violence. Efforts are also underway to identify and apprehend those responsible for the explosions. The house where the first blast occurred has reportedly remained abandoned since ethnic violence erupted in the state in May 2023, with the owner and his family currently residing in a relief camp. The incident has further heightened



tensions in the state, which has witnessed prolonged unrest and violence between Meitei and Kuki communities. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands displaced since the ethnic clashes began nearly two years ago. In response to the blasts, several organisations, including the Indigenous People Organisation and the All Manipur Students’ Union, called for a 24-hour statewide shutdown starting midnight on Wednesday. Meanwhile, Meitei civil body Coordinating Committee on Mani-

pur Integrity (COCOMI) demanded an immediate, transparent and time-bound investigation into the incident. Manipur has been under President’s Rule since February 2025, following the resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh amid mounting criticism over his government’s handling of the ethnic violence. The investigation into the twin blasts that rocked Manipur’s Bishnupur district on January 5 has been handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), officials said on January 6.

Punjab’s Schools of Eminence

Itanagar, Jan 06: For decades, government schools in India were often seen as the last option, chosen only when families could not afford private education. Punjab is now changing that perception through its ambitious Schools of Eminence programme, which is transforming government schools into modern centres of quality learning. Children studying in these schools say the learning environment feels exciting and motivating. One student shared: “Earlier, our school was very basic. Now we have smart boards and labs. We understand things better and enjoy coming to school.” Another student said, “We feel proud to study here. It looks like a big private school, but it is government.” Free transport facility for students To ensure that no child is left out because of distance, the Punjab Government is providing free bus transport to students of Schools of Eminence. This is especially helpful for children from villages who travel long distances. A student using the bus service said: “Earlier, it was difficult to reach school. Now the government bus picks us up and drops us safely. We don’t miss classes anymore.” Schools of Eminence focus not just on textbooks, but also on overall development. Students are encouraged to take part in sports, debates, science fairs, cultural events and skill-based learning. The aim is to prepare children for competitive exams, higher education and modern careers, not just board exams. How these schools are changing families For many parents, these schools have removed the burden of expensive private education. A parent said: “We could not afford big schools. Now our child studies in a government school with better facilities than private ones.” This is helping middle-class and poor families give their children a strong start in life. For decades, government schools in India were often seen as the last option, chosen only when families could not afford private education. Punjab is now changing that perception through its ambitious Schools of Eminence programme, which is transforming government schools into modern centres of quality learning. With modern infrastructure, trained teachers, free transport and motivated students, Punjab’s Schools of Eminence are setting a new benchmark for public education. They prove that when the government invests in schools, the future of an entire generation becomes brighter. He said: “Talent exists in every child, whether they study in a village school or a city school. Our job is to provide them with the best facilities so that they can shine. Schools of Eminence are built to give equal opportunity to every child in Punjab.”

Thadou Students’ Association honours top schools for academic excellence in Kangpokpi

Agartala, Jan 06: The Thadou Students’ Association (TSA), Sadar Hills, on January 5 announced the names of outstanding educational institutions in Kangpokpi district, honouring schools that demonstrated excellence in academics, extracurricular achievements and their overall contribution to quality education. The recognition followed the successful conclusion of the TSA-organised Education Carnival, a year-long academic and cultural initiative conducted from October 5, 2024, to November 22, 2025. During this period, as many as 30 academic and extracurricular competitions were held, witnessing wide participation from schools across the district. According to TSA officials, the initiative was aimed at nurturing student talent, evaluating intellectual aptitude and promoting holistic development beyond classroom learning. Schools were assessed on the basis of their cumulative performance across all competi-



tions held under the carnival. Based on overall performance, Apex Christian English School was adjudged the Best School of Kangpokpi District, while St. Vincent School and Ideal Senior Secondary School secured the First Runners-up and Second Runners-up positions respectively. Several other institutions

were also recognised for their consistent and commendable performances. These included Omega Public School, TL Shalom Academy, MBC Higher Secondary School, Pathfinder Academy, Apple Buds, Elite Higher Secondary School, Baptist English High School, and Mount Olivet Unique Academy. The Educa-

tion Carnival featured a diverse range of competitions such as debate, extempore speech, symposium, poem and rhyme recitation, talent hunt, gospel action song, solo singing, school queen pageant, pageant parade and stand-up comedy. In addition, Mathematics and Science examinations for students from Classes VI to X were conducted to assess academic proficiency and analytical skills. The TSA noted that the performances showcased the dedication, discipline and competence of participating institutions, while also highlighting the pivotal role played by teachers in mentoring students into confident and capable individuals. In the individual category, Miss Lhing-jemkim Lhouvum and Miss Kimhoichong Thangeo, both from Apex Christian English School, were awarded ‘Student of the Year’ and ‘Student of the Year Runners-up’ respectively, in recognition of their exceptional achievements across multiple competitions

According to Akhil Gogoi Ashok Singhal was instructed by Dilip Saikia to create voter lists for sixty Assamese seats

Guwahati, Jan 06: Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi on January 5 made serious allegations against the BJP leadership in Assam, claiming that senior party functionaries were conspiring to manipulate the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls to ensure the party’s victory in the 2026 Assembly elections. In a live interaction on social media, Gogoi said that on the evening of January 4, around 8 pm, he came across a video conference involving Assam BJP state president Dilip Saikia, state ministers, MLAs and other party leaders. The meeting, he claimed, was ostensibly held to discuss preparations for the wall-writing campaign scheduled for January 5. However, Gogoi alleged that discussions during the video conference went far

beyond campaign logistics and focused on the electoral rolls. “I was shocked by what I heard. After listening to that video conference, I could not sleep the entire night,” Gogoi said, claiming he had heard the statements “with my own ears”. According to the Rajrator Dal legislator, Dilip Saikia, allegedly directed minister Ashok Singhal to take charge of voter list “corrections” in 60 Assembly constituencies, with the objective of deleting the names of eligible voters from the electoral rolls. Gogoi further alleged that during the same video conference, Dilip Saikia instructed BJP MLAs, district presidents and mandal presidents to submit booth-wise lists of voters who do not vote for the BJP by January 12, so that their names could be



deleted from the rolls. He claimed Saikia explicitly stated that responsibility for these 60 constituencies had been assigned to Ashok Singhal to “correct” the voter lists. Accusing the BJP of attempting to “engineer the Assam voter list according to its

own convenience”, Gogoi said the alleged instructions amounted to a direct assault on democracy and the integrity of the electoral process. He challenged Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to publicly release the video recording of the January 4 conference if his allegations were incorrect. Taking his challenge further, Gogoi said he was willing to undergo a narco-analysis test if proven wrong and demanded a judicial inquiry into the matter. “If what I am saying is false, let it be proven. But if it is true, then this is a very serious conspiracy against the people of Assam and their right to vote,” he said. The BJP leadership has not yet responded to Gogoi’s specific allegations regarding the video conference and the purported instructions on voter list deletions.

New Species of Reed Snake Discovered in Mizoram, Scientists Correct Long-Standing Misidentification

Aizawl, Jan 06: A team of scientists from Mizoram, working in collaboration with researchers from Russia, Germany and Vietnam, has identified a new species of reed snake from the state, correcting a long-standing taxonomic misidentification and adding a previously unknown species to India's reptile fauna.

The newly discovered species has been named Calamaria mizoramensis, after the state where it was found, said Prof. H.T. Lalremsanga of the Department of Zoology, Mizoram University, who is also the lead author of the study.

The findings were published on Monday in the international peer-reviewed scientific journal Zootaxa and are based on detailed morphological examinations and DNA analysis. According to Lalremsanga, specimens of the snake were first collected in Mizoram in 2008 but were earlier believed to belong to a widely distributed Southeast Asian species. "The new study establishes that the Mizoram population represents a distinct evolutionary lineage unique to the state," he said.

The research team analysed specimens collected over more than a decade from forested areas in and around Aizawl, Reiek, Sihphir and Sawlêng, as well as parts of Mamit and Kolasib districts. Genetic comparisons revealed that the Mizoram reed snake differs by more than 15 per cent from its closest known relatives, a level of divergence considered sufficient to classify it as a separate species.

So far, the species has been confirmed only from Mizoram, although its presence in neighbouring regions cannot be ruled out. The researchers noted that while its occurrence elsewhere in India remains unverified, the snake may also be found in adjoining states such as Manipur, Nagaland and Assam. A possible extension into the Chittagong region of Bangladesh would require further confirmation.

The genus Calamaria currently includes 69 recognised species worldwide. The newly identified snake is non-venomous, nocturnal and semi-fossorial, inhabiting humid forested hill regions at elevations ranging from 670 to 1,295 metres. It has also been recorded in areas close to human habitation, including the Mizoram University campus.

Based on available data, the researchers have provisionally assessed Calamaria mizoramensis as 'Least Concern' under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List criteria.

The study also presents an updated checklist of Mizoram's herpetofauna, documenting a total of 169 species, and highlights the need for continued biological surveys and taxonomic research in Northeast India.

Cong flags irregularities in Assam draft electoral roll

Guwahati, Jan 06: Leader of Opposition in the Assam Assembly Debabrata Saikia has alleged "serious irregularities", including "unknown" voter entries in the draft electoral rolls, published after a Special Revision (SR) of the voter lists in the state.

In a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, Saikia demanded the halt of the finalisation of the electoral rolls until "all irregularities are thoroughly verified and resolved" to ensure the removal of any unauthorised or "unknown" voter entries.

Assam has registered a 1.35 per cent increase in the number of voters as per the integrated draft electoral roll for the state, published on December 30 after the Special Revision was conducted ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

"I am writing to express my deep concern regarding serious irregularities observed during the ongoing SR of electoral rolls in Assam. Media reports and ground-level feedback indicate unauthorised inclusion of non-Assamese speaking voters and other procedural lapses that threaten the integrity of the electoral process," Saikia said in his letter to Kumar.

He alleged that specific instances have come to light where "unknown" persons have been added as voters in households without the knowledge of residents.

Tripura youth Congress leader arrested months after going missing

Agartala, Jan 06: Tripura Police have arrested Youth Congress leader Shahjahan Islam, months after he reportedly went missing following a case registered against him over a 2025 incident in Shantipara that had caused tension in the area. The arrest was confirmed on January 5 by Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Sadar, Deba Prasad Roy, who said the police had been searching for Islam for a long time. According to the police, Islam had made a series of controversial remarks during the incident last year, including comments targeting the Chief Minister. Following this, a case was filed and the investigation began. Police said that while Islam's father and brother, identified as Khairul, had already been arrested earlier in the same case, Islam himself had left the state and remained untraceable for several months. Officers said he had been "absconding" since then and was believed to be moving between locations. Roy told reporters that the police recently received information that Islam had returned and was hiding in the Jaipur area. Acting on these inputs, a team carried out a search operation and detained him. He was formally arrested after questioning. "For the past two to three days, we



• Tripura Police arrested Youth Congress leader Shahjahan Islam on January 5, months after he reportedly went missing amid a case stemming from a 2025 incident in Shantipara that escalated tensions in the area.

were receiving information that he was hiding in the Jaipur area. Based on specific inputs, we detained and arrested him today," the SDPO said while briefing the media. He added that Islam is now being interrogated, and more information will be shared once the investigation moves forward. Police officials said the case relates to unrest that broke out in Shantipara in 2025, which had led to tension across parts of the city. The investigation remains open, and the authorities have not yet disclosed further legal steps or whether more arrests may follow. In another development, the SDPO

also confirmed that police detained a Bangladeshi national in the Krishnanagar area on Sunday night. The person has been identified as Babul Mia. Police said he is also being questioned to verify his background, reason for entering the area, and legal status. Further details have not yet been released.

Police strengthen presence across Manipur after Bishnupur IED blasts

Imphal, Jan 06: Manipur Police said that the overall law-and-order situation in the state during the last 24 hours remained normal. However, two incidents of IED explosions were reported from Bishnupur district on January 5, 2026. According to the information released by the Police Control Room in Imphal, one IED exploded inside an empty house at Nganukon Ward No. 7/8 under Phougakchao Ikhai Police Station in Bishnupur district.

The police stated that the house had been unoccupied since May 3, 2023. Another IED blast took place nearby at Saiton Nganukon Ward No. 8 under the same police station. In this second incident, two civilians were injured.

The case has been handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for further investigation. Senior officers, including Inspector General of Police and the Superintendent of Police of Bishnupur district, visited the blast sites to review the situation. Police teams also carried out combing and search operations in surrounding areas. Security deployment has been strengthened to prevent any further incidents. Police said investigation and operational work are continuing to identify those responsible for the blasts. Security forces are also continuing search operations and area domination exercises in vulnerable and fringe locations across districts. Manipur Police further reported that 114 checkpoints and 'nakas' have been set up in various

parts of the valley and the hill areas. During these security checks, no detentions were reported. Movement of essential goods along NH-37 has also been secured. Police said strict checking continues in vulnerable areas to ensure safe vehicle movement across the state. Police also appealed to the public not to spread or believe rumours. People have been advised to verify any forwarded messages, videos or audio clips by contacting the Central Control Room at 9233522822. Police warned that fake social media posts could lead to legal action.

The public has also been urged to return any looted arms, ammunition or explosives to security agencies.

Congress links fresh IED blast in Manipur to centre's 'failure' to restore peace

Imphal, Jan 06: The Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee has strongly criticised the Central government after a high-level meeting was held in New Delhi to review the situation in the violence-hit state. Congress state president Keisham Meghachandra Singh said the discussions in Delhi had failed to bring any concrete plan for peace or normalcy in Manipur. The meeting in Delhi was chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and attended by the Manipur Director General of Police, the Chief Secretary and the Governor. Meghachandra said that despite the seriousness of the crisis, the meeting did not produce any step that could calm the situation or ensure safety for the people.

The Congress leader linked this lack of progress to a fresh incident of violence reported the next morning. He said that at around 6 am on Monday, January 5, an IED blast took place at Nganukon, injuring two local residents. He said the blast showed that violence was still continuing and people still did not feel safe. According to him, this also reflected the "failure" of the Centre's approach to dealing with the situation. Meghachandra alleged that the Centre was not serious about restoring peace and said the present unrest was "its own creation". He further claimed that the Central government was deliberately trying to continue President's Rule in Manipur, even if this meant going against constitutional norms.

He called this situation "the murder of democracy" and said it showed disregard for the will of the people. He also said that the people of Manipur did not want direct rule from Delhi and wanted political stability instead. Meghachandra further suggested that if both the Central and State governments were unable to restore peace, then dissolving the Manipur Assembly and holding fresh elections would be the most democratic step. He directly blamed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the crisis, calling it the "architect" of the present unrest. He accused the party of following a divide-and-rule policy in the state, which he said had deepened mistrust among communities.

CM Himanta Biswa Sarma kicks off MMUA seed funding in Mangaldai



The Darrang district, classified as aspirational due to its underdevelopment, is experiencing rapid growth under Parliamentarian Dilip Saikia's leadership during Assam's BJP government term.

Mangaldai, Jan 06: The district of Darrang has been classified as an aspirational district, indicating that it is underdeveloped. However, under the active leadership of Darrang-Udalguri Parliamentarian Dilip Saikia, Darrang district has been rapidly developing under the second consecutive term of BJP government in Assam. Speaking at a sizable public gathering at the location of Darrang Medical College on Monday, Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma stated, "The Assam Skill University, Darrang Medical College with a Nursing College and Para medical institute, the bridge over Brahmaputra connecting Kuruwa in Darrang with Narengi in Guwahati are the glaring instances of the development achieved by Darrang district." The purpose of the gathering was to begin distributing Rs 10,000 seed capital checks to 31,000 qualified female members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the Darrang district's Mangaldai Legislative Assembly Constituency. The program is a component of the flagship Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA), which aims to empower rural women en-

trepreneurs and assist them in earning at least Rs 1 lakh annually. Over 35,000 women beneficiaries attended the event planned by the Darrang district government to commemorate the ceremonial distribution of checks. Parliamentarian Dilip Saikia, lawmakers Basanta Das and Dr. Paramananda Rajbongshi, District Commissioner Parag Kumar Kakaty, Zilla Parishad Chairperson Sewali Goswami Kalita, State Mohila Morcha President Nilima Devi, former lawmaker Guru Jyoti Das, and others were among the important guests. Speaking to the crowd, Chief Minister Sarma emphasized the State Government's efforts to protect the Howly of the Koch Kings of Darrang, the inclusion of Sipajhar in the Darrang district in the proposed ring road, and the national promotion of the historic Krishak Vidroh of Pothorughat and the 140 Krishak Swahids. Later, Dr. Sarma told the media about the BJP's methodical approach to choosing candidates for the 2026 Assam Assembly election, which included grassroots surveys, party worker consultations, and evaluations of the performance of current MLAs. He acknowledged that seat-sharing negotiations with ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) are still underway, pointing out that a few rounds of talks have already taken place but that a final decision is still awaited.

Tinsukia Medical College unveils MRI unit

Tinsukia, Jan 06: Ashok Singhal, the Assam Cabinet Minister for the Health and Family Welfare Department, officially opened a cutting-edge 1.5 Tesla MRI center at Tinsukia Medical College & Hospital (TMCH), Makum, on Monday.

Patients from Tinsukia and the surrounding areas of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh who previously had to travel to the closest MRI center in Dibrugarh will now have access to cutting-edge diagnostic services thanks to the first-ever MRI center in Tinsukia. Assam Medical Services Corporation Limited (AMSL) will operate, administer, and maintain the facility, which was constructed for about Rs 12.5 crore, including the cost of the Siemens MRI unit. Minister Singhal emphasized that there were 14 operational medical institutions in the state and an additional 10 in the early phases of development when speaking at the inaugural event. According to him, Assam is on the path to being self-sufficient in the health care industry, covering the final mile in efficient service delivery, with 1800 doctors graduating from these institutions annually. "The impoverished and needy patients who previously had to travel great dis-



tances or rely on pricey private diagnostic centers will greatly benefit from the State Government's MRI centers. By commissioning these MRI facilities, the government is not only improving diag-

nostic capabilities but also guaranteeing prompt disease diagnosis, improved treatment results, and a decrease in the general public's total healthcare costs," Singhal said.

Sivasagar DC Mridul Yadav addresses mediapersons after appointment

Sivasagar, Jan 06: Following his assumption of office, Mridul Yadav, the recently appointed District Commissioner of Sivasagar, hosted an initial meeting with district media representatives on Monday at the Sukafa Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office. District Development Commissioner Pabitra Kumar Das was present at the meeting, along with Lukumoni Borah and Suntrishna Gharphalia. Wide-ranging conversations about a variety of district-related administrative and developmental issues took place during the exchange. Media representatives brought attention to a number of significant issues that the residents of Sivasagar confront and asked the district administration to take the necessary steps to address them.

Oil India pipeline bursts in Dibrugarh

Dibrugarh, Jan 06: A crude oil pipeline of Oil India Limited (OIL) reportedly burst late on Monday night in the Salmari-Digholia area under Tingkhong in Assam's Dibrugarh district, causing panic among residents and damage to nearby farmland and fish-rearing ponds. Local people said the incident took place at around 10 pm when a sudden bursting sound was heard from

the pipeline. Soon after, crude oil started leaking continuously from the damaged section.

The smell of crude oil spread quickly across the area, and many residents said they were worried about the possibility of a fire. Villagers said that within a short time the leaking oil flowed into nearby agricultural fields and ponds used for fish farming. Many

fish reportedly died after coming into contact with the oil.

Farmers have said that their crops have also been affected and they now fear heavy losses due to contamination of soil and water. Residents said the strong smell of crude oil made it uncomfortable to breathe and some feared that exposure over time might cause health problems for both people and an-

imals. There were also concerns that sunlight and wind during the day might increase the risk of ignition or spread the fumes further. Several villagers alleged that the pipeline has become old and weak and that similar bursts had taken place in the past as well. They said that while temporary repairs were carried out earlier, the pipeline was never replaced. Many demanded a

proper safety audit and permanent replacement of ageing lines so that such incidents do not happen again. Oil India officials reportedly reached the site soon after receiving information and began efforts to control the leakage.

Work was also started to assess the extent of the damage caused to farmland, ponds and the surrounding environment.

EDITORIAL

The Economic Hot Potato of Assam



Potato growers dumping their produce on the road as a mark of protest at Sadiya in Assam bears a striking paradox—even as the state is dependent on supplies from other states to meet its demand, the local farmers are not getting remunerative prices. Creation of adequate cold storage facilities, increasing productivity, and cooperative farming are essential to increase the price bargaining capacity of local farmers. Protesting farmers allege that traders are offering them a paltry sum of Rs 7 a kg, which is much lower than the production cost and has turned potato production commercially unviable. Ironically, the current retail prices of potatoes in the state range from Rs. 20 to 30 a kg, which indicates that the market has the capacity to pay growers a remunerative rate. Potatoes are grown in about a one lakh hectare area in the state, but the state is dependent on procurement from major potato-growing states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal to meet its demand. Dependence on supplies from other states also exposes retail consumers to price volatility at the source and hoarding by unscrupulous wholesale traders. In addition to impacting the livelihoods of potato growers, distress selling by local growers will increase retail price volatility, which will have a greater effect on end consumers.

Official data highlights that the farmers in the state spend about Rs 800 crore to Rs 1,200 crore annually for procuring about 75% of potato seeds required from other states. The Horticulture Department observes that most potato seeds are of poor-quality table potatoes, due to which the productivity of potatoes in the state is much less. High investment in input costs, including seeds, coupled with low productivity pushes up the production cost, which leaves the farmers disadvantaged in the competitive market.

The pragmatic solution to the problem is increasing production of high-quality potato seeds. The availability of high-quality seeds locally can assist farmers in reducing input costs and boosting production within the same area. Since potatoes are a perishable product, it is crucial for small growers to obtain cold storage facilities that are affordable and located nearby in order to prevent post-harvest losses and ensure they do not have to sell their produce at non-remunerative prices.

However, most cold storages are privately owned; the charges for hiring them are fixed by market forces, which are often very high for individual small growers to bear. The small-scale potato growers can form collectives in the form of Self Help Groups (SHG) or Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO) for seeking bank loans and availing various subsidies under central government schemes to take private and government cold storage facilities on

rent to enhance their individual affordability. Under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), under which financial assistance is provided for various horticulture activities, including construction/expansion/modernization of cold storages of capacity up to 5000 MT in the country, assistance is available for individuals, groups of farmers/growers/consumers, partnership/proprietary firms, SHGs, FPOs, companies, corporations, cooperatives, cooperative marketing federations, local bodies, Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs), Marketing Boards, and State Governments. Credit linked to a back-ended subsidy at the rate of 50% is available for Northeastern states for construction/expansion/modernization of cold storage, and Controlled Atmosphere (CA) storage of capacity above 5000 MT and up to 20,000 MT is available under the “Capital Investment Subsidy for Construction/Expansion/Modernization of Cold Storages and Storages for Horticulture Products” implemented by the National Horticulture Board. Motivating farmers’ groups to leverage these opportunities can help them explore alternative cold storage facilities. If farmers’ collectives are able to construct their own cold storages and also run them efficiently, then it can go a long way in moderating rental charges of existing privately owned cold storages in the state. As local bodies are also eligible to seek subsidies under these schemes, panchayat bodies can construct cold storages in the public sector to make the space available to farmers at affordable charges.

The availability of quality farm produce for seasonal crops throughout the year increases the commercial viability of food processing units. Buy-back arrangements between food processing units and collectives of potato growers can enhance the financial capacity of growers, enabling them to secure larger loans from banks and repay those loans on time, as these arrangements will include predetermined remunerative prices that ensure profitability.

With fruit and vegetable markets being unregulated, the state government cannot fix procurement prices for wholesale traders, which makes it imperative for farmers to increase their market competitiveness by making the best use of various government schemes and programmes. The “Potato Seed Production under Low Cost Net House” initiated in the state government under a World Bank Assisted programme has brightened hopes for the availability of quality seeds locally for boosting productivity and making quality potato seed production financially attractive. Small farmers learning to overcome commercial challenges through collective efforts is essential to make the state self-reliant in potato production.

‘A warning not an insult’: US doubles down on criticism of Europe

Donald Trump’s administration has doubled down on its recent criticism of Europe, saying last month’s US national security strategy was an attempt to “jolt” an ally back to economic life. The document was widely condemned in Europe as representing a seismic shift in the 70-year transatlantic alliance with its dark references to a purported threat of “civilisational erasure” with migration and censorship creating “strife”, “cratering birthrates” and “loss of national identities”. Its threat to interfere in European politics and oppose what

it termed as “elite-driven, anti-democratic restrictions on core liberties in Europe” was condemned as unacceptable by the president of the European Council of leaders, António Costa. On Monday, Jacob Helberg, the US under secretary of state for economic affairs, told reporters the strategy was in fact a response to what Washington saw as an economic crisis and over-regulation. “I know that the national security strategy, the language around Europe and around civilisational erasure drew a lot of attention in Europe,” he said. “What I’d

like to highlight is that that language is a warning. It’s not an insult ... because there is a growing sense of concern and alarm in the United States about the fact that Europe’s economic, relative economic decline as a share of the global GDP is a crisis. “There is a degree of alarm in Washington about the need for serious reforms in order to jolt the European economy back to life. We think it’s possible with the right reforms.” The changes the US was seeking, Helberg said, centred on the opportunity to “drastically simplify and reduce the reg-



ulatory burden in Europe”, which he claimed would free up talent and capital on the European continent and attract US investment. The US has repeatedly threatened not to lift 50% steel tariffs on the EU if the bloc does not roll

back on tech legislation hitting its billionaires including Elon Musk. Helberg said the bloc was falling way behind other leading economies such as the US and Washington desired a strong Europe to maintain the “historic 70-year plus

of a transatlantic alliance”. Countries such as Italy and Germany are experiencing modest GDP growth. Germany recorded no growth in the third quarter of 2025, while it was projected to grow 1.3% in 2026 and 1.4% in 2027. Overall the bloc’s own estimates project growth of 1.4% for 2025 and 1.5% in 2027. By comparison the US economy rose at an annualised rate of 4.3% in the third quarter of 2025, rebounding after a contraction in the first three months of the year amid fears over the impact of Trump’s tariff strategy.

Trump’s new world order is being born – and Venezuela is just the start Owen Jones



As Venezuela’s skyline lit up under US bombs, we were watching the morbid symptoms of a declining empire. That may sound counterintuitive. After all, the US has kidnapped a foreign leader, and Donald Trump has announced that he will “run” Venezuela. Surely this looks less like decay than intoxication: a superpower high on its own force. But Trump’s great virtue, if it can be called that, is candour. Previous US presidents draped naked self-interest in the language of “democracy” and “human rights”. Trump dispenses with the costume. In 2023, he boasted: “When I left, Venezuela was ready to collapse. We would have taken it over, we would have gotten all that oil, it would have been right next door.” And this was no off-the-cuff remark. The logic of an oil grab, and much more besides, is laid out plainly in Trump’s recently published National Security Strategy. The document accepts something long denied in Washington: that US global hegemony is over.

“After the end of the Cold War, American foreign policy elites convinced themselves that permanent American domination of the entire world was in the best interests of our country,” it declares with barely concealed contempt. “The days of the United States propping up the entire world order like Atlas are over.” These are the strategy’s unceremonious funeral rites for US superpower status. What replaces it is a world of rival empires, each enforcing its own sphere of influence. And for the US, that sphere is the Americas. “After years of neglect,” the strategy pronounces, “the United States will reassert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine to restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere.” The Monroe doctrine, formulated in the early 19th century, purported

to block European colonialism. In practice, it laid the foundations for US domination over its Latin American backyard.

Violence in Latin America facilitated by Washington is hardly new. My parents took in refugees who had fled Chile’s rightwing dictatorship, installed after the socialist president Salvador Allende was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup. “I don’t see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its people,” declared the then US secretary of state Henry Kissinger. Similar logic underpinned US support for murderous regimes in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia, as well as across Central America and the Caribbean. But in the last three decades, that domination has been challenged. The so-called “pink tide” of progressive governments, spearheaded by Brazil’s president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, sought to assert greater regional independence.

And, crucially, China – the main US rival – has grown in power across the continent. The two-way goods trade between China and Latin America was 259 times larger in 2023 than it was in 1990. China is now the continent’s second largest trading partner, behind only the US. At the end of the cold war, it did not even make the top 10.

Trump’s assault on Venezuela is just the opening move in an attempt to reverse all of this. The experience of Trump’s first term has led too many to conclude that the strongman in the White House was all bluster. Then, he reached an accommodation with the traditional Republican elite. The unwritten bargain was simple: deliver tax cuts and deregulation, and he could vent endlessly on social media. Second-term Trump is a full-fat far-right regime. When he menaces the democrat-

ically elected presidents of Colombia and Mexico – believe him. When he declares, with barely concealed relish, that “Cuba is ready to fall,” believe him. And when he states, “We do need Greenland, absolutely,” believe him. He really does intend to annex more than 2m sq km of European territory. If – when – Greenland is swallowed by a Trumpian empire, what then? Trump will have noted the pitifully weak European response to his brazenly illegal assault on Venezuela. But a US seizure of Danish sovereign territory would surely spell the end of Nato, founded on the principle of collective defence. Denmark’s land would be stolen no less blatantly than Russia’s devouring of Ukraine. Whatever muted noises have emerged from London, Paris or Berlin, the western alliance would be finished. When the Soviet Union collapsed, US elites convinced themselves they were militarily invincible and that their economic model marked the endpoint of human development. That hubris led directly to catastrophe in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, and the financial crash of 2008. US elites proised their people utopian dreams, and then dragged them from one disaster to another. Trumpism itself emerged from the resulting mass disillusionment.

But the “America First” response to US decline is to abandon global dominance in favour of a hemispheric empire. What does that leave the US itself? When the US defeated Spain at the end of the 19th century and seized the Philippines, leading dignitaries founded the American Anti-Imperialist League. “We hold that the policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty and tends toward militarism,” they declared, “an evil from which it has been our glory to be free.” “We assert that no nation can

long endure half republic and half empire,” the Democratic party asserted in the 1900 presidential election, “and we warn the American people that imperialism abroad will lead quickly and inevitably to despotism at home.” In the end, informal empire replaced direct colonialism, and American democracy – always deeply flawed – endured. Who would dismiss such warnings as exaggeration now? What happens abroad cannot be divorced from what happens at home. This is the imperial “boomerang”, as Martinican author Aimé Césaire defined it three quarters of a century ago, analysing how European colonialism returned to the continent in the form of fascism. We have already watched the “war on terror” boomerang in this way: its language and logic repurposed for domestic repression.

“The Democrat party is not a political party,” Stephen Miller, Trump’s deputy chief of staff, declared last summer. “It is a domestic extremist organisation.” National guard troops are dispatched into Democratic-run cities like occupying forces, echoing the “surges” once unleashed on Afghanistan or Iraq. Seen this way, Trump’s indulgence of Russian ambitions in Ukraine is hardly mysterious. Back in 2019, Russia reportedly proposed offering increased US influence in Venezuela in exchange for the US retreating from Ukraine. Who knows if such a deal has been made. What is certainly true is that a new world order is being born. It is one where increasingly authoritarian powers use brute force to subjugate their neighbours and steal their resources. What once might have sounded like dystopian fantasy is being assembled in plain sight. The question is whether we have the means, willingness and ability to fight back.

Misinformation and fake news on social media

Online social networks (OSNs) have exponentially expanded, becoming significant sources for global and local news for millions of users. While they facilitate unlimited communication and immediate access to information, OSNs also pose serious challenges, primarily the proliferation of fake news. The identification of fake news remains a complex and unresolved issue, particularly within the unique contexts of OSNs, which complicate detection efforts. Current artificial intelligence (AI) strategies, including machine learning and deep learning, have not successfully addressed these challenges and, paradoxically, can also be manipulated to generate and distribute deceptive content. Consequently, automatically detecting fake news is exceptionally difficult; the information is often crafted to closely mimic truthful content, making it challenging for AI to ascertain its authenticity without the aid of external verification.

This study seeks to deliver an in-depth and structured review of the literature on fake news, alongside an evaluation of existing methodologies aimed at detecting and mitigating the spread of misinformation on these platforms. Today’s children, especially students, are so busy with their textbooks that they are left with no other choice. Reading a good book during a leisure period has become a rare occurrence. In families, all members are so busy that no one is available to turn off the TV and silence the smartphone, which may be interfering with reading. In those good old days there were neither mobile phones nor reel addiction, but a bedtime reading addiction was the ‘real addiction.’

Until the late 1990s children grew up on the best of literature available then, namely ‘Amar Chitra Katha.’

It was truly the immortal pictorial collection of stories from various subjects that increased their mental horizons and indulged them in imaginative and creative thinking. Sadly, most children today are unaware of this book. Nowadays, videos depicting stories virtually capture children’s attention, but the learning outcome is just superficial. It is now the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to monitor daily reading and factors influencing reading to develop a reading habit among children.

Why not try to create a family environment where we carry a book instead of a phone? Let us remember Austin Phelps’s important words: ‘Wear the old coat and buy the new book.’ Let’s all come forward and motivate our children to visit

book fairs and expose themselves to good books so they can feel the joy of reading.

Reviving children’s love for books so they grab them and read them leisurely is the prime responsibility of every conscious member of the society. During the winter months, when picnic outings are in full swing, violent quarrels often break out at many popular picnic spots, and this year too several such incidents have come to light. Picnics are meant to help people unwind, let their hair down, and get away from the humdrum of monotonous daily life. Unfortunately, this very spirit of recreation is often spoiled by a section of people—especially drunk and quarrelsome young boys—who end up picking fights over trifles and turning a pleasant outing into a battlefield. Time and again, minor arguments snowball into ugly clashes, mainly because liquor flows freely and tempers run high. Instead of soaking in the joy of togetherness, families and children are forced to look over their shoulders. The administration and police cannot afford to sit back and turn a blind eye; they must step up, keep a close watch, and crack down firmly on such unruly behaviour to nip trouble in the bud. Moreover, liquor consumption at picnic spots should be strictly prohibited, or else untoward incidents are bound to crop up again and again. Many picnic-goers prefer riverbanks, which are inherently risky, and when people are heavily intoxicated, the chances of accidents and even fatalities increase alarmingly. If these issues are not checked in time, the joy of winter picnics will continue to be overshadowed by fear and chaos, turning what should be moments of cheer into scenes of regret.

2026 will be very vital for both Assam and West Bengal, as both these states will be going to assembly polls within three months. Interestingly, so far, the main issue of election for both the states appears to be the same. The Assam CM and Union Home Minister are accusing West Bengal’s CM of encouraging infiltration for vote bank politics. In response, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is questioning the issue of infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir, which led to the Pahalgam mayhem.

After careful probing, we, the bona fide Indians, do agree that besides West Bengal and Assam, infiltration of foreigners is there in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, and Rajasthan. The only difference is that infiltration of foreigners in West Bengal is state-sponsored, which is not so in the states mentioned above.

80% of mutual funds show 25% + wealth loss in 10 years due



New Delhi: Hidden commissions in regular mutual fund plans can significantly erode long-term investor wealth, with most investors losing more than a quarter of their potential gains over a decade, according to a new study by I Finance

Research. The study underscores how distributor commissions, though often overlooked, entirely due to higher expenses, pounding impact of higher expense ratios embedded in Regular plans.

Dividends to save govt’s shortfall, hopes on IDBI

New Delhi: The government is increasingly leaning on dividend income to offset a shortfall in disinvestment receipts, even as it places high expectations on the strategic sale of IDBI Bank to bolster capital receipts in the next fiscal. Data from the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) shows that total receipts so far this year stand at Rs 58,328 crore. A bulk of this, Rs 49,560 crore has come through dividends from public sector enterprises, while disinvestment receipts remain limited at Rs 8,768 crore. Against this backdrop, the proposed strategic disinvestment of IDBI Bank has assumed critical importance in the Union Budget calculations for FY 2025–26.

With the transaction already running behind schedule, senior Finance Ministry officials said that most regulatory clearances are now in place and efforts are underway to call for financial bids at the earliest. However, officials declined to comment on whether the process could face further

delays or spill over beyond March. “Our efforts are to do it with the best due diligence,” one official said. As per sources, the Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) for IDBI Bank received clearance from the Inter-Ministerial Group in June and was subsequently approved by the core group of secretaries after multiple rounds of clarifications. However, financial bids, which were earlier expected to be invited in November, are yet to be called. According to sources, the delay was partly due to clarifications sought by the three shortlisted bidders on the draft SPA. Based on current market valuations, the total proceeds from the IDBI Bank stake sale could be around Rs 63,000 crore. The government plans to divest 30.48 per cent of its 45.48 per cent holding, which could fetch over Rs 31,700 crore. The government since then has stopped setting a separate numerical target for disinvestment proceeds, signalling a shift away from rigid benchmarks.

YES Bank, IndusInd Bank, SBI, BOB latest targets after Q3 biz updates

New Delhi: A recent preview by JM Financial, based on provisional updates from 24 banks and four NBFCs for the third quarter of FY26, highlights continued strength in loan growth for financial stocks, contrasted by muted deposit mobilisation. Most banks are experiencing a rising credit-deposit ratio as lending outpaces the gathering of new deposits. Aggregate loans for banks reporting provisional updates grew by 12.6% year-on-year and 4.1% sequentially in Q3FY26. Sector-wide, the figures stood at 12.0% YoY and 4.2% QoQ up to mid-December 2025. In contrast, deposit growth remained subdued at 10.3% YoY and 2.1% QoQ, compared to sector averages of 9.4% and 2.5% for the same period.

Private banks reported 12.4% YoY and 3.2% QoQ loan growth, led by HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IDBI Bank, J&K Bank, and several mid-sized southern banks. PSU banks posted similar momentum, with 12.5% YoY and 4.8% QoQ loan growth, aided by Bank of Baroda, Indian Bank, Bank of Maharashtra, and UCO Bank. Small finance banks (SFBs) outperformed, seeing 19.2% YoY and 6.8% QoQ loan growth, propelled by AU SFB, Ujjivan, and Equitas. Deposit mobilisation was less impressive, as private banks increased deposits by 11.5% YoY and 1.8% QoQ, while PSU counterparts grew by 9.2% YoY and 2.2% QoQ. Some, including Yes Bank, Bandhan Bank, and Equitas SFB, experienced quarter-on-quarter declines. SFBs, however, maintained strong deposit growth at 20.2% YoY and 4.2% QoQ. The persistent gap between credit and deposit growth has heightened com-



petition for retail term deposits. With loan growth outpacing deposits, credit-deposit (CD) ratios rose across the system. The system-wide CD ratio reached 81.6% as of 15 December 2025, up from 79.7% a year earlier. HDFC Bank’s CASA ratios remained within a narrow range amid ongoing deposit competition. Collection efficiency and asset quality showed positive movement in some SFBs. Ujjivan SFB reported a slight improvement, with collection efficiency rising to 99.7% in Q3FY26 from 99.6% in the previous quarter, and gross non-performing assets (GNPA) easing to 2.4%. Bandhan Bank also saw better collection efficiency, especially in its EEB segment, indicating improving asset quality in microfinance portfolios. NBFCs delivered mixed results in Q3FY26. Bajaj Finance reported 22.1% YoY and 5.1% QoQ asset under management (AUM) growth, below JM Financial’s estimate. Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services (MMFS) saw a 7% YoY and 30% QoQ rise in disbursements, with improved Stage 2 assets. L&T Finance Holdings ICICI Bank,

Bank of Baroda, SBI, Ujjivan, and DCB among banks, and Aditya Birla Capital, Shriram Housing Finance, Tata Capital, Aadhar, and PNB Housing Finance in the NBFC/HFC space as top picks. The brokerage stated: “We remain constructive on banks that have strong liability franchises, diversified loan growth engines, and robust capital and provision buffers. Mid-banks and SFBs provide higher operating leverage to a growth recovery, but remain more sensitive to the pace of normalisation in unsecured and MFI portfolios.” (TP: Rs 335) and Equities Small Finance Bank (TP: Rs 60). JM Financial has ‘buy’ ratings on HDFC Bank (TP: Rs 1,160), ICICI Bank (TP: Rs 1,700), Axis Bank (TP: Rs 1,475), City Union Bank (TP: Rs 335), DCB Bank (TP: Rs 215), State Bank of India (TP: Rs 1,160), Bank of Baroda (TP: Rs 350) and Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (TP: Rs 65), while it has given an ‘add’ tag to Punjab National Bank (TP: Rs 130) and AU Small Finance Bank (TP: Rs 1,050).

Restaurant-style taste at home: Mother’s Recipe launches North East outdoor campaign for ready-to-cook spice mixes

Aizawl: Mother’s Recipe, a legacy homegrown food brand trusted by Indian households for generations, has intensified its focus on the North East market with a high-impact outdoor campaign promoting its Ready to Cook spice mixes this festive season. The campaign highlights the simple consumer insight that more families are preparing flavour-rich dishes at home, while still seeking restaurant-style taste and convenience without lengthy preparation. Rolling out from December 20, 2025, to the first week of January 2026, the campaign features large outdoor hoardings across Agartala, Imphal, Dimapur, Aizawl and Shillong, showcasing popular restaurant-style dishes with strong visual appeal and clear product messaging. The range promises authentic flavours, no added preservatives and all-natural ingredients, aligning with growing consumer interest in quality and health.

Mother’s Recipe said the North East remains a key market due to its strong food culture and openness to experimenting with flavours. Speaking about the initiative, Sanjana Desai, Executive Director, said the brand aims to “bring restaurant



style flavours into everyday home cooking,” offering great taste with ease for today’s busy consumers. Targeting families, working professionals and young consumers, the campaign seeks to build strong visibility, encourage trial and reinforce the

brand promise — that favourite restaurant-style dishes can now be created easily at home. Through this initiative, Mother’s Recipe hopes to further strengthen its connect with evolving food habits in the region.

Ashika Investment Managers unveils SmartAlpha Fund amid growing demand for quant AIFs

New Delhi: Ashika Investment Managers has launched the SmartAlpha Fund, a new open-ended Category III Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) that uses a data-driven, systematic strategy to identify market opportunities across cycles. The fund, which has received regulatory approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), is now open for subscription and marks a significant expansion of Ashika’s alternative asset management platform. Designed as a quantitative, rules-based strategy, the SmartAlpha Fund is built on what the firm calls a proprietary “Six Bucket Approach”. This framework draws on academically and empirically validated behavioural patterns observed across global markets, seeking to capture investment opportunities in a consistent and methodical way rather than relying on discretionary calls. At the core of the strategy is a multi-layered process that blends traditional fundamental analysis with quantitative signals. The fund focuses on changes in earnings expectations, valuation metrics, and momentum trends, while also tracking the activity of strategic investors to gauge shifts in market sentiment. In addition, it incorporates behavioural finance insights such as trend-following and the identification of fundamentally strong companies that may be temporarily mispriced due to market over-reaction. According to Ashika Investment Managers, the objective is to create a system that can perform across different market environments by reducing dependence on any single factor or style of investing. By integrating multiple validated signals into a unified framework, the fund aims to deliver more stable risk-adjusted returns over time. “The Sebi approval of the SmartAlpha



Fund marks an important milestone in our alternative asset management journey,” said Ajay Arora, Co-CEO of Ashika Investment Managers. “

As India’s alternatives ecosystem matures, systematic and data-driven strategies are becoming increasingly relevant, complementing traditional investment approaches.” Himadri Roy, Head of Quantitative Fund Management and the fund manager for SmartAlpha, said the strategy is designed to bring greater discipline to portfolio construction. “By combining multiple dynamic factors within a struc-

tured framework, we aim to offer investors a consistent way of engaging with market behaviour rather than reacting to short-term noise.”

he said. The fund launch comes close on the heels of a broader strategic push by the Ashika Group into asset management. Last week, the group announced that it had received in-principle approval from Sebi to set up a mutual fund business, allowing it to move ahead with establishing an asset management company and preparing new schemes, subject to final regulatory clearances. Ashika Group’s entry into mutual

funds builds on its presence across capital markets and financial services, including retail and institutional broking, investment banking, research advisory, global family office services, alternative assets and private equity. “

The launch of Ashika Mutual Fund is a natural extension of our vision to contribute meaningfully to India’s evolving asset management ecosystem,” said Pawan Jain, Chairman and Managing Director of Ashika Group, adding that the proposed fund house will offer a range of schemes tailored to diverse investor needs.

Eternal, Swiggy shares fall up 5% amid heightened competition



New Delhi: Extending their ongoing weakness, shares of Swiggy and Eternal tumbled up to 5 per cent during trading sessions on Tuesday. The quick commerce and food delivery giants have cracked up to 25-35 per cent from their respective 52-week highs, amid the rising competition from peers like Zepto, Amazon, Jio & others. Brokerage firms continue to remain mixed on these stocks. Shares of Swiggy Ltd tanked 4.88 per cent to Rs 359.55 on Tuesday, with its market capitalization slipping below Rs 1 lakh crore mark. The stock is down 35 per cent from its 52-week high at Rs 546.45. On the similar lines, Eternal Ltd fell 1.96 per cent to Rs 276.25 with a total mcap slipping below Rs 2.7 lakh crore. The latest fall on Tuesday has also taken Swiggy’s shares below their QIP price of Rs 375, at which the company had raised Rs 10,000 crore to boost its war chest. The stock now also trades below its IPO price of Rs 390 apiece. Their arch rival in the quick commerce space, Zepto, also confidentially filed its DRHP with Sebi to launch its IPO. Nuvama Institutional Equities anticipates Eternals’ food delivery NOV to grow 2.2 per cent QoQ/14.1 per cent YoY while adjusted EBITDA margin as percent of NOV to be 5.4 per cent. Blinkit NOV to grow 14.4 per cent QoQ/122 per cent YoY while absolute adjusted EBITDA loss to be Rs 130 crore. Consolidated EBITDA margin shall contract 10bp

QoQ, it said. “For Swiggy, we forecast food delivery GOV shall grow 3.8 per cent QoQ/19.2 per cent YoY while adjusted EBITDA margin as per cent of GOV shall be 3 per cent. Instamart GOV to grow 13.6 per cent QoQ/104.1 per cent YoY while absolute adjusted EBITDA loss shall be Rs 920 crore. Consolidated EBITDA margin to decrease 10bp QoQ,” Nuvama adds. In a nutshell, it sees Eternal and Swiggy to lead in terms of revenue growth. It recently initiated with ‘buy’ rating on Swiggy with a target price of Rs 510, while It has the same rating for Eternal with a target price of Rs 400 apiece. Nirmal Bang Institutional Equities also has a ‘buy’ rating on both the counters with a target prices of Rs 523 and Rs 357, respectively. On the other hand, Ambit has retained its preference for Eternal over Swiggy. The report points to stronger market positioning and better operational efficiency as factors supporting Eternal, while reaffirming ‘sell’ ratings for both stocks with revised target prices of Rs 210 for Eternal and Rs 330 for Swiggy. Ambit’s assessment is based on both companies facing a highly competitive landscape, but Eternal is positioned to optimise outcomes in this environment. It highlights sector-wide constraints, such as India’s low urbanisation rate of 36 per cent, limited dark store potential (12,000–16,000), and affordability limits, all of which cap user and order growth.

How did Russia learn about Mali’s stability

Washington: S’appuyer sur la Russie pour lutter contre le terrorisme a des conséquences désastreuses au Mali. En plus de se focaliser sur l’exploitation des ressources du pays – au premier rang desquels l’or malien – le groupe Wagner, devenu Africa Corps, a provoqué un fort mécontentement dans les casernes. L’analyse de Justyna Gudzowska, de l’ONG The Sentry.Alors que la junte au pouvoir au Mali était au bord de l’effondrement le mois dernier, avec un groupe terroriste affilié à Al-Qaïda qui progressait militairement et paralysait la capitale avec un blocus sur le carburant, il est important de se demander comment le pays en est arrivé là. La réponse réside en partie dans l’aventurisme de la Russie sur le continent africain, qui a contribué à créer les conditions favorables à l’essor du jihadisme au Sahel, et ainsi donner corps à la possibilité d’un troisième coup d’État au Mali en cinq ans. Depuis septembre, le Groupe de soutien à l’islam et aux musulmans (Jnim) empêche le carburant d’atteindre Bamako en incendiant des camions à travers le Mali et en bloquant les convois en provenance de Mauritanie, du Sénégal et de Côte d’Ivoire. Cette offensive a provoqué une pénurie dans tout le pays, de longues files d’attente aux stations-service, alimenté l’insécurité alimentaire et la fermeture d’écoles et d’entreprises, déstabilisant une économie déjà fragile.Bien que le blocus se soit assoupli ces dernières semaines, la junte continue de rationner le carburant tout

en assurant le Fonds monétaire international (FMI) que la croissance reprendra en 2026. Le 18 novembre, le porte-parole du Jnim, Bina Diarra – dit al-Bambari –, a publié une déclaration dans laquelle il affirmait que le blocus se poursuivrait et que Bamako subirait ce que d’autres régions du pays avaient enduré.L’or du Mali dans le viseur d’Africa Corps
Bien que les Forces armées maliennes (Fama) combattent le Jnim depuis 2012, c’est la première fois qu’elles semblent complètement impuissantes face aux insurgés. Cette situation désastreuse a plusieurs causes : après les coups d’État successifs de 2020 et 2021 qui ont porté au pouvoir l’actuel dirigeant, le général l’aide militaire américaine, le Mali a fini par solliciter l’aide d’un nouveau partenaire militaire : la Russie.Le groupe Wagner, une organisation de mercenaires dirigée, jusqu’à sa mort prématurée, par un proche de Poutine, Evgueni Prigojine, est arrivé au Mali au début de l’année 2022 après s’être implanté en République centrafricaine, en Libye et au Soudan où il s’était allié aux Forces de Soutien Rapide (FSR).ont fait qu’affaiblir les forces armées maliennes et exacerber le problème sécuritaire. L’été dernier, le groupe paramilitaire a été officiellement remplacé par l’Africa Corps, dont l’effectif est estimé à au moins 1 000 personnes, et qui est directement contrôlé par le ministère russe de la Défense.

US mulling possible intervention in Iran

South Korea: US and Israeli officials are assessing potential policy options in response to ongoing unrest in Iran, according to multiple indications received by Israeli media reports The Jerusalem Post. The discussions come amid sustained protests across Iranian cities and recent US actions in Venezuela that appear to have influenced regional strategic calculations. Iran has experienced periodic waves of demonstrations, driven by economic pressures, political repression, and dissatisfaction with clerical rule. While Iranian authorities have previously succeeded in suppressing similar movements, the persistence of the demonstrations has renewed international attention, writes The Jerusalem Post. According to a report in the Times of Israel, the death toll in violence surrounding protests in Iran has risen to at least 35 people.The Times of Israel quoted the figures from the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which says more than 1,200 people have been detained in the protests, which have been ongoing for more than a week. It says 29 protesters, four children and two members of Iran’s security forces have been killed. Demonstrations have reached over 250 locations in 27 of Iran’s 31 provinces.The Iranian Fars news agency, reported that 250 police officers and 45 members of the all-volunteer Basij force have been hurt in the demonstrations.On January 2, US President Donald Trump said that the United States is “locked and loaded” to respond if Iranian authorities use violence against peaceful protesters, as demonstrations over worsening economic conditions spread across multiple provinces in Iran.In a Truth Social Post, Trump wrote, “If Iran shots and violently kills peaceful protesters, which is their custom, the United States of America will come to their rescue. We are locked and loaded and ready to go. Thank you for your attention to this matter!”Meanwhile, Iran’s erstwhile crown Prince in Exile, Reza Pahlvi has been taking an active role in pushing protestors to take on the Khamnei regime.In a post on X on Monday he said, “Dear compatriots, The shooting of the brave and noble people of Malekshahi, the killing of the city’s youth, and the subsequent cowardly attack by the regime’s mercenaries on Ilam Hospital, are an unmistakable crime that recalls the massacre of the people of Zahedan on Bloody Friday in 2022. A regime that kills unarmed young people and raids medical centres clearly has no legitimacy, and is nearing its end. To the suffering and patriotic people of Malekshahi and Ilam: I stand with you in grief and solidarity, and I assure you that Khamenei and the corrupt, murderous ringleaders of the Islamic Republic will pay the price for this crime.”

From Caracas ‘fort’ to New York court: Maduro’s capture in pictures and map

London: The US says its military operation to capture Venezuela’s president took months of planning, but when Donald Trump gave the order to launch, “Operation Absolute Resolve” only lasted about 150 minutes.The surprise early-morning attack on Saturday marked an unprecedented event in modern politics and culminated in the arrest of Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores.Captured by troops from an elite US army unit as they tried to flee into a fortified safe room, the pair are now being held in a detention centre in New York and face narco-terrorism charges.
As the sun rose on Saturday, the scale of the military operation in Caracas, Venezuela’s capital, was clear.Pictures from Fuerte Tiuna, a huge military complex where top government officials live, show bombed out buildings and charred, smouldering cars.It was at this compound that Maduro and his wife were captured, Venezuelan ruling party leader Nahum Fernández told the Associated Press news agency.Operation Absolute Resolve began with reports of explosions at about 02:00 in Caracas (06:00 GMT).The US cut power to the city, Trump has since said, describing it as “dark and deadly”.The aim was to disable Venezuela’s air defences and clear the path for US military helicopters to get to Fuerte Tiuna.”We assessed that we had maintained totally the element of surprise”, Gen Dan Caine, the nation’s highest-ranking military officer, said.The BBC has verified five strike locations, including the compound, a port and an airport. Pictures show Fuerte Tiuna on fire, with huge flames visible for miles.Once on the ground, troops from the US Army’s Delta Force, an elite special forces unit, moved quickly.They gained access to the compound at 02:01 local time, and the Maduros “gave up” without a struggle, Gen Caine said.But Trump gave more details. The Maduros tried to escape into a safe place, the US president explained, describing it as a military “fortress”.The safe place is all steel, and he wasn’t able to make it to the door because our guys were so fast
“It was a very thick door, a very heavy door,” Trump told reporters. “He made it to the door. He was unable to close it.
But even if they had managed to get into the safe room, Trump said troops could have blown it open in about “47 seconds”.From Caracas to ManhattanNow in US custody, Nicolás Maduro and his wife were transported some 2,100 miles (3,400km), to New York City.They were flown out of Caracas by helicopter, and taken to the USS Iwo Jima, a warship stationed in the Caribbean. The team was back “over the water” by 04:29, Gen Caine said.It was on the ship that we got one of the defining pictures of the whole oper-

Central Africa Republic President Faustin Archange Touadéra reelected, provisional results show

London: entral Africa Republic President Faustin Archange Touadéra won a third term in last month’s election, provisional results showed.The major Opposition coalition boycotted the vote after a referendum allowed the removal of term limits. Mr. Touadéra faced challenges from six candidates, but the main Opposition coalition did not participate after denouncing what it called an unequal political environment. He won 76.15% of the votes, according to the provisional results the election authority released late on Monday (January 5, 2026). Some 2.4 million Central Africans were registered to vote in a first-of-its-kind election in the country, where citizens voted simultaneously for all tiers of government, including presidential, legislative, regional and municipal seats. Two Opposition candidates have already contested the results, citing instances of alleged malpractice by the National Elections Authority and widespread fraud. Anicet Georges Dologué, the runner-up who received 14.66% of the vote, proclaimed himself the winner of the election on Friday (January 2, 2026). AP Google Preferred Source President of the Central African Republic and United Hearts Movement presidential candidate Faustin-Archange Touadera, casts his vote during the presidential election at a polling station in Bangui, Central African Republic December 28, 2025. President of the Central African Republic and United Hearts Movement presidential candidate Faustin-Archange Touadera, casts his vote during the presidential election at a polling station in Bangui, Central African Republic December 28, 2025.Central Africa Republic President Faustin Archange Touadéra won a third term in last month’s election, provisional results showed. The major Opposition coalition boy-



cotted the vote after a referendum allowed the removal of term limits. Mr. Touadéra faced challenges from six candidates, but the main Opposition coalition did not participate after denouncing what it called an unequal political environment. He won 76.15% of the votes, according to the provisional results the election authority released late on Monday (January 5, 2026).Some 2.4 million Central Africans were registered to vote in a first-of-its-kind election in the country, where citizens voted simultaneously for all tiers of government, including presidential, legislative, regional and municipal seats.Two Opposition candidates have already contested the results, citing instances of alleged malpractice by the National Elections Authority and widespread fraud. Anicet Georges Dologué, the runner-up who received 14.66% of the vote, proclaimed himself the winner of the election on Friday (January 2, 2026).

Analysts say Mr. Touadéra has consolidated power within state institutions.The country has been embroiled in conflict since 2013 after mostly Muslim rebels seized power and forced then-President François Bozizé out of office. The conflict was de-escalated by a 2019 peace deal between the government and 14 armed groups. Six of the 14 groups later withdrew from the agreement. The Central Africa Republic is one of the countries where Wagner, a Russian mercenary group, was first active in Africa. The group has been responsible for Mr. Touadéra’s security, but tensions have grown between Mr. Touadéra and Russia after Moscow demanded that Wagner be replaced with the Russian government-run African Corps. Regional power Rwanda also plays an influential role in the country. Security issues ranked high among voters’ concerns in the election, even though the crisis has dwindled. The United Nations peace-

keeping mission MINUSCA, which has been present in the country since 2014, is facing a drawdown due to financial constraints.. West Africa Province fighters operate freely and often set up checkpoints, according to a military source from the Damasak brigade. “The terrorists planted a mine that our soldiers stepped on. Unfortunately, about nine soldiers died instantly, while five others were seriously injured,” said Abba Kaka Tuja, a member of the Civilian Joint Task Force involved in the rescue operation. He added that an armoured vehicle was destroyed when the mine detonated, followed Boko Haram have intensified attacks in recent months, targeting military convoys and civilians, is the country’s most conflict-prone region. Other areas are also tense. The United States carried out a strike against Islamic State militants in the northwest late last month.

Israel to introduce electronic tagging

London: The Israeli army said on Monday (January 5, 2026) it was introducing a new technological system to enforce movement restrictions in the occupied West Bank for both Israelis and Palestinians, in a move Israeli media said aims to rein in surging settler violence.The decision allows security forces “to install a technological monitoring device on individuals subject to an administrative order restricting their movement within the (West Bank),” the army said in a statement.The system would allow for monitoring of “violations of these restriction orders accordingly,” it added.The measure was adopted after a request by head of the domestic Shin Bet security agency David Zini in response to rising violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank, Israel’s Channel 12 reported.

The monitoring devices used will be electronic bracelets, according to the Israeli broadcaster. In response to an AFP query, the army said the measure will be applied to Israelis and Palestinians alike.In a post on X, it quoted one of its lawyers saying it was an “undemocratic move that reminds of the conduct of oppressive regimes”. Administrative restrictive orders bar suspects residing in the West Bank from going to certain areas or communicating with certain people.A more draconian measure, known as administrative detention, allowed Israeli security forces to detain West Bank suspects, both Israelis and Palestinian, for up to six months without charges. Upon taking office in November 2024, Defence Minister Israel Katz abolished the use of that measure against Israelis, but it is still enforced

against Palestinians.Since the start of the war in Gaza following Hamas’s attack on Israel in October 2023, violence has also surged in the West Bank.Despite the delicate truce between Israel and Hamas that came into effect in October, the violence has not ceased.Israeli troops and settlers have killed more than 1,000 Palestinians in the territory, including many militants as well as dozens of civilians, according to an AFP tally based on figures from the Palestinian Health Ministry. Almost none of the perpetrators of dozens of attacks carried out by settlers have been held to account by the Israeli authorities.According to official Israeli figures, at least 44 Israelis, both soldiers and civilians, have also been killed in Palestinian attacks or Israeli military operations in the same period in the West Bank.

US is not ‘world judge’ What China has at stake in Venezuela

London: China’s top diplomat accused the US of acting like a “world judge” by seizing Venezuela’s leader Nicolas Maduro to put him on trial in New York, with Beijing later confronting Washington at the United Nations over the move’s legality. China follows a policy of non-intervention and routinely criticises military activity conducted without the UN Security Council’s approval. The US military’s removal of the leader of one of China’s “all-weather” strategic partners from his capital in the dead of night will be a litmus test of Beijing’s assertion that it can play a role in resolving global hotspot issues without following Washington down the military route. “We have never believed that any country can act as the world’s police, nor do we accept that any nation can claim to be the world’s judge,”Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Pakistani counterpart during a meeting in Beijing on Sunday, referring to “sudden developments in Venezuela” without directly mentioning the United States. The sovereignty and security of all countries should be fully protected under international law,” Wang added, in his first remarks since images of the 63-year-old Maduro blindfolded and handcuffed on Saturday stunned the world.Maduro pleaded not guilty to narcotics charges in a New York court on Monday. Just blocks away, the UN Security Council convened at Colombia’s request - backed by China and Russia - to debate U.S. President Donald Addressing the meeting, China expressed its shock and condemnation at the actions of the U.S., which, like China, is one of the council’s five permanent members.“The lessons of history offer a stark warning,” said Sun Lei, the charge d’affaires of China’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations. “Military means are not the solution to problems, and the indiscriminate use of force will only lead to greater crises.”Analysts said China, the world’s second-largest economy and a leading global trading partner, would be crucial in marshalling criticism of Washington’s actions.



ation - Maduro in handcuffs, wearing ear protectors and a type of blindfold that looked like dark sunglasses.On Saturday, a video was released showing Maduro at the Drug Enforcement Agency’s (DEA) headquarters in New York.He and Cilia Flores are now being held in a detention centre in the city.They have been charged with conspiracy to commit narco-terrorism and import cocaine, possession of machine guns and destructive devices, and conspiracy to possess machine guns and destructive devices against the US.”They will soon face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts,” said Attorney General Pam Bondi.

The World’s Tallest Waterfall: A Travel Guide To An Unforgettable Journey



Angel Falls in Venezuela is the tallest waterfall in the world, plunging an astonishing 979 meters (3,212 feet) from the Auyán-tepui mountain in Canaima National Park. Its sheer drop and remote jungle setting make it one of the most extraordinary natural wonders on Earth, attracting adventure seekers and nature lovers alike. Angel Falls, known locally as Salto Angel or Kerepakupai Vená in the Pemon language, is located deep within the UNESCO-listed Canaima National Park in Bolívar State, Venezuela. The waterfall is formed by the Río Kerepakupai Merú, which cascades from the edge of the Auyán-tepui, one of the massive table mountains unique to the Guiana Highlands. With a free fall of 807 meters before continuing in smaller cascades, Angel Falls holds the record as the tallest uninterrupted waterfall in the world. The falls were named after Jimmy Angel, an American aviator who first flew over them in 1933 while searching for gold. His plane later crashed nearby, cementing his name in history. Today, Angel Falls is not only a geological marvel but also a cultural symbol, revered by the indigenous Pemon people who consider it sacred. Traveling to Angel Falls is an adventure in itself. The site is extremely remote, accessible only by a combination of flights, river journeys, and treks. Most visitors begin their journey in Ciudad Bolívar or Canaima village, from where small planes fly into Canaima National Park. From there, travelers embark on boat rides along winding rivers, followed by hikes through dense rainforest. The journey can be challenging, but the re-



ward is unparalleled: standing at the base of the world’s tallest waterfall, surrounded by pristine jungle and mist. The best time to visit Angel Falls is during the rainy season, from June to November, when the water flow is at its strongest. In the dry months, the falls can reduce to a thin stream, though the dramatic cliff face remains awe-inspiring. The rainy season also enhances the lush greenery of Canaima, making the trek more scenic. However, heavy rains can make river travel difficult, so visitors should plan carefully. Angel Falls is more than just a waterfall; it is part of a vast ecosystem. Canaima National Park covers nearly 30,000 square kilometers and is home to tepuis, rivers, lagoons, and diverse wildlife. The park’s unique geology inspired the landscapes in Pixar’s Up, where Angel Falls was reimagined as “Paradise Falls.” For travelers, this connection adds a touch of cinematic magic to the real-life experience. Accommodation options near

Angel Falls are limited, with most visitors staying in rustic lodges or camps in Canaima village. These lodges often organize guided tours, which are essential given the complexity of reaching the falls. Tours typically include boat rides, jungle treks, and overnight stays in hammocks near the river. While facilities are basic, the immersive experience of sleeping under the stars in the Venezuelan jungle is unforgettable. Visiting Angel Falls also offers cultural encounters. The indigenous Pemon communities play a vital role in guiding visitors and preserving the area. Their knowledge of the land, traditions, and legends enriches the journey, providing insight into how the falls are woven into local identity. Respecting their customs and supporting community-run tourism initiatives ensures that travel benefits the people who call Canaima home. For adventure travelers, Angel Falls represents the ultimate destination: remote, challenging, and breathtaking. It is not a place for luxury tourism but for those willing to embrace the raw beauty of nature. The falls remind us of the planet’s grandeur and the importance of preserving such wonders for future generations. Standing before the mist-shrouded cascade, one feels both humbled and inspired, as if witnessing the Earth’s heartbeat in motion.

Are We Treating Skin Too Much And Caring Too Little? A Dermat’s Advice For 2026 Skincare Routine

Skincare has become a business that includes a lot of fancy creams and serums, with videos pushing multi-step routines on one day and simple regimens on the other. Somewhere in this constant noise, the reality might get missed – could we actually be hurting skin by trying so hard to help it?Dr Gaurav Garg – Consultant Dermatologist, Hair Transplant Surgeon & Dermato-Surgeon, and Founder and Director of Dermalife Skin and Hair Clinic, New Delhi, says, “A growing number of my appointments lately have involved people whose problems started not from ignoring their complexion, but from doing far too much to it.” Today’s skin habits chase speed – fast brightness, flawless texture. This has added fuel to the rise of multi-step routines, active-heavy products, and in-clinic procedures at younger ages than ever before. Science can only help – if it’s applied right.

The Rise of Skin Overload

Dr Gaurav Garg says, “Some folks spread different skincare products through their weekly routine – retinoids one night, acids another, then vitamin C, sometimes peptides. Done right, with advice from an expert, it might help. But plenty decide on their own, influ-

enced by videos they see online, and their skin often pays the price as the barriers weaken. Reactions show up as breakouts, dark spots, constant irritation, and stinging sensations.” What they wanted to feel like progress turns into damage. Young adults, patients in their 20s and 30s, keep repeating treatments – peels, laser sessions, injections – one after another without any recovery gaps for the skin. Our skin is alive; it breathes, reacts, and heals; it does not just endure. For skin that is healthy, rest matters, and repair happens only when it is left alone while being nourished. If you push it too hard that balance can break.

The Forgotten Skin Barrier

At the heart of most over-treatment problems lies a damaged skin barrier. This outer wall does two jobs: it holds water in and blocks bad stuff out. Too much scrubbing breaks it down. Harsh soaps chip away at it. Strong products used too often weaken defence, and what’s left can’t protect the skin. Dr Gaurav Garg says, “Right now, words like ‘barrier repair’ pop up everywhere – and for a solid cause. Skin thrives not through harsh routines but by staying steady. Doing less can mean more help when it’s about letting skin fix itself.”

Influencer Advice vs. Individual Skin

A single post on skincare tips and tricks spreads fast, yet clarity often gets lost in the noise. Just because a routine glows on camera does not mean it suits every face. Skin thrives under different rules – humidity, genes, and daily habits all shift the balance. A fix for dark patches might worsen redness without context. Real care digs into personal patterns, not what’s trending today.

Dr Gaurav Garg says, “I often re-mind myself pa-

tients that irritation is not a sign that a product is ‘working’. Tingling, peeling, and redness are warning signals, not milestones. Caring for skin means listening to



it.” Taking care of your skin starts long before lotions hit the shelf. Shielding it from the sun each day matters just as much as rest. When tension eases, the body responds – silently, steadily. What you eat plays a role, too, shaping how skin behaves over time. Scientists now link slow-burning internal reactions to an older-looking complexion. Choices made at breakfast, bedtime, and even during work breaks – they leave marks not seen right away.Scientists are now seeing how gut health ties into skin problems such as eczema, psoriasis, and acne – mindset plays a part too. Fixing only what’s visible, while ignoring deeper causes, ends up just covering flaws instead of healing them. The most powerful skincare decision is knowing when to do less—and care more.

GK: Why Is Hyderabad Called The City Of Pearls

Hyderabad, the capital of Telangana, is famously known as the “City of Pearls” thanks to its centuries-old pearl trade, royal patronage, and thriving jewelry markets that continue to attract visitors from around the world. Hyderabad’s association with pearls dates back to the era of the Qutb Shahi rulers and the Nizams of Hyderabad, who were renowned for their love of jewels. Pearls were imported from the Persian Gulf and crafted into exquisite ornaments by skilled artisans. The royal families adorned themselves with elaborate pearl necklaces, earrings, and tiaras, cementing pearls as a symbol of Hyderabad’s regal identity. The city’s artisans became masters of pearl drilling and stringing, a delicate craft passed down through generations. Even today, villages like Chandanpet, located near Hyderabad, are dedicated to pearl drilling, with almost the entire population engaged in this intricate art. Hyderabad’s bustling bazaars are a paradise for jewelry lovers. Laad Bazaar, located near the iconic Charminar, is one of the most famous markets for pearls. Here, visitors can find everything from simple pearl studs to elaborate Satlada necklaces, a traditional Hyderabad ornament featuring seven strings of pearls, sometimes containing more than 400 pearls. Another popular destination is Pathergatti Bazaar, where traders offer a wide range of pearl jewelry, from affordable artificial sets to luxury pieces made with genuine Gulf pearls. These markets are not just shopping hubs but



timeless pieces. The Chandbali earrings, crescent-shaped and studded with pearls, are a hallmark of Hyderabad craftsmanship. The Satlada necklace remains a favorite among brides,

cultural experiences, where the aroma of street food mingles with the sparkle of pearls. The artistry of Hyderabad pearl jewelry is unmatched. Designs often combine pearls with gold, diamonds, or precious stones, creating elegant pieces. The Chandbali earrings, crescent-shaped and studded with pearls, are a hallmark of Hyderabad craftsmanship. The Satlada necklace remains a favorite among brides,

symbolizing elegance and tradition. Pearls are also used in innovative ways; crushed pearls were historically believed to have healing and beautifying properties, adding another layer of mystique to their appeal. While pearls gave Hyderabad its nickname, the city is equally famous for its rich culture and cuisine. The architectural marvels of Charminar, Golconda Fort, and Chowmahalla Palace reflect its royal past. Meanwhile, Hyderabad biryani has become a culinary ambassador for the city worldwide. This blend of heritage, artistry, and gastronomy makes Hyderabad more than just a pearl hub; it is a vibrant cultural capital. Today, Hyderabad continues to export pearls globally, maintaining its reputation as India’s primary pearl trading center. Modern jewelers blend traditional designs with contemporary styles, ensuring that Hyderabad pearls remain relevant in fashion. The city’s pearl industry supports thousands of artisans and traders, keeping alive a legacy that began centuries ago.

Quilts And Blankets Don’t Make You Warm, They Just Keep You Warm!

You often hear people say that a particular quilt is extremely warm or that blankets made in a certain country provide exceptional warmth. But did you know that no quilt or blanket is actually warm on its own? So how do they keep us warm? Even the finest quilt or blanket in the world does not generate heat. The simplest proof is this: if you place an object or body inside a quilt without any body heat, it will still feel cold. There is no warmth produced on its own. So what really makes the difference? Here’s the truth: whether it is a quilt, a blanket, or even a premium-quality cover, none of them create heat independently. Instead, they work by preventing your body heat from escaping. In simple terms, they act as insulators, keeping cold air out while trapping your natural body heat inside.



This is why you begin to feel warm after staying under a quilt or blanket for some time. The human body continuously produces heat. When you cover yourself,

this heat becomes trapped, gradually warming the air inside. Quilts retain this warmth for longer because of their thick filling, while ordinary blankets tend to

lose heat more quickly. Both quilts and blankets function as thermal insulators. They trap layers of air within their fibres, which helps retain heat. Materials like wool and cotton, along with the air pockets between them, slow down heat loss. Using two blankets creates an additional air layer, improving insulation and helping your body heat stay with you for longer. This leads to another interesting question: how much heat does the human body actually produce? At rest, a healthy adult generates around 80 to 100 watts of heat, roughly equivalent to a standard light bulb. During light activity such as walking, this increases to about 200 to 250 watts. During intense exercise or fast running, the body can produce between 600 and 1,000 watts, similar to a small room heater. Over a

full day, the human body produces approximately 2,000 to 2,500 kilocalories of heat and energy, enough to charge a mobile phone several times over. Producing heat alone is not enough; the body must also regulate it. This function is controlled by the hypothalamus, a part of the brain that acts like a thermostat. When the body becomes too warm, blood vessels near the skin widen, allowing heat to escape through radiation. Heat is also released through breathing, as warm, moist air is exhaled.

Now let’s look at the history of quilts and blankets. Between 70,000 and 50,000 years ago, early humans began using animal skins and fur for warmth and bedding. This was the earliest and most basic form of blankets and quilts. In ancient Egypt, people used light-

weight linen blankets, often decorated with intricate patterns for royalty. In ancient Rome, woollen blankets known as lodice were commonly used on beds. Historians believe that quilts may have first appeared in ancient China and Egypt.

Blankets, as we know them today, came later. In the 14th century, the cities of Bristol and Wales in England became well known for producing woollen blankets. In the 18th century, an Englishman named Thomas Blanket developed a new fabric by blending cotton and wool, which is believed to have given the blanket its modern name. So the next time you reach for a quilt or blanket, remember—it isn’t creating warmth, but cleverly holding on to the heat your body already produces.

Trishala, Sanjay Dutt’s daughter, shares cryptic posts about abusing silence

Mumbai: Trishala, a psychologist in the United States and the daughter of Sanjay Dutt, recently posted two fascinating Instagram Stories about how people abuse and manipulate others in relationships by using silence.Trishala distinguished between two types of silent therapy: “Healthy silence taken to cool down—communicated clearly.”Trishala distinguished between two types of silent therapy: “Healthy silence taken to cool down—communicated clearly.”“Self-respect is silence that safeguards your neurological system. “Power play is silence that punishes someone else,” Trishala went on.”Over time, the silent treatment erodes your sense of safety, your self-trust, and your belief that relationships are supposed to be places where problems can be worked through instead of being weaponized against you,” she said in a subsequent post. Sanjay Dutt received a heart-warming wish from his daughter on his 66th birthday last year. Trishala sent him a vin-



tag photo along with the message, “Love You More Each Day.”Sanjay remembered to wish Trishala a happy birthday on August 10.Richa Sharma, Sanjay Dutt’s first wife, passed away in 1996 from a brain tumor. At the moment, Trishala works as a psychotherapist in the United States.Later, in 2008, Sanjay wed Maanayata Dutt. Shahraan, the couple’s son, and

Iqra, their daughter, were born in 2010.Shahraan and Iqra occasionally appear on their parents’ social media accounts, but Trishala would rather avoid the spotlight. Aditya Dhar’s Dhu-randhar, which was a box office failure, was Sanjay Dutt’s most recent appearance. The movie made over ₹1,200 crore worldwide, including ₹820 crore in India and more.

Fans decorate Bangalore with posters as Yash’s birthday approaches



Mumbai: Actor Yash’s admirers in Bangalore have up posters with his picture and birthday greetings in a number of neighborhoods ahead of his 40th birthday on January 8. As fans prepare to commemorate the historic event, the posters show the adoration for the actor in his hometown.One of the posters says, “World is my territory.” Fear everything, move, and turn around.The public celebration coincides with the premiere of the teaser for Yash’s upcoming movie, Toxic. The fact that the teaser will be shown on his birthday adds to the day’s signif-

icance for both the actor and his fan base. Since its release, Toxic has sparked a lot of conversation among movie buffs, with Yash’s new on-screen persona receiving much of the attention. It was deliberate to release the teaser on January 8. “Yash turning 40 is a huge moment for his fans, and the team felt there couldn’t be a better day to introduce the world of Toxic,” according to a person connected to the movie.The teaser’s unique tone and visual style have been emphasized by the film’s creative team. “The teaser is raw, stylish, and very different from anything audiences have seen him do before,” said an insider. In contrast to his other roles, Yash plays a stylized mobster in Geetu Mohandas’ film Toxic. “The idea was to reinvent Yash on screen,” said a second production insider. Toxic puts him in a more complicated and gloomy environment. Without giving away too much, the teaser will provide a clear feel of the tone of the movie and his persona.”The teaser is only the start. It establishes the mood for a daring, unyielding movie. The source continued, “Fans should anticipate intensity, attitude, and a whole new world.”Toxic features Kiara Advani, Tara Sutaria, Huma Qureshi, and Nayanantara in addition to Yash. The movie is scheduled to open in theaters on March 19.

Kiara Advani calls her 5-month-old daughter Saraayah “My Mini” and shares her first glimpse



Mumbai: Recently, Kiara Advani gave her followers a first look at her daughter Saraayah. On the evening of January 5, she posted a video to her Instagram Stories. Through an Instagram Story shared on Monday night, Kiara Advani gave followers their first glimpse of her infant daughter, Saraayah. In the brief video, Kiara can be heard looking through a magazine with her pictures and engaging in lighthearted conversation with her youngster. Do you wish to peruse Mama’s magazine? Alright, let’s check on Mama.” In the video, Kiara is seen looking over the pages. Saraayah’s small fingers emerge momentarily when her image is displayed. “Me and my mini enjoying our Monday magazine read” was Kiara’s caption for the photo. Saraayah was born on July

15, 2025, at Reliance Hospital in Mumbai to Kiara and her husband, actor Sidharth Malhotra. In November, the pair shared her name on Instagram together. Kiara is getting ready for the premiere of Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups, a forthcoming movie starring Kannada actor Yash and directed by Geetu Mohandas. The film is slated to open in theaters on March 19, 2026. Both Kannada and English versions of Toxic have been filmed, and dubbing in a number of Indian languages is planned. In the movie, Kiara portrays Nadia, while Huma Qureshi plays Elizabeth and Nayanthara plays Ganga. Tara Sutaria, Rukmini Vasanth, Akshay Oberoi, and Sudev Nair are among the ensemble cast members. Kiara last appeared with Jr. NTR and Hrithik Roshan in War 2.

In 2026, Bollywood-South Star Collaborations Will Finally Unlock the Pan-India Code

Mumbai: Indian cinema has long pursued the alluring notion that magic will inevitably occur when a Bollywood star is paired with a Southern powerhouse. larger gaps. larger markets. increased buzz. The term “pan-India” evolved from a description to a promise somewhere between glossy posters and multilingual films.If 2025 taught the industry anything, it’s that it’s simple to pair celebrities from other fields, but it’s difficult to make that coupling work. With some of the most ambitious Bollywood-South partnerships scheduled for 2026, the question remains: is this approach truly ready to deliver, or are we still confusing scale for substance? 2026 appears to be stacked on paper. Almost all major film announcements have a new cross-industry combination intended to attract viewers from both Southern markets and the Hindi belt.One of the most talked-about pairings is Nitesh Tiwari’s Ramayana, which stars Sai Pallavi as Sita and Ranbir Kapoor as Lord Ram. The film’s mythological canvas lends it an inherent pan-Indian appeal, and it is the first time the two stars will appear together on screen.Then there is Spirit, which stars Prabhas and Triptii Dimri and is directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga. Expectations surrounding this pairing are high due to Vanga’s history of controversial yet financially successful partnerships. Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups, which pairs Bollywood actors Kiara Advani, Huma Qureshi, and Tara Sutaria with Kannada superstar Yash, is another attention-getter. In the meantime, filmmaker Anurag Basu pairs Telugu star Sreeleela with Kartik Aaryan for a movie called Tu Meri Zindagi Hai, which is purportedly directed at younger audiences worldwide.Peddi, which is directed by Buchi Babu Sana and

is Ram Charan and Janhvi Kapoor’s first joint project, completes the list.These movies appear promising on their own. When taken as a whole, they indicate that the industry is intensifying its use of the crossover model. However, excitement for 2026 cannot be separated from the past. Similar hopes preceded a number of high-profile Bollywood-South partnerships that discreetly ended last year with disappointing outcomes.Despite their size and star power, movies like Kanguva, Game Changer, Daaku Maharaj, and They Call Him OG only achieved moderate to poor box office results.Even high-profile projects like War 2 revealed the model’s weakness, leaving Jr. NTR supporters unhappy with articles that didn’t support his inclusion.The same problem was brought up again and time again by trade analysts: the cooperation was more focused on marketing than on narrative. The concept of cross-industry migration is not new. Stars like Kamal Haasan, Rajinikanth, and subsequently R Madhavan spoke multiple languages with ease even before the term “pan-India” became popular. But duties, not appearances, were the driving force behind those changes.What evolved after Baahubali: Ambition was the starting point. Both Bollywood and Southern industries were persuaded that scale alone could ensure universality by the success of Baahubali and later RRR.However, analysts point out that the sensibility gap still exists. While Hindi cinema, particularly in recent years, has tended toward belabored performances and urban tales, Southern mainstream cinema frequently relies on heightened heroism, stylized action, and mass elevation. The outcome feels neither here nor there when these idioms collide without careful writing.

Karan Johar Evaluates Ikkis by Dharmendra-Agastya Nanda



Mumbai: Audiences have responded favorably to Dharmendra’s swan song

and Agastya Nanda’s second feature film, Ikkis. The most recent famous person to become an Ikkis fan is filmmaker Karan Johar.On Monday, Karan, who always supports movies and posts reviews of his favorites, posted a touching message on Instagram. He referred to the movie as “a love letter to peace.”“IKKIS is a love letter to peace... a sincere and truthful account of the utter futility of war... Karan Johar stated, “I was so moved

by so many moments of the film... it silently screams.” Karan Johar continued, praising the movie’s actors and crew, saying, “And that’s where Sriram Raghavan gets it so right... Every time Dharmji appeared on TV, I had tears in my eyes. His portrayal of a grieving parent is incredibly respectful, and you can’t help but feel sorry for him despite his towering on-screen presence. Jaideepahlawat consistently demonstrates

his exceptional force of nature—he is ROCK SOLID!”Agastya Nanda is OUTSTANDING as the 21-year-old Arun Khetarpal... his endearing innocence, silent resolve and eventual climax breakout prove his mettle as an artist... was so proud and excited to see him emerge as such a sincere and solid actor... can’t wait to see his journey unfold... welcome to the movies .simarbhathia you are so supremely confident and assured...”

Balakrishna’s Bhagavanth Kesari becomes popular on OTT platform

Mumbai:Discussions over the plot and themes of Vijay’s Jana Nayagan have been rekindled by the trailer. A number of fans have compared the trailer to Bhagavanth Kesari, sparking a heated internet debate. The Balakrishna film has been popular on Amazon Prime Video because of the newfound interest, and Tamil critics have responded to it in different ways.Social media users started pointing out parallels in speech, action sequences, and the main character arc shortly after the three-minute teaser was released, implying that Jana Nayagan closely adheres to the Balakrishna-led movie’s framework.As the controversy intensified, focus turned to Bhagavanth Kesari. A portion of the Tamil audience started watching the original movie again without any language restrictions as

it was already available on OTT in a Tamil-dubbed form. Bhagavanth Kesari is presently trending at No. 1 in the drama category and No. 8 on Amazon Prime Video’s Top 10 India list on the platform’s front page, indicating that the revived interest has paid off.Anil Ravipudi wrote and directed the Telugu-language action drama, which debuted in 2023 and starring Nandamuri Balakrishna in the lead role alongside Arjun Rampal, Kajal Aggarwal, and Sreeleela. Due to the film’s increased popularity, people are making direct analogies between its narrative beats and those of Jana Nayagan.The Jana Nayagan trailer emphasizes Vijay’s on-screen persona, especially in the action-packed scenes, despite the increasing rumors. In keeping with Vijay’s continuing political transfor-



mation, a distinct political undertone is also included in the closing scenes. The remake rumors have not been openly addressed by director H Vinoth, and Anil Ravipudi’s previous remarks were similarly vague. Mamitha Baiju, Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol, Prakash Raj, Sunil, and Priya-

mani are among the ensemble cast members of the movie. Balakrishna’s most recent appearance was in Boyapati Srinu’s Akhanda 2: Thaandavam. Samyuktha, Aadhi Pinisetty, Harshaali Malhotra, Kabir Duhhan Singh, and Saswata Chatterjee are also featured in the movie.

Rakesh Roshan refutes reports that Rajat Bedi may play a villain



Mumbai: Rumors that Rajat Bedi may play the antagonist in the next movie Krrish 4 have been formally refuted by Rakesh Roshan. Following

Rajat’s recent comeback to acting with the 2025 series *The Ba***ds of Bollywood*, the rumors gained momentum.Rajat, who had previously worked

with the Roshans, was rumored to be in talks to play the adversary. Up to Roshan’s recent announcement, the producers said nothing despite the excitement.”The news of Rajat Bedi acting in Krrish 4 is all false,” Rakesh stated during a conversation. Rumors are unfounded. With Hrithik directing his first Krrish film, the fourth installment represents a significant turning point for the franchise. Rakesh has previously directed the series, which is a spin-off of the popular 2003 film Koi Mill Gaya. Filming is anticipated to start in early 2026, however the project is still in pre-production.Rakesh expressed his support for Hrithik’s new position as director in March 2025. He posted on Instagram, saying, “Duggu I introduced you as an actor twenty-five years ago, and now, twenty-five years later, two filmmakers, Aditya Chopra and myself, are introducing you as a director to pursue our most ambitious project, Krrish4. I’m

wishing you well and blessings in your new avatar. Rajat already discussed his experiences on the Koi Mil Gaya sets in an interview. “Even when I was doing Koi Mil Gaya, I wasn’t a mature actor back then,” he recalls. Rakesh ji asked me to perform a particular scene, and it was my scene. When I say that, I’m referring to a situation in which I could have outdone Duggu (Hrithik Roshan) with my lines.”Rajat, tujhe pata hai woh scene tera tha (Rajat, you know, that scene was yours)?” Rakesh also gave Bedi input at that time. In that scene, you had to devour Duggu! However, you didn’t do that. That day, I was devastated. Back then, I lacked the maturity to comprehend it. Aryan Khan’s directorial debut, “The Ba***ds of Bollywood,” marked the actor’s return. He acknowledges that playing a forgotten actor in the series who is attempting to start again after 15 years of unemployment seemed “close to home.”

The filming of Kangana Ranaut’s next Bharat Bhagya Viddhaata has begun

Mumbai: Kangana Ranaut is not putting her acting career on hold despite her numerous political obligations. The actor-turned-politician is back on the set of her next movie, Bharat Bhagya Viddhaata.Kangana updated her fans on Instagram on Monday by sharing a video that was first published by Manikamika Films Production, her production company. In the video, the actor is seen arriving on set and collaborating closely with director Manoj Tapadia. Prior to the shoot, the two are seen going over the screenplay and talking about the set.”Nice to be back on film set,” Kangana remarked after posting the footage on her Instagram Stories. In the footage, Kangana is seen conversing with the director while wearing a light-colored suit and carrying a few papers. As of right now, very little



is known about the movie’s narrative; specifics are being kept under wraps. Kangana will play “the central role in the film which will showcase the remarkable stories of ordinary people and their extraordinary achievements,” according to the 2024 movie announcement.Kangana last appeared in the movie Emergency, which she co-produced and directed. Kangana portrays former prime minister Indira Gandhi in the political drama. It centers on the 21-month emergency that occurred between 1975 and 1977.

Vaibhav Suryavanshi Breaks Rishabh Pant's Extended Record



New Delhi: Vaibhav Suryavanshi, a 14-year-old batting prodigy from India, broke the record for the fastest fifty by an Indian in Youth ODIs, adding yet another incredible accomplishment to his portfolio. Suryavanshi surpassed a long-standing record set by India's senior wicket-keeper batter Rishabh Pant on Monday during the second Youth ODI against South Africa U19 at Willowmoore Park in Benoni. In the absence of Ayush Mhatre, Suryavanshi led the team as captain and unleashed a torrent of powerful hits that stunned the South African bowlers. Pant's record of 50 runs in 18 balls was surpassed by the youthful prodigy, who hit the milestone in just 15 balls. After just 24 deliveries, Suryavanshi was eventually discharged for 68. With ten sixes and just one four, boundary hitting dominated his innings, accounting for 64 of his 68 runs. Regarding the game, South Africa U19 was bowled out for 245 in 49.3 overs after choosing to bat first. Rain caused India's aim to be altered to 174 runs from 27 overs. Aaron George and Suryavanshi, India's openers, came out with a definite intention and immediately put pressure on the hosts. Suryavanshi reached his half-century in 19 balls as the two quickly reached 50 in 4.1 overs. Suryavanshi was ultimately released for 68 deliveries after only 24. His innings was dominated by boundary hitting, which accounted for 64 of his 68 runs with 10 sixes and only one four. In terms of the match, South Africa U19 opted to bat first and was bowled out for 245 in 49.3 overs. India's target was changed to 174 runs from 27 overs due to rain. India's openers, Aaron George and Suryavanshi, came out with a clear plan and applied pressure to the hosts right away. The two swiftly reached 50 in 4.1 overs, with Suryavanshi reaching his half-century in 19 balls. Then, carefully guiding India home, Vedant Trivedi and Abhigyan Kundu made sure there were no further problems. Kundu finished with an undefeated 48, while Trivedi finished with an undefeated 31.

Novak Djokovic withdraws from the Adelaide International



unfortunately I'm not quite physically ready to compete in the Adelaide International next week," Djokovic said to Instagram. "I have such wonderful memories of winning the title there two years ago, so I'm personally really disappointed. It felt like playing at home, so I was really looking forward to going back. "My focus is now on my preparation for the Australian Open and I look forward to arriving in Melbourne soon and seeing all the tennis fans in Australia." Since defeating Lorenzo Musetti in the Athens final in early November, the fourth-ranked player in the world has not participated in a tour match. Since Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner took over the men's tour, Djokovic has been forced to play a supporting role. His last Grand Slam victory came at the US Open in 2023, and he advanced to the semifinals of all four majors in 2025 but was unable to advance.

An official from the BCCI shares inside details of a major decision on Mustafizur Rahman



New Delhi: The release of Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 contract appears to be the beginning of an extraordinary test of

the two nations' cricketing ties. The veteran seamer was released by the Kolkata Knight Riders on the body of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) orders, which infuriated the Bangla-

deshi government and cricket body. It has been stated that neither the IPL Governing Council nor BCCI officials were informed in the decision to release Mustafizur, as the BCB now want to move its team's T20 World Cup 2026 fixtures from India to Sri Lanka. A report claims that not every member of the IPL governing council and the BCCI attended the meeting where the decision to release Mustafizur from his IPL contract was made. According to the source, the top level of the board actually made the decision to release the left-arm pacer, which was purchased at auction last month for INR 9.20 crore. "The media is how we personally learned about this. No conversation took place. We didn't make any suggestions," a BCCI official stated. Devajit Saikia, the secretary of the BCCI, made the significant announcement on Saturday. He continued: "Due to

the recent developments that are going on all across, BCCI has instructed the franchise KKR to release one of their players, Mustafizur Rahman of Bangladesh, from their squad." The Bangladeshi government declared a statewide IPL telecast embargo till further notice in response to the BCCI's ruling. The Bangladesh ministry released a statement saying, "Due to this, a request is made as per instructions to stop the broadcast/telecast of all matches and programs of the Indian Premier League." Following the lynching and burning death of a Hindu man, bilateral tensions between Bangladesh and India have increased in recent weeks. Numerous Hindu minority in Bangladesh have been attacked and killed after the initial event a few weeks ago. Social media has been used to criticize KKR and its co-owner Shah Rukh Khan since the initial incident was publicized.

Meeting PM Modi, Yogi Adityanath gives him a replica of Ram Mandir

New Delhi, Jan 06: Yogi Adityanath, the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Monday. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) of India posted images on X along with the caption, "Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri @myogiadityanath met Prime Minister @narendramodi. @CMOfficeUP." Chief Minister Adityanath honored former Rajasthan Governor and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh on his birth anniversary earlier today, emphasizing his contributions to the state's progress and the Ram Janmabhoomi cause. Kalyan Singh was praised by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for "sacrificing" his position "without any hesitation" amid the height of the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign. The Chief Minister went on to say that development and advancing the nationalist cause will be the hallmarks of Kalyan Singh's time as UP chief minister. "Respecting the feelings of Lord Ram's devotees, he voluntarily gave up his position as chief minister when the Ram Janmabhoomi movement was reaching its zenith. When the building, a symbol of slavery, was destroyed, he quickly assumed responsibility," Yogi Adityanath stated at a Lucknow ceremony. Yogi Adityanath praised Kalyan Singh earlier in a post on X, referring to him as a resolute fighter of the Ram Temple cause. The former governor of Rajasthan and former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, "Padma Vibhushan," honored Kalyan Singh "Babuji" on the birth anniversary of the unwavering warrior of the Shri Ram Temple movement, who lit the lamp of



faith in the hearts of countless devotees of Lord Ram," he wrote. "With his people-welfare programs and unwavering administrative resolve, the beloved 'Babuji,' a symbol of devotion, sacrifice, and dedication, gave Uttar Pradesh's growth a new lease on life. He continued, "His life is a singular example of commitment to society and the country." Sepsis and multi-organ failure claimed Kalyan Singh's life at Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI) in Lucknow on August 21, 2021. Singh was the governor of Rajasthan from 2014

to 2019 and the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh twice, from June 1991 to December 1992 and September 1997 to November 1999. In the BJP, he has held a number of organizational positions at the state and federal levels. When the Babri Masjid was destroyed, Kalyan Singh was the chief minister. He quit as Chief Minister a few hours after the demolition. On the same day, the state government of Uttar Pradesh was sacked by the Congress-led Union Government. Due to the event, Singh was imprisoned for one day and faced legal proceedings.

The Madras High Court upholds the directive to light a lamp on "Deepathoon"



New Delhi, Jan 06: A single Bench on Tuesday. When issuing the order, a division bench made up of Justices G Jayachandran and KK Ramakrishnan found that the single judge's decision was not precluded by res judicata because the matter

had not been resolved in previous cases, according to a report. The Thiruparankundram hill has long been regarded as a site where people of all religions coexist together. The historic Subramaniya Swamy Temple, the Kasi Viswanathar Temple, and the Sikkander Badusha Dargah, which were constructed long after the temples were founded, are located on the hill. Justice G R Swaminathan had earlier ordered state officials to ensure that the sacred lamp was lit at the summit of the hill following a plea filed by an activist. The petitioner and 10 other people were given permission by the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court to go to the Deepam pillar at the summit of Thiruparankundram hill in order to light the Karthigai Deepam. This, according to government officials,

violated the long-standing custom of lighting the lamp at the neighboring Deepa Mandapam, a ritual that has been performed for many years. According to a source, the state government decided to contest the court judgment due to worries about law and order. In February of last year, a member of parliament was accused of eating meat on the hill, which sparked demonstrations by Hindu organizations and increased tensions around the site. Thiruparankundram was recently referred to as the "Ayodhya of the South" by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Based on a 1920 court decision, the Subramaniya Swamy Temple asserts ownership of nearly the whole hill, while the dargah has acknowledged rights over the mosque and other associated buildings.

27,000 Birth and Death Registrations in a Village

New Delhi, Jan 06: After around 27,000 birth and death registrations were created in a village with 1,300 residents, the Maharashtra government established a Special Investigation Team to look into possible irregularities in the Civil Registration System (CRS) software data, according to officials. Although there are just 1,300 people living in Shendursani Gram Panchayat, the Civil Registration System (CRS) generates about 27,000 birth and death certificates. This number strongly suggests that the digital registration platform may have been abused, manipulated, or used fraudulently because it is wildly at odds with the village's demographic profile. An official stated on Monday that preliminary data shows a very worrying and disproportionate irregularity in the registration data. In December, officials said that the community had registered 27,398 "delayed birth registrations" in just three months. According to pertinent provisions of the Information Technology (IT) Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), a criminal offense has been reported at the Yavatmal City Police Station. According to him, Yavatmal, the Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), is currently in charge of the inquiry. Given the seriousness and possible ramifications of the issue, the Home Department has made the decision to launch a thorough investigation through the SIT, which will be overseen by the ADG, Maharashtra Cyber, and include the Deputy Director of Health Services and the District Health Officer as members, he said.



Shubman Gill returns to Jaipur for the Vijay Hazare Trophy is delayed by dense fog

New Delhi: Dense fog on Tuesday morning in Jaipur caused up to four Vijay Hazare Trophy matches to be postponed. A number of players were supposed to compete in the domestic 50-over tournament, including India's ODI skipper Shubman Gill and vice captain Shreyas Iyer. However, due to unfavorable weather, they were all forced to wait. The conditions were far from ideal to start a 50-over match, and visibility became a serious worry. As severe cold conditions persisted in the capital, news agency PTI reported earlier on Tuesday morning that thick fog had covered the city, making it nearly impossible to see. Iyer's Mumbai was to play Himachal Pradesh at the Jaipuria Vidyalaya

Ground, while Gill's Punjab was to play Goa at the KL Saini Ground. As visibility steadily improved, Gill and the rest of his squad started warm-up exercises at around 10 am IST. Sportstar reports that the ground crew was working diligently to get the outfield ready for action. In a clever social media post, the Punjab Cricket Association acknowledged that the fog had caused the toss to be postponed and stated that they were waiting for pictures from the location. They also mentioned that their photographer was traveling to the stadium while negotiating low visibility. At the Jaipuria Vidyalaya Ground, Mumbai's coaching staff was also observed examining the field and playing surface.

Venus Williams Will Lose at the Australian Open Warm-Ups First Round



New Delhi: Magda Linette defeated Venus Williams in three sets on Tuesday at the Auckland Classic as the 45-year-old American icon prepares to create history at the Australian Open. Before losing to the 52nd-ranked Linette 6-4, 4-6, 6-2, Williams displayed flashes of the skill that has won her seven major singles titles. Before the first Grand Slam of the year, Williams will go to Hobart for another warm-up event after receiving a hearty round of applause as she exited the court.

After receiving a wildcard, the American will compete in her first Australian Open in five years and become the oldest female competitor at the Melbourne tournament. The match against Linette of Poland was her first competitive singles appearance since the US Open in August; she has only played occasionally in previous years. Williams and Elina Svitolina of Ukraine lost in doubles on Monday in Auckland. Williams hit four aces in the second set to force a decider against

the 33-year-old Linette. However, Linette broke Williams' service twice to advance to the second round after the former world number one, currently ranked 582, faltered in the third set. Despite losing both of their previous encounters, Linette expressed her admiration for Williams. "She was really moving well, hitting well, especially when running to the open space," Linette stated. "I had to stay calm, be more solid, not make too many mistakes on my side."

Neeraj Chopra Still Recovering From Injuries, Athletics Feeration Confirms 2026 Season Opening Yet Undecided

Mumbai: “Neeraj is recovering from his injuries. During the World Championships, he had two injuries. Athletes don’t usually play with such injuries but he didn’t say a word,” AFI spokesperson Adille Sumariwalla told the reporters on Saturday. “We even asked him (Neeraj) not to compete but he said I have to do it for the country.” When asked how Chopra has planned his season, Sumariwalla said: “His calendar is with his coach Jan Zelezny. Right now the focus is on his rehabilitation from the injury and not the season opener.” After finishing eighth at the worlds, Chopra spoke about the back issues that impacted his performance. “Two weeks ago I had some back issues but I didn’t want to tell anyone. I was thinking I would still manage to get through it. But javelin is really tough. If you are not in a good shape, you’re out,” Chopra had said back then. “Neeraj is recovering from his injuries. During the World Championships, he had two injuries. Athletes don’t usually play with such injuries but he didn’t say a word,” AFI spokesperson Adille Sumariwalla told the reporters on Saturday. “We even asked him (Neeraj) not to compete but he said I have to do it for the country.”

When asked how Chopra has planned his season, Sumariwalla said: “His calendar is with his coach Jan Zelezny. Right now the focus is on his rehabilitation from the injury and not the season opener.” After finishing eighth at the worlds, Chopra spoke about the back issues that impacted his performance. “Two weeks ago I had some back issues but I didn’t want to tell anyone. I was thinking I would still manage to get through it. But javelin is really tough. If you are not in a good shape, you’re out,” Chopra had said back then. Written by Pritish Raj Neeraj chopra World Athletics ChampionshipsIndia’s Neeraj Chopra reacts in the men’s javelin throw final at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo, Thursday, Sept. 18, 2025. (AP Photo/Ashley Landis) Double Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra is still recovering from injuries and has not decided when to open his 2026 season, a senior Athletics Federation of India (AFI) official said. The former World Champion had competed in the 2025 Tokyo World Championships with a back injury and finished eighth in the final, ending a podium streak of 2,566 days. “Neeraj is recovering from his injuries. During the World Championships, he had two injuries. Athletes don’t usually play with such injuries but he didn’t say a word,” AFI spokesperson Adille Sumariwalla told the reporters on Saturday. “We even asked him (Neeraj) not to compete but he said I have to do it for the country.”

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In the 2025 season, Chopra ended his long-term association with Dr Klaus Bartonietz and partnered with Czech world record holder Zelenzy. He crossed the coveted 90m mark early in the season but failed to replicate his success at the World Championships. Qualification standards for AsiaThe AFI, meanwhile, announced the qualification criteria for the upcoming 2026 Asian Games. The criteria have been announced before the start of the domestic season so that



athletes know the requirements beforehand and there are no last-minute controversies related to selection during the continental showpiece. “The qualification standards are set as per the fifth or sixth place finish at the last edition of the Asian Games. We have kept it tighter to make the qualification competitive,” said Sumariwalla, who is also the World Athletics vice-president. “The final decision lies with the selection committee. The athletes have to keep their performance up throughout the season. It is mandatory for athletes to participate in the state meet.” *Events like men’s javelin throw, high jump and long jump will see tighter competition than others and the qualification standards are expected to be overhauled by much higher marks. We have kept tighter marks in certain events such as men’s and women’s 100m, 200m and 400m as we don’t want to carry passengers. The athletes who qualify but don’t have much medal potential,” explained Sumariwalla.* India won a total of 29 athletics medals at the previous edition of the Asian Games with six gold, 14 silver, and nine bronze.2026 will be a busy year for India’s track and field athletes, with the Commonwealth Games also scheduled for July. The focus, however, will be the Asian Games, Sumariwalla said. “We will take a call about the Commonwealth Games later in the year on which athletes we are going to send. But our main focus remains on Asian Games,” Sumariwalla said. Written by Pritish Raj Neeraj chopra World Athletics ChampionshipsIndia’s Neeraj Chopra reacts in the men’s javelin throw final at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo, Thursday, Sept. 18, 2025. (AP Photo/Ashley Landis)Double Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra is still recovering from injuries and has not decided when to open his 2026 season, a senior Athletics Federation of India (AFI) official said. The former World Champion had competed in the 2025 Tokyo World Championships with a back injury and finished eighth in the final, ending a podium streak of 2,566 days.“Neeraj is recovering from his injuries. During the World Championships, he had two injuries. Athletes don’t usually play with such injuries but he didn’t say a word,” AFI spokesperson Adille Sumariwalla told the reporters on Saturday. “We even asked him (Neeraj) not to compete but he said I have to do it for the country.” When asked how Chopra has planned his season, Sumariwalla said: “His calendar is with his coach Jan Zelezny. Right now the focus is on his rehabilitation from the injury and not the season opener.” After finishing eighth at the worlds, Chopra spoke about the back issues that impacted his performance. javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra is focussing on rehabilitation of his back injury he had suffered just before the World Championships

last September and has not yet decided when and where to start the season, Athletics Federation of India (AFI) said on Saturday.Chopra competed in the World Championships in Tokyo in September 2025 with a back injury and he finished a lowly eighth with a best throw of 84.03m, a far cry from the season and personal best of 90.23m in May last. He (Chopra) is taking a break. He recovering from his injuries. He had two injuries. The focus is on rehabilitation, I think that is the most important thing, not the opener,” AFI spokesperson Adille Sumariwalla said when asked about Chopra’s likely opening event of the season. s off to him that he took part in the world championships. I have seen his injury, the swelling, and he still took part. We told him, don’t do it. He said ‘no sir, I will try’. He never said a word like ‘I couldn’t throw because of my injury’,” Sumariwalla said while addressing a press conference in New Delhi.Lauding the attitude of Chopra, a two-time Olympic medallist and world championships title winner, former AFI president Sumariwalla said, Hats off to him.” s off to him that he took part in the world championships. I have seen his injury, the swelling, and he still took part. We told him, don’t do it. He said ‘no sir, I will try’. He never said a word like ‘I couldn’t throw because of my injury’,” Sumariwalla said while addressing a press conference in New Delhi. Lauding the attitude of Chopra, a two-time Olympic medallist and world championships title winner, former AFI president Sumariwalla said, “There is only one Neeraj Chopra. I have seen people who have not done a thousandth of the performance of Neeraj Chopra talk so much that they want this, they want that. But this poor guy (Neeraj) doesn’t say anything. Hats off to him.” year, Chopra began the season in April in a low-key event in South Africa before the high-stake Diamond League competition in May in Doha where he breached the 90m mark. In 2024, he began with the Doha Diamond League in May. Recently, Chopra had shared pictures of the wedding reception he had thrown in his home state on his social media accounts. He had married former tennis player Himani Mor in a private ceremony early in 2025. he latest Registered Testing Pool for dope testing released by the Athletics Integrity Unit set up by the World Athletics, Chopra and another javelin thrower Sachin Yadav were the only Indians to be in the list.Asked if more Indians could be in the list moving forward, Sumariwalla said, “AIU is an independent body. They don’t report to World Athletics, nor to anyone. So, we don’t know what their annual plan is. mally, when it comes to Olympics, World Championships, testing will increase. Those they know who are going to qualify for the Ultimate Championships.

SG Pipers Fall 2-3 to HIL GC in League Season Opener

Indian hockey defender Jarmanpreet Singh has opened up about his difficult past, including a two-year suspension due to a failed doping test in 2015, and shared his ambitious plans for 2026 as he takes on the captaincy of SG Pipers in the Hockey India League. He emphasized resilience, his comeback journey, and his determination to lead his team to success this season. - Jarmanpreet was forced to sit out for two years after failing a doping test, a period he described as the most challenging of his career. Right from pushback, SG Pipers moved the ball with swift passing and incisive early raids, forcing HIL GC onto the back foot and earning a fourth-minute penalty corner that saw Argentina’s clinical finisher Tomas Domene unleash a powerful drag-flick, only to be denied by a strong save from goalkeeper James Mazarelo. Undeterred, the Pipers kept the pressure on through a high-quality midfield unit featuring Raj Kumar Pal, Jacob Draper, and Ky Willott, who circulated the ball crisply and dictated the tempo. In the final minutes of the quarter, HIL GC earned a penalty corner of their own, but SG Pipers’ defence stood tall, charging down the attempt and immediately springing a counter, with Domene driving into the circle and firing a tomahawk just wide of the target. Deep into the dying seconds, HIL GC nearly snatched the opener from close range, but Pipers’ goalkeeper Tomas Santiago produced a brilliant point-blank save to keep the contest finely balanced at 0-0 at the end of the first

quarter. The second quarter turned into a high-tempo, end-to-end battle, with both SG Pipers and HIL GC trading circle entries and repeatedly testing each other’s defensive structure. SG Pipers’ forward Roman Duvekot produced one of the stand-out moments of the phase, gliding past multiple HIL GC defenders inside the circle before flashing the ball across the face of goal, agonisingly unable to find a finishing touch from a teammate. With under four minutes left in the half, goalkeeper Tomas Santiago once again underlined his class, pulling off a sensational save to claw away Ajeet Yadav’s powerful strike that was arrowing towards the top-right corner. Moments later, Pipers created a sparkling chance of their own when captain Jarmanpreet Singh launched a precise aerial ball to the rapid Aditya Lalage, who brought it down superbly, eliminated two defenders and drove into the circle, only to see his shot blocked by the HIL GC keeper as the teams went into half-time still deadlocked at 0-0. SG Pipers exploded into the third quarter with electrifying energy and clinical precision, surging to a deserved lead before showing remarkable resilience against HIL GC’s quick riposte, ending the frame just 2-1 down. The Pipers then unleashed a ferocious final-quarter onslaught driven by relentless determination and attacking firepower, clawing back from a deficit with clinical equalising brilliance to dramatic turnaround against HIL GC.



Solskjaer considered for shock Manchester United return after Amorim sacking: Report

New Delhi: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is reportedly under consideration as Manchester United assesses options for a caretaker or interim head coach following the sacking of Ruben Amorim, more than four years after the Norwegian himself was dismissed by the club. Darren Fletcher has been placed in charge in the immediate aftermath of Amorim’s exit, but United are expected to appoint another figure to lead the team for the remainder of the season. A permanent successor is not anticipated until the summer. According to reports, Solskjaer would be open to a return to Old Trafford on a caretaker basis. The 52-year-old has been out of frontline management since leaving Turkish club Besiktas in August, which was his first head-coach role since his United exit in November 2021. The Athletic has reported that Solskjaer is under consideration in what would be an emotional comeback. The circumstances echo how his first spell as United manager began in December 2018, when he was appointed as interim boss following the dismissal of Jose Mourinho. Michael Carrick, who briefly took charge as caretaker following Solskjaer’s dismissal in 2021, is also understood to be among the names discussed



internally for the temporary role. United do not expect to appoint Amorim’s long-term successor until the end of the campaign and are therefore leaning towards a caretaker solution once Fletcher’s short-term spell concludes. While it remains unclear whether Solskjaer will make the final shortlist, reports suggest he would welcome discussions over a return until the end of the season. Since leaving Besiktas after they failed to qualify for the Conference League, Solskjaer has remained involved in the game and has been working as a match analyst for UEFA. Despite the absence of silverware, Solskjaer remains a popular figure among sections of the United fanbase and is viewed by some as a stabilising presence capable of guiding the club towards their stated ambition of a top-six Premier League finish. During his first spell,

United finished second in the league and reached the Europa League final. His initial appointment was intended to put smiles back on faces, but an impressive 11-match unbeaten run, which included 10 wins, earned him a full-time role and a three-year contract. United finished third and second in Solskjaer’s two full seasons in charge, the club’s best consecutive league finishes since Sir Alex Ferguson retired. They also reached five semi-finals across six domestic and European cup competitions. Solskjaer was sacked in November 2021 with United sitting seventh in the table after a 4-1 defeat to Watford. The club had won just once in seven league matches and were 12 points behind leaders Chelsea at the time. While many supporters lamented the lack of trophies during his tenure, Solskjaer’s overall record compares favourably with several of his

successors. His win percentage of 54.2 per cent is marginally lower than Erik ten Hag’s but significantly higher than Amorim’s reported return of 38.1 per cent, and better than both David Moyes and Louis van Gaal during their respective spells. United’s statement at the time of Solskjaer’s dismissal underlined his enduring status at the club, noting that his place in United’s history was secure and that he would forever be welcome back at Old Trafford as part of the Manchester United family. In a post-Ferguson era defined by upheaval and short-term fixes, Solskjaer’s reign, while falling short of historic standards, is increasingly viewed as one of the more stable chapters. Whether that familiarity counts in his favour as United consider another interim reset remains to be seen. With Manchester United sitting sixth in the Premier League, the club’s leadership has reluctantly made the decision that it is the right time to make a change. This will give the team the best opportunity of the highest possible Premier League finish,” read the statement. It’s going to be like this for 18 months or when the board decide to change,” Amorim added. “That was my point, I want to finish with that. I’m not going to quit.

Sabalenka Opens 2026 Strong With Dominant Win, Kyrgios Suffers Early Brisbane Exit

Mumbai: Aryna Sabalenka launched her 2026 campaign with an emphatic victory at the Brisbane International, dismantling Spain’s Cristina Bucsa 6-0, 6-1 in just 47 minutes to book her place in the third round. While Sabalenka’s dominant performance marked a commanding start to her title defence, Nick Kyrgios, making his much-anticipated singles return after nearly a year away, was unable to progress, falling in straight sets to American Aleksandar Kovacevic. Both players arrived in Brisbane under the spotlight following their recent exhibition meeting, but only Sabalenka managed to translate that attention into success on court. The world No. 1 wasted little time imposing herself, racing through the opening set in just 22 minutes after breaking Bucsa’s serve three times. Her aggressive intent was reflected in the numbers, with Sabalenka finishing the match with 18 winners against just nine unforced errors - a statement performance as she builds towards the Australian Open, which begins on January 18. “Definitely my serve worked really well,” Sabalenka said after the match. “I did a couple of serve-and-volleys, which is like, ‘wow’. I’m super happy with the level. I’m happy to be back. I always enjoy playing in front of all you guys. That was a great performance from me.” Sabalenka’s serve proved decisive throughout, as she sealed the contest with an ace and produced a clinical display that equalled the quickest win of her career. Her attacking approach, including frequent forays to the net, left Bucsa with little room to settle or respond. Control was evident from the outset, with Bucsa managing to hold serve only once in the opening set. Once Sabalenka converted her early break chances, she maintained relentless pressure through deep returns and precise shot-making. The second set followed a similar pattern, as Sabalenka’s pace and accuracy dictated rallies and brought a swift conclusion. In contrast, Kyrgios endured a difficult return to singles competition. The Australian, sidelined by injury since March, struggled to find rhythm and timing as he went down 6-3, 6-4 in 65 minutes. Despite strong crowd support, the match highlighted the challenge ahead as he works his way back to full fitness. The 30-year-old is now hoping for a wildcard entry to the Australian Open and will continue to build match sharpness in doubles. He is set to team up with Thanasi Kokkinakis in the round of 16 after the pair’s win over Matthew Ebden and Rajevev Ram.

They will next face Sadio Doumbia and Fabien Reboul. Former world number one Iga Swiatek believes that the ‘Battle of the Sexes’ match between Nick Kyrgios and Aryna Sabalenka was not needed at all. Speaking ahead of the United Cup, Swiatek said the exhibition between the Australian and the Belarusian did little for tennis beyond grabbing attention. Kyrgios and Sabalenka played an intergender match in Dubai on December 28, 2025. Billed as a ‘Battle of the Sexes’ in reference to Billie Jean King’s famous 1973 match against Bobby Riggs, the 2025 edition did little to enhance the reputation of women’s tennis. Despite claims that it would be a serious contest, Kyrgios did not go full tilt against Sabalenka, who appeared more focused on the spectacle surrounding the event. Sabalenka made her entrance through the stands with Eye of the Tiger blaring from the loudspeakers and even broke into a dance during a medical time-out. A half-fit Kyrgios still won the match in straight sets, despite visibly running out of gas midway through the second set. Swiatek said she did not watch the match herself but stressed that there were no real similarities between the original Billie Jean King event and this one. She argued that women’s tennis stands firmly on its own and already has enough role models for young players to draw inspiration from. “I don’t watch stuff like that. But for sure it grabbed attention. I wouldn’t say it had anything to do with social change or any important topics. The name was the same as the one from the Billie Jean King match in 1973, and that’s it. There were no more similarities,” Swiatek told reporters ahead of the United Cup. “I feel women’s tennis stands on its own right now. Aryna Sabalenka launched her 2026 campaign with an emphatic victory at the Brisbane International, dismantling Spain’s Cristina Bucsa 6-0, 6-1 in just 47 minutes to book her place in the third round. While Sabalenka’s dominant performance marked a commanding start to her title defence, Nick Kyrgios, making his much-anticipated singles return after nearly a year away, was unable to progress, falling in straight sets to American Aleksandar Kovacevic. Both players arrived in Brisbane under the spotlight following their recent exhibition meeting, but only Sabalenka managed to translate that attention into success on court. The world No. 1 wasted little time imposing herself, racing through the opening set in just comeback.