

In Brief

Five Militants held in Manipur

Imphal: Joint operations by security forces in Manipur resulted in the arrest of five militants from the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) across three districts, along with the recovery of arms and ammunition. Additionally, a drug peddler was apprehended with one kg of brown sugar valued at Rs 20 lakh. Ongoing intelligence-led operations are targeting extortionists and criminals in Imphal valley and surrounding areas.

One Nabbed with Stolen Gold in Darrang

Mangaldai: A police team led by Sub Inspector Dip Jyoti Das quickly responded to a burglary complaint in Joypur, Darrang, apprehending suspect Jiarul Islam, 24, from Na-Khunda-Bishnupur. Following his confession, a search at his hiding place in Baihata Chariali revealed stolen items, including gold and silver ornaments worth around Rs 3.5 lakh. Jiarul Islam has been charged and remanded to judicial prison by the court.

Suspected Tramadol Capsules seized by Bajali Police

Bajali: On Wednesday afternoon, Bajali police achieved a major success in combating drug trafficking by seizing 7.797 kg of suspected Tramadol capsules in the Kohora area along National Highway 27 at around 4 p.m. The individual arrested, Ishaque Ali, 44, from Bharegaon village, was apprehended while riding a motorcycle (registration number AS15J7666) after police acted on reliable information. During a search, authorities discovered five polythene packets containing blue pills believed to be tramadol in Ali's black messenger bag, with the entire operation documented on video and witnessed by independent parties.

COCOMI Condemns Firing and Bombing in Manipur's Torbung

Imphal, Dec 17: The Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) on Wednesday strongly condemned an incident of armed firing and bombing that occurred at Torbung in Bishnupur district on Tuesday evening, alleging that the attack terrorised civilians and violated constitutional guarantees. According to COCOMI, the incident took place around 8.30 pm on December 16, when armed assailants, suspected to be affiliated with Kuki militant elements, allegedly opened indiscriminate fire and used explosives in civilian areas, triggering panic among residents and posing a serious threat to public safety. In a statement, COCOMI said such acts amount to a direct violation of the Right to Life and Personal Liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution, while also undermining public order and social harmony. The organisation asserted that violent intimidation strikes at the foundations of constitutional governance and democratic norms. COCOMI also expressed strong objection to an alleged public statement by Kuki-Zo Council leader Ginza Vualzong, accusing him of justifying and rationalising the attack. The organisation said such remarks were inflammatory in nature and could provoke further unrest. "Public endorsement or moral justification of armed violence threatens public safety, emboldens militant actors and may

amount to criminal incitement and abetment under Indian law," the statement said. Highlighting relevant legal provisions, COCOMI pointed to sections of the Indian Penal Code, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Arms Act, and the Explosive Substances Act, stating that these laws exist to protect citizens, maintain public order and counter unlawful armed violence. The organisation voiced concern over what it described as the recurrence of armed attacks and a perception of impunity in certain areas, alleging selective public confidence in the justice system. COCOMI demanded immediate registration of FIRs in the case, transfer of the investigation to a senior-level or special investigation team, legal action against individuals allegedly inciting or justifying violence, and enhanced security deployment in vulnerable areas including Torbung, Waikhurok, Kangvai and Torbung Bangla. It also sought a time-bound action taken report to ensure transparency and accountability. COCOMI reiterated that failure to act decisively against both violence and its public justification could embolden further attacks and deepen alienation among affected communities. The organisation said it remains committed to peace, constitutional governance and protection of human rights in Manipur.

Tripura signs MoU with NBSS for scientific land mapping to boost crop yields

Agartala, Dec 17: The Tripura government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS), Nagpur, to conduct scientific research on cultivable land. Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath said the initiative aims to enhance agricultural productivity and achieve self-reliance in



foodgrain production. The MoU will facilitate detailed land resource mapping us-

ing geo-spatial techniques across three districts of the state, enabling crop-specif-

ic planning and promoting sustainable farming practices. Nath was speaking after inaugurating a workshop on the Land Resource Inventory of Tripura using Geo-Spatial Techniques at Pragra Bhawan here. Emphasising the importance of scientific assessment, the minister said self-reliance in agriculture cannot be achieved without proper research on land. He noted

that land quality forms the foundation of agriculture, followed by seeds, water availability, and scientific cultivation methods. Nath said the initiative was launched three years ago to study soil layers and land conditions in the state. As part of the first phase, South Tripura and Gomati districts were surveyed by NBSS soil scientists, who subsequently submitted their findings.

Centre Plans Peren as Arecanut Hub

Dimapur, Dec 17: A central team conducted a feasibility study on arecanut cultivation in Ngwalwa Arecanut Village in Nagaland's Peren district on Tuesday, officials said on Wednesday. The team was led by Babulal Meena, Deputy Director, Directorate of Arecanut and Spices Development (DASD), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Calicut, Kerala, along with Dr. A.K. Sit, Senior Scientist, CPCRI, West Bengal, and Leichombam S. Singh, Scientist, CPCRI, Guwahati. The Mon District Planning and Development Board had earlier declared Ngwalwa as an arecanut

village. The team also carried out field visits to Heningkunglwa village in the district. Following the field visits, a stakeholders' meeting was held at the Ngwalwa Village Council Hall under the chairmanship of Ngwalwa Extra Assistant Commissioner Sizin Renttah. The meeting was attended by government officials, village leaders, and local stakeholders. During the meeting, the central team informed participants that they would recommend to the ministry the introduction of the latest production technologies, the establishment of nurseries for quality planting materials.

Assam CM congratulates PM Modi on Ethiopia's Top Civilian Award

■ *Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam's chief minister, praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for receiving Ethiopia's highest civilian honor, the "Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia."*
■ *Awarded by Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed during Modi's bilateral visit, the honor highlights his role in fostering India-Ethiopia relations.*
■ *Modi expressed gratitude, calling it a significant recognition from an ancient civilization and emphasized education's role in development.*

Guwahati, Dec 17: Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister of Assam, thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi on receiving Ethiopia's highest civilian honor, the "Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia."

Sarma posted on social media that every "Bharatiya" should be extremely proud of this. "Congrat-

ulations to Adarniya Shri Narendra Modi Ji on being bestowed with Ethiopia's highest award, the 'Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia,'" he continues. This is the 28th time that Adarniya Modi Ji's leadership and statesmanship have been acknowledged worldwide. Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed awarded the award during Prime Minister Modi's historic bilateral visit to Ethiopia, taking into account both Modi's role as a statesman in international circles and his contribution to strengthening ties between Ethiopia and India. The Addis International Convention Center hosted a special ceremony to give the honor.

Speaking at the award ceremony, Prime Minister Modi described receiving this honor from one of the "oldest" civilizations in the world as a "great honor" and "opportunity." He acknowledged Dr. Abiy's "initiatives and efforts towards uni-



ty, sustainability, and development" and thanked Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the "people of Ethiopia" for this honor. Additionally, Prime Minister Modi emphasized the importance of education and knowledge in the development of

the country. After the ceremony, the Ethiopian Prime Minister attended a banquet dinner event where Ethiopian artists performed "Vande Mataram," marking yet another historic moment. This event symbolizes the close cultural ties between

Ethiopia and India and captures the strength of their friendship. Because it commemorates 150 years of "Vande Mataram," which stands for our nation's freedom struggle and sense of pride, this has been accorded particular significance. The awarding of the "Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia" is seen as a significant development in India-Ethiopian relations and a powerful confirmation of their collaboration. Additionally, it strengthens India's expanding leadership position in promoting the Global South's common goals.

Leaders from all over India, including Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister of Assam, and a number of other distinguished dignitaries, are celebrating the accomplishment, which is another indication of Prime Minister Modi's growing worldwide influence and India's enhanced diplomatic presence.

Assam CM Announces Tea Workers Ex-Gratia

Dibrugarh, Dec 17: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday evening met the grieving families of 20 tea estate workers from Gelapukhuri Tea Estate in Assam's Tinsukia district who perished in a tragic road accident in Arunachal Pradesh's Anjaw district on December 8. The Chief Minister paid floral tributes to the deceased and offered condolences to the bereaved families. During the meeting, the Chief Minister presented cheques of Rs 5 lakh each to the next of kin of all 20 deceased workers. "I express my profound condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones in this devastating tragedy," he said, expressing condolences to the families of the deceased. The accident, which occurred in the remote Anjaw district, claimed 20 lives, leaving only one survivor. Budheswar Deep, the sole survivor, is currently receiving medical treatment.

Peace first, power later: Manipur BJP MLA says stability key before new government

Imphal, Dec 17: Restoring peace and normalcy in Manipur must come before any move to form a new government in the state, BJP MLA Tongbram Robindro said that after returning from discussions with the party's central leadership in New Delhi. Speaking to reporters, Robindro said the talks were meaningful and focused mainly on the welfare of the people, but made it clear that political decisions would only follow once the situation on the ground improves. Manipur has been under President's Rule for the last 10 months amid continuing ethnic tensions and security concerns. "We had a fruitful meeting with the central leadership. The main agenda was the welfare of the people," Robindro said. "The government will and has to come, but peace must come first. Without stability, nothing meaningful can move forward." He said there was no fixed timeline for the formation of a new government, add-

ing that peace and public confidence were the top priorities at present. The meeting was held on Sunday and was attended by BJP national general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh, the party's Northeast coordinator Sambit Patra, and BJP legislators from Manipur. MLAs from both the Meitei and Kuki communities were present, despite the deep divisions caused by the ongoing ethnic conflict in the state. Stressing the importance of reconciliation, Robindro appealed for unity and understanding between communities. "We are all human beings and we have to live together. Whatever mistakes have been committed, we must learn to forgive and forget so that Manipur can move forward," he said. Another BJP MLA, Heikham Dingo, echoed similar views and said the discussions were centred on restoring harmony and peace. "We mainly discussed how to bring peace back to the state. Continued



Image tweeted by @AShardaDevi

dialogue with the Centre will help bring positive results for the people," he said. Sources said the BJP's central leadership urged legislators from both communities to work together and help reduce mistrust. They un-

derlined that lasting peace was essential for rebuilding Manipur and for any future political transition. As many as 34 BJP MLAs from Manipur attended the Delhi meeting, including former chief minister N Biren

Singh and Assembly Speaker Thokchom Satyabrata Singh. Of the seven BJP MLAs from the Kuki community, four were present, while three were absent due to what party sources described as unavoidable reasons.

NATIONAL

Government of Karnataka defends anti-hate speech legislation

Bengaluru, Dec 17: The Karnataka government has reaffirmed its commitment to the Hate Speech and Hate Crimes Prevention Bill 2025, citing it as essential for maintaining public order amidst rising tensions. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar emphasized the law's role in combating hatred and said it aims to benefit society. The Bill, introduced on December 10, has faced criticism from the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which alleges it is intended to stifle dissent. Shivakumar countered these claims, questioning the BJP's focus on local development issues. Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy also criticized the Bill as a potential tool for silencing opposition, while senior ministers defended it as necessary for regulation, especially regarding social media. The Bill outlines that hate crimes are acts or speech against individuals or groups based on various attributes and stipulates severe penalties, including imprisonment and fines for offenders, emphasizing its applicability regardless of political affiliation.

Two cars are set on fire by a masked man outside a Gurugram village home

Agency: On Tuesday, two cars belonging to Raman Yadav were set ablaze outside his home in Sidhrawali village by an unidentified masked assailant, as captured by the CCTV installed at his residence. The police reported that the incident occurred around 2:07 am when the footage showed the masked individual igniting a Mahindra Thar, which then spread flames to a nearby Maruti Suzuki Wagon R. Following the commotion, Yadav and his family, who were asleep at the time, rushed out to find the Thar in flames and witnessed the Wagon R catching fire shortly afterward. Despite attempts to extinguish the fire, both vehicles were completely destroyed. The police and a fire brigade arrived at the scene shortly after being notified and managed to control the blaze, although damage was also reported to part of the house due to the proximity of the parked vehicles. Yadav suspects that Shubhash and his sister Babli, with whom his family has a longstanding dispute, are behind the arson. He mentioned prior incidents where the windows of the

Will stay in the CM position as long as Cong top brass desires

Bengaluru, Dec 17: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah reaffirmed his authority during an assembly session on Tuesday in response to concerns raised by Congress MLA HD Ranganath regarding short-term loan discrimination faced by farmers in his constituency compared to those in the neighboring Madhugiri. Ranganath expressed his grievances about the District Central Cooperative Bank's reported bias, asking for government intervention while assuring that he was not angry but wanted a resolution.

Siddaramaiah committed to addressing the issue but faced scrutiny from the opposition, particularly R Ashoka, who suggested that the situation hinted at deeper divides within the ruling Congress party amidst ongoing speculation about leadership. Siddaramaiah responded by accusing the opposition of exploiting internal matters for their benefit and firmly asserting his position as chief minister, emphasizing that he would continue as long as the high



command supports him. He reiterated this stance by stating, "I am the chief minister and I will remain the chief minister in the future."

The chief minister framed his leadership as a product of electoral mandate, highlighting the party's success in securing votes in both the 2013 and 2018 assembly elections, contrasting this with the BJP's lack of similar public endorsement. In retort,

■CM Siddaramaiah has reiterated his stance despite facing internal party tensions, as the opposition accuses his administration of discriminating against farmers, attributing this to ongoing power struggles within the party.

Ashoka accused the Congress of internal instability and pointed to the ambitions of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar for the chief ministership, leading to further confrontations in the assembly. Siddaramaiah dismissed allegations of disunity within the Congress, asserting the solidarity of all party legislators. Outside the assembly, Shivakumar responded to queries about his recent meetings in New Delhi with senior Congress leaders, maintaining that he met them merely for pleasantries. The exchange in the assembly highlighted both the ongoing tensions within the ruling party regarding leadership aspirations and the opposition's attempts to capitalize on perceived divisions.

Prithviraj Chavan is “not sorry” for his comments about Operation Sindoor. “Didn’t say anything wrong”

Mumbai, Dec 17: Prithviraj Chavan, a Congress leader and former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, remains unapologetic regarding his controversial remarks about Operation Sindoor, asserting that he has “nothing to apologise for.” Speaking at a Pune event, Chavan stated that India was “defeated on Day 1” during this military engagement with Pakistan, which commenced in May following a terror attack in Pahalgam. He claimed that Indian military aircraft were downed by Pakistani forces on the

operation's first day, leading to complete grounding of the Air Force to prevent further losses. Chavan emphasized that this reality, regardless of public acceptance, must be acknowledged. The military action, which involved initial Indian strikes on terror targets in Pakistan and ended after three days with a ceasefire request from Pakistan's military, resulted in the Indian forces announcing over 100 terrorist fatalities. Chavan's comments have incited significant backlash, particularly from the BJP,



whose spokesperson, Shehzad Poonawalla, criticized him and accused Congress, including Rahul Gandhi, of fostering an “anti-army mentality” by allowing such statements to pass without reprimand. In rebuttal to Chavan's remarks, Congress has attempted to disassociate itself

from his comments. Sukhdeo Bhagat, a Lok Sabha MP from Jharkhand, underscored the party's support for the government's counter-terrorism efforts, stating, “We are proud of our army,” and reiterating Congress's commitment to fighting against terrorism and addressing threats from Pakistan. The controversy highlights the ongoing tensions within Indian political discourse regarding national security and military assessments, as well as the reactions from conflicting political factions.

An accident on the Delhi–Mumbai Expressway claimed three lives

Jaipur, Dec 17: On Wednesday morning, a tragic road accident on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway resulted in the deaths of three individuals and serious injuries to one other. The incident occurred when a pickup vehicle, transporting passengers from Delhi to Jaipur, collided with another vehicle in the Reni police station area near Channel Number 131. The force of the collision caused the pickup to catch fire almost immediately, leading to

Efforts were made by bystanders to rescue the individuals trapped in the fire; however, the flames spread quickly, offering no opportunity for salvation.

the rapid engulfment of the vehicle in flames. Eyewitnesses reported a severe impact, and despite attempts to rescue those inside, the fire spread too quickly for any successful intervention. The three occupants of the pickup were trapped and perished in the blaze. The driver

suffered serious injuries and was taken to a hospital, then referred to a facility in Jaipur due to his critical state. Reni police promptly arrived to investigate the scene, where the charred bodies of the victims were deposited at the hospital mortuary. Their identities have yet to be confirmed. Authorities noted that the front of the pickup was entirely destroyed in the crash, and investigations are ongoing to establish the accident's cause and the victims' identities.

National Herald case The court rejects Gandhis’ ED charge sheet

New Delhi, Dec 17: A Delhi court has declined to take cognizance of a charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the National Herald case involving senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. The court emphasized that commencing judicial proceedings against the Gandhis based on the charges was not permissible in accordance with legal standards.

In its detailed 117-page order, the court found that the ED's actions reflected an overreach and an inappropriate progression in relation to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Special judge Vishal Gogne noted that the current prosecution complaint, focused on money laundering allegations, was based on a private complaint by Dr. Subramanian Swamy rather than an official FIR, making the ED's cognizance untenable. While permitting the ED to further argue its case at a later hearing, the court dismissed the necessity of adjudicating the merits of the allegations. The ED intends to challenge this ruling, as the Delhi Police's economic offences wing (EOW) had previously filed an FIR linked to the ED's complaint, potentially implicating the central agency in a predicate offence. Political reactions followed, with the Congress party condemning the ED's proceedings as illegal and malicious, while the BJP interpreted the court's order as not absolving the Gandhis of culpability. The charge sheet, filed in April, accused Sonia

and Rahul Gandhi of misappropriating assets of the Associates Journals Limited (AJL), which once published the National Herald, resulting in substantial proceeds of crime. The court underlined that the ED had prematurely pursued an Economic Crime Information Report (ECIR) without a foundational FIR, asserting that the established legal process mandates that a scheduled offence must be recorded first before a money laundering investigation is initiated.

The judgment further highlighted the longstanding agreement between the ED and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) regarding the advisability of not independently registering an FIR. Citing procedural missteps by the ED, the court affirmed that it was not appropriate to assess the allegations at this juncture, especially given that the EOW had already launched an investigation. In a separate decision, the court denied the accused access to copies of the EOW FIR but allowed them to receive information about the case.

Legal representatives for the ED contended that the Gandhis had clandestinely acquired the debt-ridden AJL for a fraction of its worth, while counsel for the Congress leaders argued that Young Indian was merely attempting to preserve AJL's legacy. The charge sheet also implicated other individuals, including Sam Pitroda and Suman Dubey, alongside the Young Indian Private Limited.

Concerns about the new MNREGA replacement bill are raised by NDA allies, but they say they won’t confront

New Delhi, Dec 17: Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Janata Dal United (JDU), have raised concerns regarding the proposed Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G Ram G) Bill, which is intended to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA). While the leaders of these parties are not opposing the bill outright, they have communicated their apprehensions to the government, particularly regarding the financial implications for states.

JDU leaders highlighted that the bill could impose challenges on state finances, particularly as the Andhra Pradesh government is currently seeking additional funding for various infrastructure initiatives. They



NDA partners TDP and JDU have voiced their concerns regarding the VB-G Ram G Bill. While they support the legislation, they are requesting additional central funds to help manage the rising state expenditures associated with its implementation.

noted that greater federal funding is necessary to support new employment generation schemes. The proposed bill suggests a 60:40 funding distribution between the central and state governments for most regions,

with a more favorable 90:10 split for northeastern states and certain mountainous regions.

TDP MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu acknowledged ongoing stakeholder consultations that indi-

cated a need for improvements to the MNREGA. Proposed changes include an increase in workdays from 100 to 125 and granting states flexibility in project selection. However, Devarayalu voiced concerns about the state's fiscal capacity, stating that the Andhra Pradesh government, already financially strained since 2014, may struggle to absorb the proposed 40% wage burden. In response, a senior government official assured that ally concerns would be taken into account, emphasizing that the new scheme is designed to be sensitive to the financial capabilities of states. The official also mentioned that additional support could be requested by states in times of disaster. Overall, both the TDP and JDU appear supportive of the bill's objectives but assert the importance of addressing financial challenges associated with its implementation.

MP gov't forms panel to probe HIV infection among six children

Bhopal, Dec 17: Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan has stood firm on his controversial remarks regarding Operation Sindoor, asserting that he has “nothing to apologise for.” During a recent event in Pune, he stated that India was “defeated on Day 1” of the military engagement with Pakistan, which commenced on May 7 as a response to the Pahalgam terror attack. Chavan claimed that Indian military aircraft were shot down by Pakistani forces during the initial aerial conflict, resulting in the Air Force being fully grounded to avoid further losses. His comments ignited backlash from the BJP, with spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla crit-

- Health Minister Rajendra Shukla has ordered the investigation, which will also consider potential transfusions at other hospitals.
- Dr. Satya Avadhiya will lead the investigation team, which includes experts from various health institutions.

icizing Chavan and accusing Rahul Gandhi of failing to address such sentiments within the Congress party. In contrast, Congress leaders sought to clarify their stance, emphasizing support for the Indian military and counter-terrorism efforts, distancing the party from Chavan's statements while reinforcing their commitment to anti-terrorism measures against Pakistan.

A flaw in the SC’s attempt to remove Justice Yashwant Varma

New Delhi, Dec 17: The Supreme Court identified a significant legal flaw in the removal proceedings against Justice Yashwant Varma of the Allahabad High Court due to concerns regarding the process the Lok Sabha Speaker employed to form a committee without simultaneous motion admission from both Houses of Parliament.

Justice Varma argued, via his petition, that the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 expressly requires both Houses to jointly constitute such a committee only after admitting the motion. The motion for Varma's removal, initiated on July 21, was admitted by the Speaker on August 12, while the Rajya Sabha motion re-



mains pending. The court has issued notices to the Lok Sabha Speaker's office and the secretaries of both Houses to respond to Varma's legal challenge.

The Speaker's unilateral action to appoint a committee comprised of judges and senior advocates was contended by Varma's counsel Mukul Rohatgi, who emphasized that both Houses must admit the motion before any committee formation is valid.

The proceedings were initiated following a controversial incident where cash was found during a fire at Varma's residence.

A prior inquiry panel in May confirmed the discovery of cash, which Varma has denied, and leading to calls for his removal by the Chief Justice. The case is set for further hearing on January 7, 2024, before Varma's defense must be submitted by January 12, 2026.

After Rahul and Sonia Gandhi received court relief, Mallikarjun Kharge said, “PM Modi and Amit Shah should resign”

New Delhi, Dec 17: On Wednesday, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge launched a strong criticism against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), specifically targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, suggesting they should resign following a Delhi court's rejection of a charge sheet from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) related to the National Herald case, which implicated senior Congress figures Sonia and Rahul Gandhi.

During a press conference, Kharge characterized the

charge sheet as a tactic to politically harass the Gandhi family, accusing the BJP of pursuing the case out of “political vendetta.” He stated that the court's decision is a rebuke to Modi and Shah, urging them to resign as a gesture against future harassment of the public.

Kharge labeled the National Herald case as “false,” claiming it stemmed from a desire for “political revenge” and malice against the Congress party. He emphasized the historical significance of the National Herald newspaper,



founded by freedom fighters in 1938, and condemned the BJP for allegedly attempting to tarnish its reputation by associating it with money laundering allegations.

He asserted that the case lacks credible basis and has

been exploited by the BJP to target Congress leaders systematically. Furthermore, Kharge claimed that the current administration utilizes ED investigations to undermine opposition leaders for political advantage. However,

he welcomed the court's recent ruling, interpreting it as a victory for justice, and declared, “Truth has triumphed.” The Delhi court had identified limitations in the ED's legal approach, stating that it was not lawful to acknowledge the charge sheet, reflecting an overreach of authority by the enforcement agencies.

Special Judge Vishal Gogne noted that the charge sheet was initiated improperly, as it did not stem from a proper FIR, thereby deeming the prosecution complaint impermissible in law.

A female advocate accused of recruiting Maoists is denied bail by the Supreme Court

New Delhi, Dec 17: The Supreme Court dismissed the bail plea of Chukka Shilpa, a woman advocate accused of recruiting young women into the banned CPI (Maoist), emphasizing the seriousness of the charges and ordering the trial to conclude within four months.

Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta acknowledged the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) assurance of an expedited trial, likely completing in three months. Shilpa has been in custody since her

arrest in June 2022, with the case revolving around allegations of her involvement in radicalizing women under the guise of social work, as notably highlighted in a complaint by the mother of a missing nursing student, Radha.

The NIA's investigation indicated that Shilpa, associated with the Chaitanya Mahila Sangham (CMS), facilitated the recruitment of young women for the CPI (Maoist). The chargesheets filed are serious, citing violations of the Indian Penal Code and the

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Previous attempts to secure bail for Shilpa were rejected by both the NIA Special Court and the Andhra Pradesh High Court, which cited the gravity of the allegations and substantial evidence against her, including statements from Radha's family and findings from the NIA investigation. The court's refusal of bail reflects the ongoing legal scrutiny surrounding radicalization and recruitment practices attributed to CMS.



Vivekanagar school in Agartala bags best school award as Ramakrishna Mission highlights major achievements at 116th AGM

Agartala, Dec 17: The Ramakrishna Mission reviewed a year of wide-ranging work in education, social service and spiritual activities at its 116th Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at Belur Math on Sunday. The meeting brought together senior monks and members of the organisation to take stock of achievements during the financial year 2024-25, both in India and abroad. Presiding over the AGM, Swami Suvirananda, General Secretary of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, placed the annual report of the Governing Body before the house. The report detailed the Mission's expanding activities, institutional recognitions and humanitarian services that reached millions of people. A major highlight for Tripura was the recognition given to Vivekanagar

School, Agartala, which received the Best School Award from the Government of Tripura. The award was given in recognition of the school's strong academic performance and its focus on all-round development of students. The achievement was seen as a moment of pride for the education sector in Agartala and the state as a whole. Another Mission-run institution, Kozhikode School, was also honoured with the Best School Award by the Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Society, Kozhikode. The AGM also noted progress in higher education and research. Vidyamandira Residential College at Belur Math received recognition as a Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (SIRO) from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research under the Ministry of Science and Technology. This recogni-

tion reflects the college's growing contribution to academic research. Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (RKMVERI) was selected to establish Centres of Natural Farming under the National Mission on Natural Farming of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. In another key development, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) awarded A+ grades to the College of Education, Coimbatore, and Sikshanamandira, Belur Math. Several Mission-run colleges also featured prominently in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). Vivekananda Centenary College, Rahara, secured the 3rd rank at the national level, followed by Vidyamandira Residential College, Belur Math, at 17th rank, Narendra-

pur Residential College, Kolkata, at 24th rank, and Arts and Science College, Coimbatore, at 82nd rank. In the field of agriculture and sports education, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research recognised the Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Ranchi Morabadi for developing locally scented rice varieties. Meanwhile, Maruthi College of Physical Education, Coimbatore, received a Yoga World Record Certificate and the Institution of Excellence Award from the World Sports Yoga Federation, Hong Kong. The AGM also recorded the expansion of the Mission's organisational presence. Five new Ramakrishna Mission branch centres were opened during the year at Haflong and Kuralbhanga in Assam, Nellore in Andhra Pradesh, and Sarati and Siliguri in West Bengal. In addition, four new

Ramakrishna Math centres were established at Adipur in Gujarat, Kolhapur in Maharashtra, Pathanamthitta in Kerala and Rewa in Madhya Pradesh. On the service front, the Ramakrishna Mission and Ramakrishna Math continued large-scale humanitarian work through 244 branch centres and sub-centres across India. An expenditure of Rs. 1,670.79 crore was incurred on education, healthcare, rural and tribal welfare, relief and rehabilitation, general welfare, spiritual activities and publication work. These services benefited millions of people across the country. Internationally, the Mission strengthened its presence with the opening of a new centre in Washington, DC, in the United States. It currently operates through 99 centres and sub-centres in 24 countries outside India.

Five Militants held in Manipur, arms seized

Imphal, Dec 17: Joint operations by security forces in Manipur resulted in the arrest of five militants from the outlawed People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) across Bishnupur, Imphal West, and Imphal East districts. The operation also led to the seizure of several mobile phones and materials related to the militants, who were involved in extorting money from various sectors including contractors and government employees. Additionally, a drug peddler named Suimi Awungshi was arrested with one kilogram of brown sugar valued at Rs 20 lakh in Imphal East. Security forces are conducting intelligence-led combing, cordon, and search operations throughout the Imphal valley and surrounding mountainous areas to apprehend individuals involved in extortion and other criminal activities. Furthermore, arms and ammunition were recovered from Thoubal and Imphal East districts during these operations.

Scients discover new Snakehead fish in Meghalaya rivers

Shillong, Dec 17: Scientists have discovered a new species of snakehead fish in a small mountain stream near lewmawlong village in Meghalaya's Ri Bhoi district, marking an important addition to India's freshwater biodiversity. The finding highlights the ecological richness of the Eastern Himalayan region and its lesser explored aquatic habitats. The newly identified species has been named Channa bhoi, in honour of the indigenous Bhoi people of the Khasi tribe who inhabit the Ri Bhoi region. The discovery has been formally documented in the international peer reviewed journal Ichthyology and Herpetology, published by the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists.

The species was identified by a team of researchers led by Jayasimhan Praveenraj, along with Nallathambi Moulitharan, Tejas Thackeray, Ravi Shanthi Naveen, Annam Pavan Kumar, and local researcher Aristone M Ryndongsngi. Their work combined extensive field surveys with detailed morphological analysis to establish the fish as a species new to science. Specimens of Channa bhoi were collected during surveys conducted in 2021 from a shallow hill stream near Nongpoh. The stream flows through rocky terrain with sandy substrates and is bordered by dense riparian vegetation, creating a unique micro habitat suitable for specialised freshwater species.

Narang Festival to celebrate Garo Hill's Orange Heritage at Chibragre on Dec 18

Shillong, Dec 17: The Hundred Drums Wangala Festival Committee (HDWFC) will organise the Narang Festival on December 18 at Chibragre in the Garo Heritage Village, Wangala Aadam. The event will be held from 12:30 pm to 2:00 pm and is aimed at highlighting the rich agricultural traditions of the Garo Hills, with special focus on Komila, or orange, one of the most important crops of the region. The festival is being planned as a platform to bring farmers, villagers, and visitors together to celebrate farming practices that have been part of Garo life for generations. Organisers said the Narang Festival is not just about competition, but about recognising the hard work of growers and the role agriculture plays in sustaining local communities. Several competitions will be held as part of

the programme. These include the Sweetest Orange Competition, the Largest Orange Competition, and the popular Komila (Orange) Eating Competition. All competitions will carry cash prizes and certificates for the winners. According to the HDWFC, oranges for the Orange Eating Competition will be provided by the organisers. Participants will have to register by paying an entry fee of Rs. 300. The contest will be conducted under clear rules to ensure fairness. Each participant will get one minute to eat as many oranges as possible. Oranges must be properly peeled and completely swallowed. Any violation of the rules may lead to disqualification. Members of the HDWFC will not be allowed to take part in the competition. The winner of the Orange Eating Competition will receive a cash prize of Rs.

5,000 along with a certificate. The first runners-up will get Rs. 3,000, while the second runners-up will receive Rs. 2,000. In the Sweetest Orange and Largest Orange competitions, participants will be required to bring their own oranges for judging. Each of these categories will carry a cash prize of Rs. 3,000. Organisers said all participants will be briefed about the rules and judging process at the venue before the competitions begin. Apart from the daytime events, the festival will continue into the evening with a musical concert. The main attraction of the evening programme will be a performance by Riprap, a well-known and respected music band from the Garo Hills. The organisers expect the concert to draw a large crowd and add to the festive atmosphere.

No ban on outside taxis, Govt to meet hoteliers, says Dhar

Shillong, Dec 17: The state government has rejected the demand to restrict outside tourist taxis, citing legal infeasibility. Instead, it will convene a meeting with hoteliers, resort owners, and tour operators to promote the use of local tourist taxis. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by the deputy chief minister in-charge transport Sniawbhalang Dhar with a delegation of the All Khasi Meghalaya Tourist Taxi Association (AKMT-TA) on Tuesday. "We had a very fruitful meeting, a very positive one," Dhar told reporters. The association had requested restrictions on outside tourist taxis, but Dhar said this was not legally feasible. "As per law, it is not legal to stop outside vehicles from coming to the state, so they understand properly. The Advocate General (AG) had stated that it is legally not allowed to stop outside vehicles from coming to the state," he added. However, the government has agreed to request hoteliers and tour operators to engage local tourist taxis. "We will call owners of hotels, resorts, and tour operators and request them to utilize the service of local tourist taxis," Dhar said while informing that a meeting will again be held with the taxi association at the level of the transport and tourism officers.

Panchayat Elections Conducted Peacefully in Keyi Panyor

Itanagar, Dec 17: The Panchayat elections in Arunachal Pradesh's Keyi Panyor district were held peacefully on December 15, with polling completed smoothly across the district. Officials confirmed that voting took place without any disturbance in all six Zilla Parishad segments, reflecting a calm and orderly election process. According to the district administration, a total of 46 polling stations were set up across Keyi Panyor district. All polling stations functioned normally throughout the day, and no untoward incident was reported from any location. Voters turned up in good numbers and were able to cast their votes freely in a safe and secure environment. The elections were conducted under the overall supervision of District Election Officer Shweta Nagarkoti Mehta, IAS. She was assisted by the Deputy District Election Officer and Superintendent of Police Angad Mehta, IPS. Officials said that proper planning, close monitoring, and timely coordination between different departments helped ensure smooth polling.



Adequate security arrangements were made by the district police, especially in areas identified as sensitive. Police personnel remained alert throughout the polling hours, which played an important role in maintaining law and order and building confidence among voters. The district election administration expressed appreciation for the efforts of polling personnel, including

presiding officers, polling officers, returning and assistant returning officers, sector magistrates, sector police officers and other police staff. Many officials were deployed at short notice, yet they carried out their duties with commitment and discipline. Special mention was also made of the election branch led by the ADC-cum-Deputy DEO, nodal officers, and the district police team

for their coordinated work. Officials noted that even in areas where logistical challenges were anticipated, effective cooperation between the civil administration and police prevented any problems. The district administration also acknowledged the cooperation extended by political parties and candidates, which helped maintain a peaceful atmosphere during the elections.

One Nabbed with Stolen Gold in Darrang



Mangaldai, Dec 17: A police team led by Sub Inspector Dip Jyoti Das, In-Charge of the Burha police outpost, responded quickly to a burglary complaint on Monday afternoon at village Joypur under the Sipajhar police station in Darrang. They apprehended a notorious criminal named Jiarul Islam (24 years old), a resident of village Na-Khunda-Bishnupur under the Sipajhar police station. Based on his confession, the accused's hiding place in Baihata Chariali was found to contain stolen valuables, including gold and silver ornaments valued at approximately Rs 3.5 lakh. The accused was booked in accordance with the law, and the court remanded him to judicial prison on Tuesday.

DS Group Expands Hospitality Portfolio in the NE

Guwahati, Dec 17: Guwahati witnessed the launch of the largest pillar-less convention centre in Northeast India at the Radisson Blu hotel on December 17, 2025. This strategic expansion by the Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group) introduces 85 additional rooms, increasing the total to 280, and features a 25,000 sq. ft. convention space, including a 15,000 sq. ft. hall that accommodates up to 1,500 guests. This facility aims to fill a critical gap in the region's MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) and wedding infrastructure, enhancing capacity for large-scale conferences and events with integrated accommodation.

Mr. Nathan Andrews, Business Head of Hospitality at DS Group, emphasized the hotel's goal of establishing Radisson Blu, Guwahati, as a prime location for both business and leisure events by offering personalized services and authentic local experiences. The new rooms are expected to be operational by the end of 2026, strengthening the hotel's ability to host extended events. The facility's competitive positioning is also expected to improve significantly in the broader region.

The Radisson Blu provides a unique dining experience showcasing North



Eastern culinary heritage at its restaurant, Nest Asia, which is noted for its local dishes like Aloo Pitika and Masor Tenga, concluding with Black Rice Kheer. Additionally, the hotel's location, just 10 km from the airport, allows easy access to major attractions, including the Kamakhya Temple and Kaziranga National Park, making it an attractive base for leisure and business guests. The hotel focuses on exceptional service and aesthetic detail, reputed for warm hospitality and cultural immersion.

Looking ahead, the DS Group's vision for its hospitality division includes expanding its portfolio of modern, luxurious hotels across India, increasing its room inventory significantly by 2029 with a planned investment of INR 1000 crores. Their strategy aims to double the current room count through asset management and brand partnerships, with aspirations to establish 10-12 hotels in key cities within the next three years, including developments in the Northeast.

Nagaland expands global links to boost farming and youth jobs

Kohima, Dec 17: Nagaland is steadily widening its engagement with international partners as part of a broader effort to improve farmer incomes, create jobs for young people and strengthen the state's economy. Recent steps taken by the state government in the areas of skilled employment and horticulture point to a growing focus on learning from global best practices while building on Nagaland's local strengths. Officials said the government is looking beyond traditional markets and exploring partnerships that can open new doors for the state's youth and farming community. Two key developments in recent days—an agreement to send skilled workers to Germany and discussions with New Zealand experts on kiwi cultivation—underline this approach. In a significant move to expand overseas employment opportunities, the Government of Nagaland has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Jobs-in-Germany GmbH. The agreement was signed on December 15 at the Nagaland Tool Room & Training Centre (NTTC) in Dimapur. The MoU was formalised by Director of Industries and Commerce and CEO of NTTC, P. Tokugha Sema, and Ralf Kratschmer, co-owner and managing director of Jobs-in-Germany GmbH, in the presence of senior officials. The partnership aims to prepare skilled youth from Nagaland for employment in Germany by aligning NTTC's training programmes with German and international industry standards. Officials explained that the initiative will operate under Germany's Skilled Immigration Act, which allows trained foreign workers to take up jobs in specific sectors facing labour shortages. As part of the programme, selected candidates will receive German language training at A1, A2 and B1 levels, along with cultural orientation to help them adapt to working and living conditions abroad. The agreement also includes faculty training, curriculum support and direct placement support by connecting NTTC-trained candidates with German employers. In the first phase, 22 candidates have been selected for a seven-month training programme, which is scheduled to begin on January 12, 2026. Officials described the initiative as a first-of-its-kind, government-led international workforce mobility programme in India. They said it positions Nagaland as a pioneer in creating structured and safe overseas employment pathways for skilled youth, while also strengthening ties with German states, including Bavaria. Alongside efforts to create jobs for youth, the state is also focusing on strengthening its agriculture sector, particularly horticulture.

AIIMS Guwahati becomes Northeast's first accredited ATLS Provider Centre

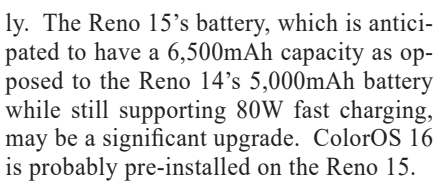
Guwahati, Dec 17: The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Guwahati has reached an important milestone in healthcare education by becoming the first institution in Northeast India to be accredited as an Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) Provider Centre. The recognition is expected to play a key role in improving trauma care and emergency medical response across the region. The accreditation has been achieved under the leadership of Prof. (Col.) Ashok Puranik, Executive Director of AIIMS Guwahati. With this approval, the institute has formally joined the national and international network of centres authorised to conduct structured ATLS training for doctors involved in trauma and emergency care. To mark the beginning of this new role, AIIMS Guwahati successfully

organised its first ATLS Provider Course from December 12 to December 14, 2025. The course is seen as a major step towards introducing standardised trauma education in the Northeast, a region that often faces challenges due to difficult terrain, road accidents, and delays in emergency response. The inaugural programme was attended by Prof. (Dr.) M. C. Mishra, Chair of ATLS India and former Director of AIIMS New Delhi. He was accompanied by experienced ATLS faculty members from different parts of the country. Their presence helped ensure that the training met established ATLS guidelines and global standards. ATLS training focuses on the early and systematic management of trauma patients, especially during the "golden hour", which is the critical period

diately after an injury. Proper care during this time can greatly increase the chances of survival and reduce long-term complications. Each ATLS course at AIIMS Guwahati is designed for 16 participants at a time. The programme includes two days of detailed classroom sessions and practical, hands-on training. On the third day, participants undergo a formal assessment to test their understanding and skills, strictly following ATLS protocols. With this accreditation, AIIMS Guwahati aims to train doctors and healthcare professionals from across the Northeast, helping to build a strong and skilled trauma care workforce. The initiative is expected to improve emergency care services, strengthen hospital preparedness, and ultimately reduce deaths caused by serious injuries in the region.

PNB Housing share price target: What ICICI Securities says on new MD & CEO

Unveiled, the OPPO Reno 15c could be released as the Reno 15 in India



Eternal, Groww, ICICI Bank, ITC are top MF picks; cuts stake in SBI, RIL



Tata Power shares at Rs 500! MOFSL says long-term value creation on track

ICICI Prudential AMC IPO: Check last day subscription GMP

ratios, a debt free balance sheet, and supportive industry tailwinds provide healthy visibility for compounding, said Angel One with a 'subscribe' rating. Citigroup Global Markets India, ICICI Securities, Morgan Stanley India, Goldman Sachs (India), BofA Securities, Avendus Capital, Axis Capital, BNP Paribas and CLSA India are among the 18 the book running lead manager and Kfin Technologies is the registrar of the issue. Shares of the company shall be listed on both BSE and "Consistent revenue and profit growth over FY23-FY25 highlights strong business momentum. P/E of 40.37 times (FY25) appears reasonable relative to peers, supported by fundamentals. Backed by strong brand equity and structural industry tailwinds, the IPO offers a compelling long-term investment opportunity," it added.

Neeraj Ghaywan’s Homebound Flies High, Shortlisted for Oscars 2026

Mumbai: Team Homebound is a step closer to turning its Oscar dream into a reality. The Neeraj Ghaywan directorial has been shortlisted for the Academy Awards 2026 in the Best International Feature Film category, placing it among 15 selected from submissions by 86 countries.

With this announcement, Homebound has cleared a crucial stage in the Oscar race, and the next step is the nomination round. Academy members are required to watch all 15 films before proceeding to vote for the final five nominees. Some other films that have been shortlisted are Palestine 36 from Palestine, The Voice of Hind Rajab from Tunisia, No Other Choice from South Korea and The Secret Agent from



Brazil. Producer Karan Johar took to social media to express his gratitude and wrote, “I am not sure I can articulate how proud, elated and over the moon I am with the journey of #HOMEBOUND... all of us @dharmamovies are privileged to have this proud and important film in our

filmography ... thank you @neeraj.ghaywan for making so many dreams of ours come true... from Cannes to being on the Oscar shortlist this has been such an overwhelming journey! Love to the entire cast and crew and teams of this special special film!!!!!!!!! Upwards and

onwards..... #HOMEBOUND streaming now on @netflix in (sic).”

Neeraj Ghaywan, and the cast Ishaan Khatter, Janhvi Kapoor and Vishal Jethwa, too, got quite emotional. Congratulatory messages also poured in from people across the industry, including Farah Khan, Aditi Rao Hydari, Zoya Akhtar, Guneet Monga and more. Homebound is inspired by Basharat Peer’s 2020 New York Times article and was released in India on September 26, 2025. It follows childhood friends Shoaib (Ishaan) and Chandan (Vishal), whose shared dream of joining the police force shapes their lives, with Janhvi adding emotional depth to a story grounded in friendship, duty, and the pressures facing young India.

Varun Dhawan’s Dramatic New Moustache Steals the Show at Border 2 Teaser Launch

Mumbai: Border 2 teaser is finally out! The much-awaited teaser of the war drama sequel dropped on December 16, generating massive buzz among the audience. During the teaser launch event, the makers gave an exclusive look at the lead cast members, including Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Ahaan Shetty and others.

Various pictures and videos from the event started making rounds on the internet. The venue was designed like a real battlefield filled with military-themed setups. One paparazzi video showed Varun Dhawan, Sunny Deol, and Ahaan Shetty dressed like their characters as they held rifles and guns while posing for pictures. At the teaser launch event, Varun Dhawan grabbed attention with his

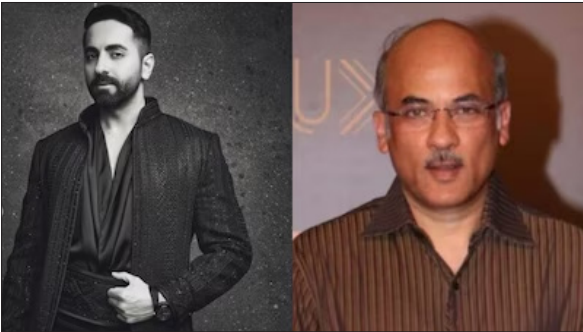


new look for the film. The actor was seen wearing a crisp blue shirt, which he paired with grey pants, and teamed it up with a navy blue blazer. The actor looked sharp and flaunted his moustache at the event. The event also marked Sunny Deol’s first public appearance since the death of his father, Dharmendra, who passed away on November 24, 2025. All the main cast members, along with the

makers, were present at the event, except Diljit Dosanjh. The teaser opens with Sunny Deol’s inspiring voiceover in the background, with the trio, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh and Ahaan Shetty, engaged in intense war action. In the teaser, Deol recreates his iconic Border Part 1 moment, as he carries a massive bomber gun on his shoulder. The teaser also gives glimpses into the characters’ emo-

tional sides, their love stories and happy family moments. The teaser becomes more special with the inclusion of the legendary song Hindustan Meri Jaan from the original Border film. In one standout moment, Sunny Deol’s character rallies his soldiers, urging them to yell so loudly that even Lahore can hear the cries of Indian soldiers. A sequel to J.P. Dutta’s magnum opus, Border, the upcoming film is set against the backdrop of the 1971 Indo-Pak war. Directed by Anurag Singh, the film stars Sunny Deol as the main protagonist with Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, Ahaan Shetty, Sonam Bajwa, Mona Singh, Medha Rana and Paramvir Cheema in other pivotal roles. Border 2 will hit the theatres on January 23, 2026.

Ayushmann Khurrana Reveals Director Sooraj Barjatya ‘Works Like a Nerd’



Mumbai: Ayushmann Khurrana is currently busy with another film directed by Sooraj Barjatya. Recently, the actor opened up about his role, sharing insights into what makes the project and his character particularly special. The actor spoke at length about working with the filmmaker. Sharvari will be seen in the lead role.

In a conversation with Mid-Day, Ayushmann opened up about the film’s director. “He works like a

nerd, and that inspires me the most.” The actor further share update about his character in Sooraj’s upcoming film. “The best part of a Sooraj Barjatya film is that the hero is always a quintessential green flag. I usually love portraying characters who are flawed and have an arc, but here, the entire family is a green flag,” added Ayushmann. Ayushmann Khurrana and Sharvari will share screen space for the first time in Sooraj Bajatya’s

upcoming romantic family entertainer. Over the last few months, several reports suggested that it is titled ‘Prem Ki Shaadi’. However, the film is now called ‘Yeh Prem Mol Liya’. A photographer named Ravendra Singh Bhaduria shared a picture on Instagram a few days ago, which featured the clapperboard of the film, clearly mentioning its title: ‘Yeh Prem Mol Liya’. Meanwhile, a report in Mid Day states that the next leg of the film’s shoot will begin this week in Mehboob Studios, Mumbai. The team is expecting to wrap up the shoot by January 2026.

Ayushmann Khurrana and Sharvari’s film went on floors in Mumbai on November 1. A few days ago, several pictures of the actors shooting at a railway station went viral on social media.

EXO drops REVERXE details, January 19

Agency: EXO is starting 2026 with exciting news for fans around the world. The group, featuring Xiumin, Suho, Lay, Baekhyun, Chen, Chanyeol, DO, Kai and Sehun, has announced a brand new album titled REVERXE (Reverse). This will be EXO’s 8th full album and is set to be released on January 19. The album will include nine songs, giving fans fresh music after a long wait.

The upcoming album is special as it comes nearly two years after EXO’s last full album, EXIST, which was released in July 2023 and became a massive hit among fans. Before the album drops, EXO plans to drop several preview materials. Fans can expect new photos, album details and a preview of the music video in the coming days. As per the schedule shared on Instagram, the first set of teaser images begins with Cube 01 on January 3, followed by Cube 02 on January 4 and Cube 03 on January 5. The second teaser image series titled Reverse will be released on January 6, 7, 8 and 9. Album details will be shared on January 12. After that, fans will get two music video teaser images on January 15 and January 16, while the video teaser will be released on January 18. Finally, EXO’s 8th full album REVERXE, along with the full music video, will be released on January 19.



Rashmika Mandanna Serves Up Chic Airport Fashion, Keeps Paparazzi at Bay



Mumbai: National crush Rashmika Mandanna has had a jam-packed schedule, with back-to-back shoots keeping her on her toes this year. The actress, who impressed audiences with her performances in films like Thamma, The Girlfriend, and Chhaava, continues to win hearts with her versatility and screen presence. Amid her busy work commitments, Rashmika was recently spotted at the Mumbai airport, where she made a subtle yet stylish appearance.

In a video now doing the rounds on social media, the actress is seen dressed in a striped shirt paired with denims, effortlessly nailing a relaxed, travel-ready look. She accessorised her outfit with a chic watch and a brown

tote bag and tied her hair in a messy bun, exuding cool and casual vibes. Keeping a low profile, Rashmika opted for a protective face mask and avoided interacting with the paparazzi stationed at the airport. She was seen swiftly making her way inside without stopping to pose. The comment section lit up with warm reactions within moments. Fans flooded her posts with admiration, with

the majority of users bombarding the video with red heart emoticons.

Fresh off playing Bhooma Devi in Rahul Ravindran’s romantic drama, The Girlfriend, Rashmika is gearing up to impress fans in the much-awaited sequel Cocktail 2. She will share the screen space with Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon in the romantic drama, backed by Maddock Films.

Rob Reiner’s son charged with parents’ double murder

Agency: In a major development in the case surrounding the deaths of actor-filmmaker Rob Reiner and his wife, Michele Singer Reiner, their son Nick Reiner has been charged with their murder. Los Angeles County prosecutors confirmed that Nick has been charged with two counts of first-degree murder. District Attorney Nathan Hochman announced this at a news conference alongside Los Angeles Police Department Chief Jim McDonnell. Prosecutors have also indicated that they plan to add a special allegation that a dangerous weapon, a knife, was used in the killings.

McDonnell said, “This case is heartbreaking and deeply personal, not only for the Reiner family and their loved ones but for our entire city. We will continue to support the Reiner family and ensure that every step forward is taken with care, dignity and resolve.” The charges come days after the couple were found dead with stab wounds at their home in the Brentwood neighbourhood of LA. Nick was arrested hours later on suspicion of the killings and has remained in custody since. District Attorney Hochman’s office has yet to decide whether to seek the death penalty in this case. Nick was scheduled to appear in court on Thursday, but his attorney, Alan Jackson, said that he was not brought to the courthouse for medical reasons. He is now expected to make his court appearance on Wednesday. Jackson is a high-profile defence lawyer who has previously



represented several prominent clients, including Harvey Weinstein. Police have not yet disclosed a motive behind the alleged double murder. Robert Reiner was an acclaimed actor and filmmaker, best known for directing films such as This Is Spinal Tap, The Sure Thing, The Princess Bride, When Harry Met Sally, Misery and A Few Good Men, among others. He received multiple honours, including two Primetime Emmy Awards for All in the Family, a Hugo Award, and nominations for an Academy Award, a BAFTA, and Golden Globe Awards. He was also honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1999 and received the Chaplin Award in 2014. Michele Singer Reiner was a photographer, film producer, and LGBTQ+ activist. The couple had been married for over three decades. Just months ago, Nick was photographed with his parents and siblings at the premiere of Spinal Tap: The End Continues. Rob and Nick had previously collaborated on the 2016 film Being Charlie, which explored the life of a troubled son of a famous father. It drew inspiration from personal experiences but was not a biography. Earlier, Nick had also spoken about his struggles with addiction and visiting treatment facilities often.

Kapil Sharma’s Wife Ginni Chatrath: Surprise Cameo Steals the Show in KKKP 2



Mumbai: Kapil Sharma’s Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2 hit theatres on December 12 but the comedy sequel has struggled to find its foothold at the box office. While the film opened to mixed reviews, it largely went unnoticed amid the massive buzz around Dhurandhar which dominated screens. Now, just days after its release, KKKP2 is back in the spotlight for an unexpected reason and the reason is a leaked scene featuring Kapil’s real-life wife, Ginni Chatrath.

Ginni makes a surprise cameo in Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2 and it happens during the film’s climax. The leaked clip, which is now circulating online, shows a light-hearted and hilarious exchange between Kapil and Ginni, instantly grab-

bing fans’ attention. Viewers were quick to highlight the natural chemistry between the two, with many calling the moment one of the film’s most entertaining highlights. Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2 stars four female leads including Hira Warina, Tridha Choudhury, Parul Gulati and Ayesha Khan alongside Manjot Singh and the late veter-

an actor Asrani. While the ensemble cast promised fun and chaos, audiences didn’t go to cinemas to watch the gripping comedy.

In its first four days of its release, the film managed to collect only Rs 8.15 crore at the box office. Considering reports that state the film’s budget at around Rs 30–35 crore, the numbers prove

that the film has fallen flat at the box office. By trade estimates, KKKP2 is being termed a box-office disaster. Earlier, Kapil Sharma and Ginni joined Bharti Singh and Haarsh Limbachiya for a conversation, during which the comedian’s wife admitted she feels insecure about his on-screen romance. She did not hold back as she admitted, “Bardash nahi hota. Bahut jealousy hoti hai (I can’t tolerate it. I get very jealous).” Even as the film struggles on the big screen, Kapil Sharma has a lot of projects on his plate. The comedian-actor is gearing up for Season 4 of The Great Indian Kapil Show, which premieres on Netflix on December 20. Adding to the excitement, the first episode will feature none other than Priyanka Chopra.

Cocktail 2 Scoop: Kriti Sanon Reveals Film’s ‘Fun, Young’ Vibe



Mumbai: Kriti Sanon is truly on a roll, ticking all the boxes professionally. From stepping into production with Do Patti to running her successful skincare brand, Hyphen and delivering stellar performances onscreen, she’s proving her versatility at every turn.

Fresh off the wave of critical and audience praise for Tere Ishk Mein, Kriti is already setting her sights on Cocktail 2, a fun, light-hearted project she’s excited about. In a recent chat on Zoom’s podcast, she shared her thoughts and excitement

about the sequel, giving fans a glimpse of what’s to come. Speaking about Cocktail 2, the Mimi actress said she was looking for a film that wasn’t as heavy as her recent release. “Cocktail 2 just happened at the right time. I was craving it. I wanted to go into that really young, urban, fun space of a rom-com,” she shared. She added, “Yes, it’s a sequel, but it’s more of a vibe sequel, I feel. The story is completely different, the characters are completely different, and their backstories are completely different.”

To this, the podcast host pointed out that even the actors are different. Kriti nodded and continued, saying that everything has changed except the vibe of the film, Maddock Films, and director Homi Adajania.

Bigg Boss 19 winner Gaurav Khanna joins YouTube

Mumbai: Winning Bigg Boss 19 may have brought Gaurav Khanna the trophy, but for the actor, the real journey seems to have begun after the cameras stopped rolling. Instead of stepping away from the public eye, Gaurav has chosen to stay connected with his audience in a more personal way. Just days after his win, he launched his own YouTube channel, giving fans a first-hand look into his thoughts, reflections, and plans ahead.

Gaurav’s first video is a calm conversation, where the actor looks back at his life, his career, and the intense months spent inside the Bigg Boss house. He begins by talking about his education and professional journey, including his work in Anupamaa and Celebrity MasterChef, before explaining why he finally de-

cided to step into the digital space. “Many fans asked me to become active on social media, and I finally decided to show a glimpse of my life. I am not able to believe that this is my first YouTube video.” Reflecting on his Bigg Boss 19 experience, Gaurav spoke about the values he carried with him into the house. “From my perspective, a winner is someone who doesn’t repeat his mistakes, one who doesn’t do anything that my own family wouldn’t like to watch. It was always said that Bigg Boss is a fight show, people lose their temper and use abusive language. But, I made a promise to myself before going inside the house – to not use foul words, body shame, and do everything my own way. It was a fun journey,” he shared.

Akshaye Khanna’s private ritual goes viral after Dhurandhar success

Mumbai: Akshaye Khanna is currently being lauded for his role in Dhurandhar. For those unaware, the actor plays the role of the infamous Pakistani gangster Rehman Dakait. Moreover, his entry to the track FA9LA in the film has garnered widespread appreciation. It has taken social media by storm and reinstated his calibre as an artiste. While Akshaye is enjoying his current stardom, a viral video of him performing a puja at his Alibaug home has gone viral.

Many social media enthusiasts are of the opinion that he is performing the Vastu Shanti hawan. It was conducted at his residence in Alibaug. In the video, Akshaye is seen wearing a white kurta with simple denim. He is performing the puja while the priests around him are assisting. Vastu Shanti Hawan is a traditional Hindu ritual performed to harmonise the energies of a home, building or land, according to Vastu Shastra. Vastu Shastra is



the ancient Indian science of architecture. The ceremony involves a sacred fire (hawan or homa) where priests chant Vedic mantras and offer herbs, ghee, grains and other sacred items into the fire. It is conducted to remove negative energies,

correct Vastu doshas and invite peace, prosperity, health and positive vibrations. Vastu Shanti Hawan is commonly performed before entering a new home, after renovations or when facing persistent difficulties.

The world’s most liveable and happiest cities lists are usually dominated by European countries – but it may be time to look down under. This year, three Australian cities made the top 10 in the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Most Liveable Cities index, with Adelaide joining Melbourne and Sydney there for the first time. It’s no surprise to Australians, who have long relished a high quality of life. They point to big city benefits – galleries, concerts, sports, diverse cuisine – combined with Australia’s iconic natural beauty as the winning formula. “Australia has a deep respect for the outdoors. Lunch breaks can be swims, weeknights mean open-air cinemas and weekends are for farmers’ markets packed with produce so good it barely needs cooking,” said Andrea Seifert, a senior comms director for Eight Communications who grew up in Europe and Asia and recently moved to Sydney. “That kind of access to nature and culture is rare!” This also translates into a culture where residents work to live instead of live to work. “The lifestyle is just easier. Not necessarily cheaper, but there’s a different mindset here,” said Cheryl Monkhouse, who lived most of her life in the US and now lives in Adelaide where she works for SeaLink Marine & Tourism. “Holidays are taken, and time off is not just expected but respected. Four weeks annual leave is the norm, not the exception.” She also says the national healthcare system is a lifeline, compared to the US where losing a job can mean losing health benefits and paying out of pocket for care. “In Australia, there’s a sense of security knowing you and your family are covered no matter your employment status,” she said. To find out more about what makes these Australian cities so liveable, we spoke to residents about the things that most impact their daily quality of life. Ranked highest out of the Australian cities and fourth globally, Melbourne scored perfect marks in both education and healthcare, and inched out Sydney and Adelaide with its high culture & environment score. Residents point to its cultural diversity as a major draw. “The people, the food, the lifestyle – Melbourne is so multicultural,” said Dani Feludu, who was born in Melbourne to European parents. “My husband is Nigerian. My closest friend is Indian. I live in the suburbs, not the city, and can walk 10 min-

utes from my house to get dinner from restaurants that serve cuisines like Mexican, Thai, Filipino, Korean and Turkish. The list goes on!” Feludu recommends experiencing Melbourne’s vibrant cultural life in iconic areas like Carlisle Street in Balaclava, Sydney Road in Brunswick and the city laneways. Residents also rave about the city’s cafe culture, a product of the Italian immigrants who moved here from the 1950s to 1970s, says resident Katherine Tuominen, founder of Catalyst Brand Strategy. “Beyond the quality and variety of coffee beans, cafes are a great place to connect with strangers and strike up a conversation – once you’ve enjoyed the beverage that is,” she said. And for sport lovers? Melbourne is paradise. “Inter-

city ranked sixth overall in the index, with perfect scores in education and healthcare, and strong rankings in infrastructure and culture & environment. Residents consistently mention that Sydney combines the buzz of a major global city with a lifestyle built around the outdoors. “What I love most is the balance. You get all the perks of a big city, great food, art, culture and jobs, but with easy access to nature,” said Sydney resident Liam Duffy. “I can be in a buzzing cafe one minute, and then at the beach or hiking in a national park within the hour. The lifestyle here feels very grounded and healthy.” Sydney’s Bondi neighbourhood in particular is known for its



na-

tional events like the Australian Open and the Formula 1 Grand Prix take place right in the city cen-

particular is known for its



The secret to life in the world’s best cities



tre,” said Melbourne-born Michael Rozenblit, founder of travel site The World Was Here First. “We also have great local sports like Aussie Rules Football (AFL) that draw huge crowds and are incredibly fun to attend.” Rozenblit recommends visitors go to an AFL game at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). “The atmosphere is intoxicating, the game is unique and it’s fundamental to Melbourne culture,” he said. “Some games can draw crowds of more than 80,000 people.” **Sydney: City perks, beach lifestyle** Australia’s most populous

strong wellness culture, contributing to Sydney’s enviable quality of life. “I’m often down at the beach at 05:00 running or training with friends, followed by a quick dip in the ocean, sauna and ice bath session and a coffee, all before 07:00,” said Alice Moore, director at Élysée Collective communications agency. Visitors can get a taste of this by doing the popular Bondi to Bronte walk, a 2.5km coastal path that passes through the city’s best beaches and has plenty of hip cafes and bars along the way. Beyond the 1,500km of walking and biking paths available in

the city, Sydney’s well-planned and easy-to-access infrastructure also makes the city feel more liveable. “Public transport is solid, healthcare is reliable and the city feels generally safe and clean,” said Duffy. Similar to Melbourne, Sydney has a diverse food scene that includes both high-end and affordable fare, including Japanese BBQ, Korean, Lebanese, Greek and Turkish. The new Sydney Fish Market is set to open this year, showcasing Australia’s best seafood and set to attract nearly six million visitors annually (more than twice the current visitation). “Fresh prawns, oysters,



bugs will be enjoyed right where the fishing trawlers come in every day,” said Amanda Bolger, a general manager at Luxury Escapes. To best appreciate the city, she recommends jumping on a ferry from Circular Quay to Manly. “You’ll get a different perspective of Sydney from the water and essentially have an inexpensive Sydney Harbour cruise,” she said, recommending a walk around Manly before hopping back aboard the ferry. “Don’t forget to get a seat on the outside deck so you can get that Insta-worthy image with the Harbour Bridge/Sydney Opera

House in the background.” **Adelaide: The quiet achiever** Jumping up two spots in the rankings from 2024 to break into the top 10 for the first time, Adelaide saw its boost come directly from strong growth in its culture & environment score. The capital and most populous city of South Australia, Adelaide scores high marks from its residents for being a “big ‘country’ city”, with a solid mix of access to nature and comprehensive infrastructure that makes life easier and more enjoyable. Locals describe it as a place where simplicity, affordability and nature come together. “Living in

Adelaide, life is simpler,” said Monkhouse. “It’s connected and convenient without being overwhelming. Public transport is reliable, and my kids use it daily to get to school, the beach or meet friends.” She contrasts it to her life in the US where public transport is often unavailable or unreliable outside of major metro areas, and rarely something kids would use independently. Even though the population nears 1.5 million, residents say Adelaide remains easy to navigate. “You can still get just about anywhere in 30 to 45 minutes,” said Erin Carey, director of PR agency Roam Generation. “I live

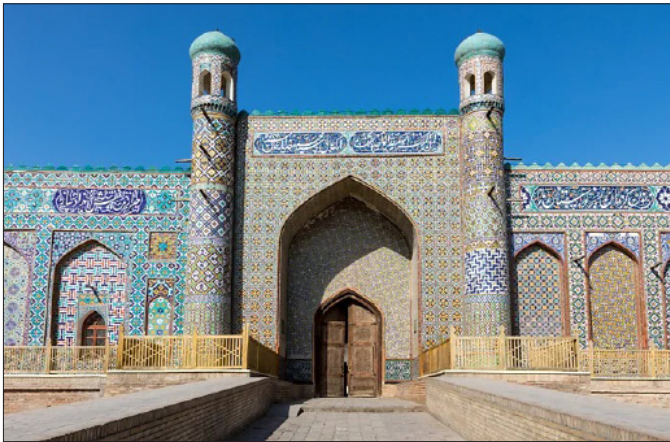
in the Adelaide Hills and I can be in the city centre in just 25 minutes. It’s easy to live here with the hills, the beach and the wine regions!” In the Hills, she finds herself surrounded by nature, with kangaroos and koalas often visiting her property, while the beach is just 30 minutes away and world-class wineries even closer. “My ideal Sunday involves a countryside drive, either south to McLaren Vale or north to the Barossa [wine regions], to discover a new cellar door, sipping a crisp white wine in the sunshine while the kids hang out on the lawn,” she said, noting she always takes first-time visitors to the Chalk Hill Winery, with vineyards dating to 1839 and the best views in the region. Autumn (March-May) is a favourite time of year here, especially in the Hills town of Stirling when the leaves start to change. Elsewhere, Carey recommends the beachside suburbs of Aldinga and Moana for their laid-back vibes. “In just a few days, you can experience three incredibly diverse sides of Adelaide: the English village feel and leafy beauty of the Hills, the rolling vineyards of McLaren Vale and the rugged, ochre-coloured cliffs of the southern beaches,” she said.



In Tashkent, the Fergana Valley, a fertile region in Central Asia, is home to a family of three who grow a variety of fruits, including strawberries, mulberries,

apricots, apples, oranges, and strawberries. The valley is also the birthplace of Uzbekistan’s celebrated silk, ceramic, and fruit production, which forms the backbone of Uzbek culture. Like

much of modern-day Uzbekistan, the Fergana Valley was a conduit for trade, ideas, and artistry between China, Persia, and the Mediterranean for centuries. Recently, Uzbekistan has been leaning into its Silk Road roots with an ambitious new tourism drive, seeing its historical trading hubs of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva developing at breakneck speeds. However, critics point out that its flashy recreations of traditional Uzbek culture run the risk of turning it into a veritable Silk Road theme



park. Margilan is the birthplace of Uzbek ikat, one of Central Asia’s most complex textile traditions. This silk-weaving tradition stretches back 1,000 years and was plied along the Silk Road as early as the 11th Century. Unlike other places in Uzbekistan today, the labour-in-

tensive weaving in Margilan is still done by hand. At Yodgorlik, one of the city’s oldest silk factories, silkworms munch through piles of tender mulberry leaves, growing fat until they spin delicate cocoons of raw silk. The silk is then washed, stretched, and tightly bundled into skeins and resist-dyed in

successive stages with natural pigments. Artisans bend and sweat over massive steaming cauldrons all day, coaxing colour into thread to build intricate patterns that emerge only after the fabric is woven. Rishtan, a city in Uzbekistan, is known for its vibrant ceramics, including bowls, tiles, jugs, and glazed



pomegranates. The pomegranate is sacred in Uzbekistan, used for fertility, good luck, and to remember life’s sweet and sharp aspects. Rustam Usmanov’s workshop, part studio and part school of a respected potter, teaches students how to shape and dry local clay, which is then coated with white clay and fired

at 920C. Intricate plant-based motifs are hand-painted before a second firing at 960-1000C locks in the alkaline glaze, revealing the intense blue tint that makes Uzbek pottery so distinct. Every Rishtan ceramic tells a story, with birds representing freedom, fruits for abundance, and jugs representing life itself.

The fertile Silk Road valley few travellers know

7 things to do this spring in Melbourne

Spring in Melbourne just hits different. As any local will tell you, the city has four seasons in a day—it can go from chilly winter vibes in the morning to springlike rain around lunch, then full-on-summer heat in the afternoon. Of the four seasons of the year, my favorite is spring. This is when the city wakes from her winter slumber (with a welcome extra hour of daylight), shakes off her coat and T-shirt weather rolls in. Al fresco dining once again becomes the norm as outdoor heaters are packed away and tables and chairs spill onto the streets. The Shakespearean gray skies turn to color, and it’s one again publicly acceptable to order an iced latte. welcoming leisurely strolls, spontaneous picnics, and flower festivals. And the cultural pulse quickens with festivals, concerts, the Spring Racing Carnival weather rolls in, the city’s rooftop scene bursts back to life. Hit up some of my favorites: Transit Rooftop Bar (for skewers and brews) or the Rooftop Bar seven flights of stairs you’ll have to climb to get there). At Goldilocks, check out the aptly named signature cocktails: Papa Bear, Mumma Bea, and plates. For an inner city option with a proper Aussie pub feel, a rooftop, a garden, and an extensive vegan (and non-vegan) menu, the Cornish Don’t skip their spicy margarita.

Tip: Maybe you’re more of a water baby. Make your way to the Yarra Botanica because who doesn’t love sipping a negroni on a floating to the passing boats? If you missed out on a European summer this year, non preoccuparti—Capri is coming to Melbourne and call- clubs on the sun-drenched Italian island, Afloat Capri will of Aperol, plus a lineup of entertainment.

Tip: If you want a Capri-themed open in mid-September. Miss-

I’m pretty fussy when vis- a tad chilly in winter There are over 70 therapy pool, Turk- treatments, private

Tip: Visit at you’re in for lands, plus a great Aussie edition, is best too hot and Anywhere favorite ground. It was (BBQ, hot offered?

Tip: Given it’s (October to of the headliners is “Eat Your Art more than 470 per- If you’re into theater, Theatre (Tina: The Tina Swap the sound of dinging Aussie and New Zealand acts, Place in the CBD. Special events

Tip: Make a stop at some of the Fringe-sup- of the Nocturnal performance at the Melbourne Mu- has come to an end, but don’t fret—the Fringe Flavours Night Market will carry the torch for five weeks from September 18 to October 16. Melbourne Fringe performers will add to the buzzy atmosphere, and there’s plenty of delicious eats to choose from—so what’s not to love?

A market stall brimming with handcrafted wares is right up a Melbournian’s alley (bonus points if it’s on a Sunday, it’s outdoors, and there’s a coffee van). Ticking these boxes and then some is the Arts Centre Melbourne Sunday market, which features more than 80 local artists and their homemade arts and crafts and freshly made produce (chutney, jams, sauces aplenty). Everything is locally made, and it’s a great spot to find one-of-a-kind treasures.

The first Finders Keepers design market to kick off the spring season will be held on October 11 to 13 at the Royal Exhibition Building. The popular market for “mindful making and thoughtful buying” features more than 200 stall holders with beautiful locally made goods—clothing, soaps, jewelry, ceramics, and more from Australian designers.

Tip: Finders Keepers has introduced a low sensory hour on Sunday from 9 to 10 a.m. The lights will be dimmed, music off, and noise and crowd levels kept low during this hour. When tulips, daffodils, and lilacs rear their pretty little heads, it signals the end of Melbourne’s chilly winter (at least on the calendar, this is Melbourne after all). With over 100,000 visitors each year, the Tesselaar Tulip Festival is a much-loved flower party running from September 14 until October 13. While the tulips—over a million of them—are the stars of the show, there are plenty of other reasons to visit including some fun theme days: Dutch days, Food, Wine and Jazz days, Children’s days with entertainment, and more. Dogs on leashes are also welcome.

Tip: Also held in Silvan, the Blue Hills Berries and Cherries annual Cherry Blossom Show runs from September 14 until October 2. On public holidays and the weekends, grab your mates and picnic under the cherry blossoms (or get a bite to eat from the food trucks) while listening to live music—it’s the perfect patch to unwind.



barge while waving (or hollering) ing Arbory Afloat home for the have striped parasols, lemon

serve as soon as the books option. Like Goldilocks, 42-acre complex can be in spring, it’s just right. and dry saunas, a hydro- with endless menus of and more.

the hilltop pool, where views over Fingal farm- set if you’re lucky. The by the beach, Melbourne ter is too cold and summer is

is a winner, and my absolute is Wye River Foreshore Camp- Nowadays it has top-notch facilities to some creature comforts if they’re

pet friendly and is open for a limited season Australia’s culture capital for good reason. One quirkier every year. This year’s oh-so-Melbourne theme

one of the few campsites in Victoria that’s April), spots book fast, so hop to it. Melbourne is is the Fringe Festival (October 1 to 20), which seems to get Out”—a delicious intersection of food and art. Expect an unconventional lineup of drag, comedy, art independent theater, music, and more. With formances, there’ll be something that tickles your fringe button.

Melbourne has tons of options. Some of the best venues include Her Majesty’s Theatre (Beauty and the Beast the Musical is on now); the Princess Turner Musical opens September 21), and the Comedy Theatre (Six the Musical is on now). trams for smooth jazz at the Melbourne International Jazz Festival (October 18 to 27). Held at various venues around town, the program includes a mix of plus the USA, Italy, Chile, and Brazil. If you’re craving a jazz fix throughout the year and not just festival time, head to Paris Cat Jazz Club tucked down Goldie and touring artists are listed on their website, or rock up Thursday to Sunday nights to catch one (or two) of their live acts.

porting venues: Grab dinner at Cooked (a barbecue pop-up at Fed Square), listen to saucy (read: erotic) storytelling at The Wheeler Centre, and see an after-dark edition seum. This city knows how to do a good market, and there are plenty to choose from all year-round. One of the most popular, the Winter Night Market at the Queen Victoria Market

A Peruvian’s guide to chifa and nikkei

The two styles showcase not only intense flavor with each bite, but also a deep, century-old history. After Peru abolished slav- ery in the 1800s, nearly 90,000 Chinese men, mostly Cantonese, came to the country to work as indentured servants. They brought over ingredients like ginger, soy sauce, and scallions, and started melding them with items found in their new land, like po’atoes, pineapples, and bananas. Thus, chifa, which translates from Cantonese to “to eat,” was born.

Nikkei kicked off similarly, with diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru beginning just before the turn of the 19th centu- ry. Lured by the advertised prospect of a paradise-like setting, thousands of Japanese men and women sailed to Peru, only to then be offered menial labor. Those who stayed created a new life—and cuisine—for the next generation.

The influences of those early Japanese and Can- including the Miami-based James Beard and her equally talented brother, Nando, Peru, the siblings followed in the cu- Fernando, who is ethnically Chinese, made ceviche at the beach from the shore. “A lot of my cooking today nostalgia and the memories I do says. “The dishes you see on are based on those memories food experiences I had.”

A consistent entry on The restaurant is helmed by the Li- ra, who spent much of his on- Japan. Japanese for “welcome,” ing, multi-course nikkei menu, assembled dishes served at each will include the yucamochi, Tsuju- times presented in inventive fashion. Tiraditos, an adaptation of the Spanish cuisine, but as Nando says, “you’re now able rant’s—not just nikkei-focused ones—with many

At their core, tiraditos consists of raw fish that’s cut in long strips and then “thrown” (hence the Spanish name) with citrus juices to cook, similar to ceviche. But unlike ceviche, which is marinated in citrus, tiraditos are sauced shortly before serving. From there, the sky’s the limit on creative interpretations. It’s hard to imagine a more authentic chifa-style restaurant than Chifa Chung Tong, a 30-plus-year-old family-run spot where the bold flavors are matched by the scores of bright red paper lanterns that hang from the ceiling. But it’s not the decor you’re coming here for—it’s the food, which includes a traditional chi- jakay dish with housemade stock and a newer, spicy version with roasted chili seeds. Flavor bombs are everywhere inside this elegant Lima restaurant, which serves up generously portioned, family-style chifa dishes. There’s a whole menu page devoted to arroz chaufa and its seemingly endless variations with duck, prawns, Chinese sausage, veggies, and more.



tonese settlers exist in today’s Peruvian chefs, award-winning Valerie Chang of Maty’s at Itamae AO. Growing up in Chiclayo, linary footsteps of their chef father, and their uncles, who oftentimes clams that they dug up along the as a professional has to do with have from growing up,” Nan- Itamae AO’s present menu to try and give my guests the

World’s Best List, this ma-born Mitsuhara Tsumu- the-job culinary training in Maida serves an ever-chang- with upwards of 12 artfully meal. If you’re lucky, the finale ra’s take on the fusion dish, often-

word “to throw,” are a staple of nikkei to find at traditional Peruvian variations, depending on the time of year.” At

Tips on how to stay fit and still enjoy festive Indian sweets

Tips for sticking to your diet through the festive season are everywhere – on the news, on social media, and in that recent conversation with your well-meaning aunt. However, according to nutrition and fitness profes- sionals, instead of taking an all-or-nothing approach, eat that dry fruit kheer and savour it – yes, truly enjoy it. But here’s the catch, instead of throwing caution to the wind and treating the festive season like a month-long all-you-can-eat party, if you simply add in some exercises and eat nutritious foods most of the time, your body can certainly handle a few ghee-laden mithais and fried tikkis and puris.

Balance your food wherever you can

According to Kolkata-based nutritionist Aparajita Saha, while high-calorie food during the festive season may be unavoidable, you can be smart healthier options. She says, “Sweets gulab jamun is high in sugar as well all kinds, but if you must indulge mishit doi, rasgulla, and cus-

When you arrive at a big, poten- you’re much more likely to in sight. “Instead of showing bre fruits, veggies, and go out to keep your hunger

Strike the ideal balance of

Apart from a moderate ap- amp up your workout schedule according to Bengaluru-based says, “Extra workouts will help you with your healthy diet routine, and with the outings.” “Exercise almo The flavor with each bite, but also a deep, ished slavery in the 1800s, nearly 90,000 Chinese men, mostly Cantonese, came to the country to work as indentured servants. They brought over ingredients like ginger, soy sauce, and scallions, and started melding them with items found in their new land, like potatoes, pineapples, and bananas. Thus, chifa, which translates from Cantonese to “to eat,” was born. Nikkei kicked off similarly, with diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru beginning just before the turn of the 19th century. Lured by the advertised prospect of a paradise-like setting, thousands of Japanese men and women sailed to Peru, only to then be offered menial labor. Those who stayed created a new life—and cuisine—for the next generation.



by indulging your sweet tooth with like rasgulla are high on sugar while as fat. It is good to control sweets of go for dark chocolate, sandesh, tards.”

tially indulgent meal famished, overeat and eat whatever is up hungry, snack on high-fi- whole grains before you in check,” Aparajita says.

fitness and fun proach to eating, you should and still stay on a healthy track, fitness instructor, Anil Shetty. He burn more calories, stay on track beat the stress that comes along two styles showcase not only intense century-old history. After Peru abol-

Foster emotional intelligence in children with these helpful tips

Mental health refers to an individual’s cognitive, behavioral and emotional well-being. It has an impact on our rationality, actions, and sensitivity. While deliberating about mental health, we usually tend to overlook the small aspects which mould a child’s character. The minds of children are very susceptible and flexible. Long term personality traits and preferences are formed during the coming-of-age period. Sitender Sehrawat, Social Entrepreneur & Meditation Guide who helps individuals to combat loneliness, explains, “A lack of focus on children’s emotional and social be taught that emotions like stress, anxiety, fear, and courage are natural be ongoing and integrated into their learning.” Can we rely merely on schools for holistic development isn’t enough—it requires a collaborative emotional awareness and self-awareness is essential for children to grow to explore and have fun, fostering both their emotional and intellectual emotional intelligence should begin early, in ways that match their de- inspire and kindle a child’s physical and mental capacity. In addition to activities have a direct mental and physical benefit for the child and are an by observing etiquettes and interactions better during outdoor play. Al- also help them better regulate emotions and feelings,” advises Dr Kedar Exposing children to outdoor activities helps them form positive insights to Sehrawat, “A lack of outdoor experiences can limit their curiosity and a deeper connection to nature. This connection brings ease and comfort, someone to communicate their feelings; they need to feel safe and relaxed work harder to build trust. As children grow older, they start evaluating creating a non-threatening environment free of fear or suppression. Mak- important skill to be developed in the children is how to navigate social ‘the feed’ on social media and to avoid doom scrolling as well as safety measures to ensure that they are not vulnerable to any online scams or dangers. Helping curate the child’s playlist and discussing the content viewed by them will also be beneficial,” advises Dr. Tilwe. Inculcating the habit of using healthy coping mechanisms to perceived stresses as well as helping them learn essential life skills will help build better mental hygiene.



well-being can lead to flawed perceptions about themselves and the world. Children should mechanisms to help them navigate life. Emotional development, just like academics, should schools for nurturing children’s mental well-being? Sehrawat answers, “Relying solely on effort from parents, schools, and the child’s environment. Building a strong foundation of into well-rounded individuals. Teach them how to live simply and enjoy life. Allow them growth.” Emotional training can’t be deferred until problems arise, and promoting a child’s velopmental stage. The idea to encourage outdoor activities and being with nature, is to helping the child enjoy and relax it also offers a great alternative for digital detox. “Outdoor essential part of growing up. Besides, a child is also able to enhance his/her social learning lowing them the use of a no-criticism safe zone to express their feelings and emotions will Tilwe, Consultant Psychiatrist, Fortis Hiranandani Hospital, Vashi.

of the world. If they have fun outside, they associate the world with happiness. According engagement. It also fosters collaboration with other children, interaction with animals, and which is something all humans feel naturally, even from a young age.” You can’t compel in a convivial setting. “Children often open up more easily with other kids, but adults must whether they feel safe sharing with adults like teachers. To encourage openness, the key is ing kids laugh and having fun is a great way to break down barriers,” avers Sehrawat. An media safely and responsibly. “This can include showing them how to critically understand the child’s playlist and discussing the content viewed by them will also be beneficial,” advises

SPORTS

Consistently winning medals increases accountability: Ace of the pistol Anish

New Delhi: Pistol ace Anish Bhawal is someone who can be considered an apt student of the game. When he's not actively shooting, the 23-year-old follows it very closely and his child-like eagerness to learn is infectious. The shooter from Karnal, Haryana has been following some of the legends of the sport for some time and he continues to watch some of sport's elite with high enthusiasm. Anish started training his guns against some of the world's best shooters when he was just a teenager. Just days before his 16th birthday, he had lined up alongside some of the world's best during the 2018 Asian Games. With his boyish charm and raw talent, he had the energy to cause an upset or two during those years. Seven years on, Anish has transformed into a young man. A man with steely determination. That is apparent when

he tries to break down his journey so far. That maturity has transformed his shooting too. He recently returned with three consecutive hits — Asian Championships silver, World Championships silver and World Cup Final silver. It was a chain reaction of sorts. One thing leading to another. First it was the Asian Championships, which had instilled that confidence in him. "My performance during the finals of the Asian Championships was quite strong. I had 35 hits out of 40, which is my best performance ever, especially at the international level. That lifted my confidence quite a bit. That is the confidence you can only earn by winning. You can have plenty of plans, you want to do this, you want to do that but things do not work like that," Anish recalled. "The build-up to the World Championships got even better. I was



working with coach Harpreet Singh and that because of that confidence, I could deliver during the World Championships qualification (585), which is also a really good score for me," he added. A sport that is considered to be highly technical, where the margins for error is minimal, the rapid fire pistol specialist felt the comfort zone that he obtained after chang-

ing his grip in the Summer is also one of the main reasons behind his success. "One thing is I got a new grip after the Munich World Cup. Soon after returning, I shot good scores in a domestic competition in Dehradun and then I went to Germany, I shot 590 twice (590 and 591) and won a medal in the finals. All the top shooters from Europe were participating.

Uncertainty over Bengaluru hosting IPL 2026 opener after stampede, league from March 26

New Delhi: The 19th edition of the Indian Premier League will be held from March 26 to May 31, but uncertainty remains over whether defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru will get to host a match at their home venue following a deadly stampede that halted big-ticket cricket at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. As per established norms, the Chinnaswamy Stadium should host the tournament opener since the home side, RCB, won the IPL 2025 title. However, the issue is unlikely to be clear until the BCCI releases the full schedule. While the stadium has received conditional clearance from the Karnataka government, it is still required to meet necessary safety and security standards following the deaths.



The franchise drew intense criticism for encouraging people to turn up for the street celebrations without obtaining requisite clearances from government agencies. "Every year, the IPL

opening match traditionally takes place at the home ground of the team that won the trophy in the previous season," recently elected Karnataka State Cricket Association president Venkatesh Prasad told reporters in Mysuru. After the stampede, Bengaluru also lost the Women's World Cup matches scheduled earlier this year owing to security and administrative concerns. The mini-auction for IPL 2026 will be held in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday, with three-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders entering the process with the biggest purse. The venue witnessed chaos and a stampede that left 11 people dead after RCB's trophy celebrations drew lakhs onto the streets in June this year, overwhelming the state machinery at short notice.

With 209 against Malaysia in the U19 Asia Cup, Abhigyan Kundu writes history in youth ODIs

Mumbai: Abhigyan Kundu scripted history on Tuesday, December, with a stupendous knock against Malaysia in the U19 Men's Asia Cup. At the Sevens Stadium in Dubai, the 17-year-old became only the second batter—and the first Indian—to score a double hundred in Youth ODIs. Earlier this year, South Africa's Jorich van Schalkwyk had become the first player to achieve the feat, and Kundu has now joined the elite list. In the Group A clash, Kundu hammered a scintillating 209 off 125 balls, laced with 17 fours and nine sixes, as India posted a mammoth 408 for seven in their 50 overs. He also registered the highest individual score by an Indian batter in Youth ODIs, surpassing Ambati Rayudu's unbeaten 177 against England in Taunton in 2002. "As we move forward into the knockout stages, my only aim will



be to keep converting opportunities. That will be my thinking going ahead," Kundu said at the mid-innings break. On break-

ing Ambati Rayudu's 23-year-old record, Kundu said, "It feels really good to know that I have created a record. Going for-

ward, I will try to break my own record again on a bigger stage." "My only thought was that the wicket was playing well and the pace and bounce were good. I felt that if I could stay at the crease for around 45 overs, the runs would come automatically because they were bound to bowl loose deliveries." "The idea was to build the innings. I have the temperament to switch gears whenever needed and start attacking at any point. So my focus was on staying at the wicket," Kundu added. Abhigyan Kundu became only the second batter in Youth ODIs to score a double hundred when India and Malaysia locked horns in the U19 Asia Cup clash on Tuesday in Dubai. Kundu is the leading run-scorer in the ongoing Asia Cup, amassing 263 runs from three matches at an average of 263 and a strike rate of 151.14.

As a player, my aspirations have grown: Andha Praggnan

Chess Grandmaster R. Praggnanandhaa is an Indian prodigy who has already achieved global recognition, including becoming the top-rated Indian player. His primary aspiration is to become a World Champion.

Mumbai: As one of the most in demand players on the chess circuit currently, R Praggnanandhaa has been constantly shuffling between cities and continents. Since the beginning of October alone, he has played in three continents. Sao Paulo for the finals of the Grand Chess Tour. Goa for the World Cup. In London, he featured in the London Chess Classic Open. That London event confirmed his place at next year's Candidates as he topped the 2025 FIDE Circuit spot. A reward for the consistency the Indian has displayed this year. But he does acknowledge that all the travelling has meant 'I have hardly been home this year'. It's also led to some situations where he has had no choice but to pack his bags and head to the airport even though 'I was dead'. In a conversation with select media after Day Two of the Global Chess League (GCL) in Mumbai on Monday, the Indian, who plays for Alpine SG Pipers in the league, opened up about the schedule, qualifying for the Candidates, and how 'I have become more ambitious' in terms of his playing style. Excerpts:

On how many days he has played competitive chess this year It's difficult to put it into numbers but I have hardly been home this year. I think I have had a two-week break but that's not really a break because by the time you feel relaxed,



the tournament is already there and you have to start playing. I would like a much longer break but the schedule is the same for everyone. Some players can decide to prioritise one thing or another. But since I wanted to play for the FIDE circuit from the start, I had to play all these tournaments.

Maybe I could have skipped something else but I think mainly the Classical tournaments are the ones that are more challenging and demand a lot of effort. No. I mean, if I'm playing these tournaments, it's probably because I also enjoy them. I mean, I enjoy playing freestyle but also I decided not to play the previous one, which just finished (at Cape Town), because it would have been too much travel. So, all these things

are there like you have to enjoy but also like taking care of the travels and schedules. I try to manage them. Even in this tournament, it is a long event but okay, 'it's one game a day'. So, it's not really, I mean, it's not that much of an effort like other events. I'm more ambitious. I want to win tournaments when I'm playing. And I'm able to do it (laughs). There is no one specific reason. It's also the hard work that I've been putting in for years, and I think that also showed. I didn't have a great last year, so I wanted to improve on my result. And also seeing D Gukesh winning the Maybe at some point earlier on. But now I think I'm mature enough that I can... I see it as an inspiration more than anything else.

Matheesha Pathirana has the solution for KKR's death overs IPL auction: Robin Uthappa

New Delhi: KKR's struggles at the back end of innings have been well documented over the past few seasons, often undoing strong work done in the powerplay and middle overs. Uthappa feels that adding a specialist death bowler, rather than spreading resources across multiple options, should be the franchise's priority this time around. Speaking on TATA IPL 2026 Auction War Room on JioStar, the former KKR star underlined why Pathirana fits that brief better than most available options. "It's all about planning and keeping things simple. We needed a good death bowler. With the kind of coaching staff KKR have, Pathirana can be very effective at the death. He has been a little off colour recently and has gone back into the auction pool, which I think will make him more motivated to perform. A change of franchise can also help," Uthappa said. Pathirana's presence in the auction pool has itself been one of the biggest talking points ahead of December 16. Chennai Super Kings dominated headlines around the retention deadline after completing a blockbuster trade for Sanju Samson, which saw Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran move to Rajasthan Royals. In the process, CSK made the surprising decision to release Pathirana to



free up space in their purse. The move raised eyebrows given Pathirana's impact for CSK. In just 32 IPL matches across four seasons, the Sri Lankan pacer picked up 47 wickets and was a key figure in CSK's 2023 title-winning campaign. Retained for Rs 13 crore ahead of last year's mega-auction, his release has been widely viewed as a strategic gamble by CSK, potentially aimed at buying him back for a lower price at the mini-auction. With a massive Rs 64.30 crore purse after releasing big names such as Andre Russell and Venkatesh Iyer, KKR have the finan-

cial muscle to outbid rivals. Additionally, some of the reports suggest KKR have already held informal talks with Pathirana's camp. Uthappa also addressed how Pathirana could fit into KKR's playing XI. He noted that alongside Varun Chakravarthy and Vaibhav Arora, the balance would remain intact, with Arora offering greater batting depth and Varun steadily improving his hitting. For KKR, investing in Pathirana could be less about experimentation and more about fixing a specific weakness — one that has often defined their season outcomes.

India players to play two Hazare game BCCI

Mumbai: The BCCI has made it mandatory for all current national team players to turn up for at least two one-day matches of the upcoming Vijay Hazare Trophy starting December 24. It is understood that with a gap of three weeks between the last T20I against South Africa in Ahmedabad (December 19) and the first ODI against New Zealand (January 11, 2026), the Board wants all its players to play domestic cricket. The diktat has been communicated to the players by the Ajit Agarkar-led national selection committee. This is in line with the recommendations of a review that was undertaken after the Test debacle in Australia earlier this year. Hardik Pandya and Suryakumar Yadav have also been asked to play at least two games for their respective teams. Save Shreyas Iyer, who will take a lot more time to get fit, others are expected to represent their state teams. December 24 and start of the New Zealand ODIs. It is up to them to play. But after the second T20I in Mullanpur, the players have been categorically told that playing Hazare isn't optional," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

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Venkatesh Iyer takes 70 percent pay cut IPL 2026 auction:

Mumbai: India all-rounder Venkatesh Iyer and South African batter David Miller endured massive pay cuts at the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 mini-auction.

Venkatesh Iyer, who had secured Rs 23.75 crore from Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) at the 2025 mega auction, was picked up by Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) for Rs 7 crore this time. This represented a significant 70.52 per cent reduction in his salary. However, the Maharashtra all-rounder may feel some relief, given how the pressure of his hefty price tag appeared to weigh on him last season. Iyer managed just 142 runs at a strike rate of 139 across 11 matches for KKR and bowled only a single over in what proved to be a disappointing campaign for the franchise. This was in stark contrast to his performances during KKR's title-winning run in 2024,

when he scored 370 runs at an impressive strike rate of 159 in 15 matches. Interestingly, KKR did enter the bidding for Iyer and pushed RCB in a two-way contest until the price reached Rs 6.80 crore. However,



they chose not to go beyond Rs 7 crore, having already invested heavily in Cameron Green, whom they acquired for a record Rs 25.20 crore earlier in the auction. Meanwhile, Delhi Capitals completed one of the biggest value purchases in IPL auction history by securing David Miller for just Rs 2 crore in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday, December 16. The experienced South African batter was widely expected to attract substantial bids, especially after being included in the first set of players to go under the hammer in a mini-auction featuring 359 players.