

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma Unveils Major Development Projects in Dibrugarh

Development projects in Dibrugarh district

Guwahati, Dec 18: The State Government’s push for infrastructure and women’s empowerment continued on Wednesday as Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma unveiled a number of development projects in the Dibrugarh region.

The chief minister gave seed money to thousands of self-help group (SHG) members under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan, opened a new sports complex, and lay the foundation stones for three major infrastructure projects.

The opening of the cutting-edge Abhaypur Rural Sports Complex in Moran, which cost Rs 12.32 crore to build, was the day’s high point. The facility, according to the chief minister, is a “modern sporting hub” intended to develop youthful talent from rural Assam. The complex has training facilities, a spectator gallery, and several playing fields. Additionally, Sarma lay the foundation stone for the 9.3-kilometer Moran Town Club–Gojpuria–Lukumari section of the Moran–Nitai Road, which will be widened and improved. The Rs 36.92 crore project, approved under Asom Mala 3.0, intends to increase local trade and improve road connectivity in upper Assam. Additionally,

Assam Chief Minister on Wednesday unveiled a series of development projects in Dibrugarh district, marking another step in the State Government’s push for infrastructure and women’s empowerment.

the chief minister lay the foundation stone for the Rs 19.5 crore Tingkhong Co-District Commissioner’s Office. The facility is anticipated to simplify the expanding subdivision’s administrative services. Furthermore, the chief minister lay the groundwork for the Rs 2.15 crore new Moran police station building, which is part of the MOITRI plan. Additionally, 23,791 members of self-help groups from the Tingkhong Legislative Assembly Constituency received seed money of Rs 10,000 apiece from the chief minister as part of the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA). The cash aid is intended to boost rural women’s entrepreneurship and small-scale income-generating ventures. The chief minister emphasized the investments’ transformative ambition when speaking to the crowd. Brick and mortar is not the only thing that exists nowadays. The development of our area will be supported by the roads and structures, but Assam’s



people are its greatest asset. We are starting a quiet economic revolution at the home level by directly providing seed funds to approximately

24,000 “baideoos” (sisters). The CM stated, “The Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan is our commitment to building a financially inde-

pendent and resilient woman in every home, and the Self-Help Groups of Assam are the engines of social and economic change in our villages.”

Delivery Executive Dies by Suicide After Alleged Public Assault; Three Arrested in Assam

Agartala, Dec 18: Tripura Police have arrested three individuals, including two women, from Assam in connection with the alleged public assault of a delivery executive who later died by suicide in North Tripura district, officials said on Thursday. The arrests were carried out with the assistance of Assam Police from Sribhumi district, formerly known as Karimganj. The accused have been identified as Sushmita Bhattacharjee, Sangita Bhattacharjee and Sourav Bhattacharjee. Sangita Bhattacharjee is reportedly a schoolteacher. Police said the accused will be produced before a court in Dharmanagar. Two other accused—Meghadeep

Bhattacharjee and Piu Dhar—remain at large, and a search operation is underway to apprehend them. The incident dates back to December 14, when the victim, Prasenjit Sarkar (23), a resident of Dharmanagar, was allegedly assaulted at his workplace following a dispute over the delivery of a parcel. Sarkar was employed as a delivery executive with a private courier company. According to the FIR filed by the victim’s family, three women and two men allegedly assaulted Sarkar in public, recorded the incident on video and later circulated it on social media. The video reportedly led to severe public humiliation and psychological distress.

Family members alleged that the incident deeply affected Sarkar’s dignity and mental health. Unable to cope with the trauma, the young man—who was the sole earning member of his family—allegedly died by suicide later the same day.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha, who also holds the Home portfolio, had earlier said that a thorough investigation is underway and assured that justice would be delivered promptly. The incident has triggered widespread protests across the state, with various political parties and social organisations demanding swift action and strict punishment for those responsible.

Dibrugarh University, Bihu Suraksha Samiti Sign MoU

Mangaldai, Dec 18: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Dibrugarh University (DU) and Bihu Suraksha Samiti, Assam, to work together on scholarly and research projects pertaining to Bihu culture. On December 15, the Memorandum of Understanding was signed in front of Dr. Jiten Hazarika, Vice-Chancellor of Dibrugarh University. The partnership will be carried out through Dibrugarh University’s Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Centre for Performing Arts and will concentrate on a number of Bihu-related academic and research endeavors. Dr. Parmananda Sonowal, Registrar; Dr. Pallabi Deka Bujarburua, Director of the Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Center for Performing Arts; Jatin Gogoi, President; and Reba Bora, Secretary of Bihu Suraksha Samiti, Assam, signed the Memorandum of Understanding.

In Brief

Cachar Police seize Two Pistols

Silchar: Within a week, Cachar police thwarted a second arms smuggling attempt, confiscating two handguns during a routine check. A vehicle from Mizoram was stopped at Dholakhal BOP, revealing an A.32 pistol, a 7.65 mm pistol, and five rounds of 7.65 mm ammunition. Two individuals, Lalkhumlien Hmar and Hmargaihzuol Hmar, were detained; the weapons were reportedly destined for HmarKhaliien in Lakhimpur.

Akoijam Urges Lok Sabha to Strengthen Rural Employment Act

Imphal: On December 17, Manipur MP Angomcha Bimol Akoijam raised significant concerns in the Lok Sabha regarding the VB-G RAM G Bill. He urged members to unite across party lines for legislation impacting citizens’ rights and lives, emphasizing the need to uphold Mahatma Gandhi’s legacy as essential to India’s democratic values. Akoijam cited Gandhi alongside influential historical figures, asserting his ideals must be respected. He mentioned two critical laws: the Right to Information Act, which enhances democratic accountability, and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, advocating for increased workdays under MGNREGA to alleviate rural distress.

U Soso Tham 85th death anniversary observed in Shillong

Shillong: Meghalaya commemorated the 85th death anniversary of U Soso Tham, a significant figure in Khasi literature, on December 18, 2025, at the U Soso Tham Auditorium, Shillong. The event, organized by the Department of Arts and Culture, celebrated Tham’s literary legacy that preserved the Khasi language and culture while fostering social consciousness. Notable attendees included the Governor of Meghalaya, Arts and Culture Minister Sanbor Shullai, and family members of Tham, highlighting the deep respect for his contributions. Often regarded as the father of modern Khasi literature, Tham utilized poetry and prose to promote cultural pride and self-awareness during a time when indigenous voices sought acknowledgment. His works continue to inspire scholars, writers, and young readers, showcasing the influential role of language in shaping identity and protecting tradition.

BJP alleges Akhil Gogoi

Guwahati: The Assam unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) claimed that Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi has “secret links” with the accused in the Zubeen Garg murder case. This allegation arose from comments made during a Facebook Live session, where Gogoi asserted that he obtained a copy of the SIT’s chargesheet. BJP spokesperson Jayanta Kumar Goswami countered this by stating that the chargesheet was only provided to jail authorities and authorized family members of the accused.

Akoijam Urges Lok Sabha to Strengthen Rural Employment Act

Imphal, Dec 18: Manipur Member of Parliament Angomcha Bimol Akoijam on Thursday, December 17, raised several concerns in the Lok Sabha during the discussion on the VB-G RAM G Bill. He urged members to look beyond party lines and work together while passing laws that directly affect people’s lives and rights. Speaking in the House, Dr. Akoijam said Parliament must protect the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. He warned that any attempt to reduce Gandhi’s moral and historical importance would weaken India’s democratic values. The MP referred to the well-known view that the modern world was shaped by Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Albert Einstein and Mahatma Gandhi, and pointed out that

Gandhi was the only non-Jew among them. He stressed that Gandhi’s ideals remain central to the country and must be respected by all parties. Dr. Akoijam also highlighted two major laws passed by Parliament—the Right to Information Act and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. He noted that RTI strengthened democratic accountability by giving people the right to question the State, while MGNREGA draws strength from the constitutional Right to Work under Article 21. The MP expressed concern about continuing rural distress and said the Centre should strengthen MGNREGA. He asked the Government to extend the number of guaranteed workdays to between 125 and 150 per year.

Madhab Dev University ties up with digitising Assam to preserve rare books and manuscripts

Guwahati, Dec 18: Madhab Dev University has taken a significant step towards preserving Assam’s literary and cultural heritage by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Digitising Assam project. The agreement was signed on December 15 and aims to digitise rare books, journals, literary works and manuscripts preserved in and around the university’s vicinity. The MoU was signed in the presence of Vice-Chancellor Arup Jyoti Chaudhury. The agreement was formally exchanged between Madhab Dev University Registrar Khiropodo Dutta and Mrinal Talukdar, Secretary of the Nanda Talukdar Foundation, which is leading the Digitising Assam initiative. Under the collaboration, the university will play a key role in identifying rare and valuable documents that need preservation. These include old manuscripts, journals and literary works kept in academic institutions, private collections and community spaces in



nearby areas. Once identified, these materials will be digitised so that they can be preserved in digital form and made accessible for future generations. Soon after the signing of the MoU, Vice-Chancellor Chaudhury, Mrinal Talukdar and a team of university professors visited a nearby Khamti village. During the visit, they examined several old manuscripts preserved inside a Buddhist temple. This visit marked the first on-ground step of the digitisation process under the new partnership and reflected

the practical beginning of the project. Speaking on the occasion, Vice-Chancellor Arup Jyoti Chaudhury said the collaboration would start from historically important locations and gradually expand to other areas.

He expressed hope that the initiative would help protect Assam’s rich and diverse literary traditions by combining academic support with modern digital technology. He also stressed the importance of preserving such materials, many of which are fragile and at risk of damage or loss over time.

Tripura Police Arrest Three Assam Men in Suicide Case

Agartala, Dec 18: Police in North Tripura have arrested three individuals in connection with the suicide of delivery boy Prasenjit Sarkar. The accused were taken into custody from Assam’s Sribhumi district, previously known as Karimganj, following continuous protests and mounting pressure from civil society groups. The arrested have been identified as Sushmita Bhattacharjee, Sangeeta Bhattacharjee, and Sourav Bhattacharjee.



Police said the arrests were made late Wednesday night during a special operation

based on specific intelligence inputs. Two other individuals linked to the case

remain at large, and efforts to trace them have been intensified. Senior police officials stated that the three accused were brought to North Tripura under tight security and presented before a local court, which remanded them to 14 days of judicial custody. A large number of people gathered outside the court premises during the deployment of additional police personnel to maintain law and order. The death of

Prasenjit Sarkar had triggered widespread public outrage across the district, with several organisations and local residents staging continuous demonstrations demanding swift arrests and strict punishment for those responsible. Protesters have maintained that justice will only be served once all those involved in the incident are brought to book. Police said the investigation is being conducted on multiple fronts to establish the full sequence

of events leading to Sarkar’s death. Raids are being carried out at several locations to apprehend the remaining accused, and authorities expressed confidence that they will be arrested soon. One of the accused even slapped him, and the entire incident was captured on video and later circulated on social media platforms. rests in Assam. of events leading to Sarkar’s death. group of people at his workplace.

RAM that is VB-G G The Lok Sabha approves a bill to replace MGNREGA over opposition protests

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Lok Sabha has approved the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill (VB-G RAM G Bill), replacing the MGNREGA from the UPA era, which previously guaranteed employment for rural populations.

Introduced on December 16 by Minister of Rural Development and Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chauhan, the new legislation promises a statutory guarantee of 125 days of wage employment annually in rural areas, with a funding allocation of ₹95,000 crore by the government.

Despite the passing of the bill by

VB-G RAM G Bill, or Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), is designed to ensure a statutory guarantee of 125 days of employment annually.

voice vote, opposition protests erupted during the session, with MPs vocally opposing the government, tearing copies of the bill, and throwing them towards the chair. The VB-G RAM G Bill seeks to establish a minimum of 125 days of employment, in contrast to the MGNREGA, which initially guaranteed at least 100 days but allowed states to extend this up to an additional 50 days. The NDA

government had further increased the guarantee to 150 days specifically for Scheduled Tribe communities residing in forest areas.

Chauhan emphasized that the proposed law is designed to ensure “comprehensive development of villages,” aiming to provide ample employment opportunities for all impoverished individuals, enhance their dignity, and offer greater protections for vulnerable groups, including the differently-abled, elderly, women, and those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The initiative represents a significant investment in rural employment and development.

Police uncover a scheme to sell mislabeled, expired food items; the ringleader is taken into custody

New Delhi, Dec 18: During a police operation, a racket selling expired and misbranded consumable products from well-known brands was dismantled, resulting in the arrest of the alleged mastermind, Atul Jalan. Jalan, a businessman from Tri Nagar, was accused of procuring near-expiry or expired products at extremely low prices through intermediaries, particularly from Mumbai. He manipulated essential product information such as expiry dates, manufac-

turing details, and prices, selling these items both online and at physical stores, often luring customers with attractive discounts.

The police action followed a complaint from the Central Licensing Authority of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, leading to a First Information Report (FIR) at the Crime Branch under various sections of the Indian Penal Code. Investigators discovered that an invoice presented by Jalan for chocolate products was

fraudulent, as the company listed on the bill denied issuing it. Additionally, it was revealed that expired items had been illegally diverted from authorized supply chains through third-party intermediaries and waste management operators.

In the course of the operation, police confiscated a substantial quantity of items, including chocolates worth approximately ₹6 lakh and other branded consumables totaling around ₹50 lakh. The in-



vestigation is ongoing, with authorities working to identify and address other individuals involved in this illicit operation.

Man arrested for perjury in Dharmasthala released from jail

Shivamogga, Dec 18: C N Chinnaiah, who was detained in Shivamogga district jail on charges of perjury related to the Dharmasthala case, was released on bail after fulfilling court-imposed conditions. His family provided a surety bond of ₹1 lakh to facilitate this release, which was executed after necessary documents were submitted on Tuesday. Chinnaiah was welcomed by his wife Mallika, sister Ratna, and legal counsel as he exited the jail on Thursday morning. It is important to note that the grant of bail is a procedural aspect and does not reflect on the accused's guilt or innocence. Chinnaiah remains obligated to cooperate with ongoing investigations into the case that pertains to serious allegations of multiple rapes, murders, and burials in Dharmasthala. The police reiterated that he must appear before investigators as needed, and failure to adhere to bail conditions may lead to additional legal repercussions. Previously, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) tasked with probing these allegations submitted a detailed 3,900-page report to the court, naming Chinnaiah among six accused individuals, highlighting discrepancies in his claims of numerous bodies being buried in the area over nearly two decades, some showing signs of sexual assault.

Allahabad University is criticized by a parliamentary panel for SC, ST exclusion, and open reserved positions

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) has criticized the University of Allahabad for its inadequate representation and recruitment practices regarding reserved category candidates. The committee's report highlighted concerns over unfilled SC and ST vacancies, the rejection of 14 candidates as not suitable (NFS) over the last three years, and the absence of SC and ST officials in the university's Executive Council (EC) for four of the past ten years. This situation has been labeled as “systemic inequity” and “structural exclusion,” undermining inclusive governance and recruitment practices within the university.

The panel, led by BJP lawmaker Faggan Singh Kulaste, urged the Union education ministry and the University Grants Commission (UGC) to



formulate policies ensuring mandatory SC and ST inclusion in the EC of all central universities. This reform is deemed necessary to prevent vacant reserved posts and unchecked NFS rejections, which contradict UGC regulations. The report criticized the lack

of suitable candidates cited by the university, highlighting that SC and ST individuals often qualify but are still dismissed due to perceived bias.

The committee stated that only a small percentage of faculty appointments over the past decade were made

■ *A report from a 30-member panel, headed by BJP lawmaker Faggan Singh Kulaste, was presented in the Lok Sabha and tabled in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.*

for SC (12.3%) and ST (5.6%) candidates, emphasizing the need for immediate corrective measures, including filling all vacant faculty positions within three months and preventing SC and ST roles from remaining unfilled for more than six months. Shortfalls in non-teaching posts were also reported, leading the committee to call on the ministry to develop an actionable plan with set deadlines, warning that delays threaten the fulfillment of reservation objectives in higher education. The University of Allahabad, one of India's oldest and most popular universities, operates 11 constituent colleges in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh.

To protect creators of digital content, Raghav Chadha calls for a change to the Copyright Act

New Delhi, Dec 18: Aam Aadmi Party leader Raghav Chadha has urged for significant amendments to the Copyright Act of 1957 to better protect the interests of digital content creators. Speaking during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, Chadha highlighted that the surge of digital content creators in India, such as educators, reviewers, entertainers, musicians, and influencers, relies on platforms like YouTube and Instagram not merely for entertainment but as legitimate sources of income and assets, representing their hard work.

He raised concerns over the issue of fair use and the arbitrary copyright strikes enforced by digital platforms, noting that creators risk the loss of their channels, even for brief uses of

copyrighted content intended for commentary, criticism, parody, educational purposes, or news reporting. Chadha emphasized that the determination of livelihoods should be grounded in law rather than being subject to the whims of algorithms, stating, “His years of hard work ends in a few minutes.”

While Chadha acknowledged the necessity of respecting the rights of copyright holders, he contended that fair use should not be misconstrued as piracy. He articulated that fair use, which allows for the incidental or transformative usage of content, should not erase the contributions of creators. He argued that innovation and creativity cannot thrive under the specter of fear induced by copyright restrictions.



Chadha pointed out that the existing Copyright Act, which dates back to 1957, is outmoded, lacking in definitions relevant to digital creators, and is

primarily focused on traditional forms of media like books and journals. To address these gaps, he proposed three key amendments. First, he called for a precise definition of digital fair use, including transformative purposes like commentary, satire, and critique, and encompassing incidental, proportionate, educational, public-interest, and non-commercial uses. Secondly, he advocated for the introduction of a proportionality doctrine in copyright enforcement, suggesting that minor uses of copyrighted material should not result in the total removal of a creator's content. Lastly, he insisted on the establishment of mandatory due process to be followed before any content is removed from platforms.

Oppn MPs protest the renaming of MNREGA on Parliament grounds, saying they “will not tolerate disrespect of Mahatma Gandhi”

New Delhi, Dec 18: Congress leaders and several Opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) staged a protest at the Parliament premises, marching from the Gandhi statue to Makkar Dawar against the renaming of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) to Viksit Bharat-G RAM G (Gramin Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission). Protesters carried posters with the slogan “Will not tolerate the disrespect of Mahatma Gandhi” (Mahatma Gandhi ka apman nahi sahenge nahi sahenge). In

addition, the MPs raised concerns about atrocities against minorities.

The previous day, the Lok Sabha experienced a lengthy 14-hour debate surrounding the Viksit Bharat-G RAM G Amendment Bill. Opposition members demanded that the proposed legislation be referred to the Standing Committee, while the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) defended the Bill as a significant step toward achieving a Viksit Bharat by 2047. Congress MPs, including K Suresh, voiced their strong objections to

the renaming of MNREGA and the proposed changes to funding patterns, which would shift from 100 percent central funding to 40 percent being sourced from state governments.

Suresh emphasized the importance of the Bill, noting that over 98 members participated in the discussion, indicating its significance. He also highlighted the subsequent plans for addressing air pollution in the Parliament following this debate. Another Congress MP, Vamsi Krishna Gaddam, criticized the gov-

ernment's intentions, stating that the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the scheme was indicative of a broader ideological agenda by the BJP and RSS, which he claimed was against the interests of the people.

Praniti Shinde, another Congress MP, accused the government of hastily pushing the legislation through, arguing that the ongoing discussion warranted more time. She suggested that the bill's name change was an attempt to erase Mahatma Gandhi's legacy and manipulate histori-



cal narratives, asserting that the legislation had been significantly weakened as a result.

Simultaneously, the ongoing 6th Session of the 18th Lok Sabha was set to

convene at 11 am the same day to address various legislative and policy matters, with a specific focus on air pollution in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). MPs including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Kanimozhi Karunanidhi planned to discuss the deteriorating air quality and its significant effects on public health. Proceedings would start with obituary references for former MPs that recently passed away, followed by scheduled questions and responses from relevant ministers.

Organ trafficking case in Kerala NIA discovers that donors were transferred to Tajikistan in addition to Iran

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 18: A racket involved in trafficking people for illegal organ donation, with connections to Iran, has been uncovered by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) while investigating a case in Kerala. The investigation was initiated on May 18, 2024, when immigration officials at Kochi airport intercepted an individual named Sabith, suspected of being part of an organized organ trafficking network. This led to the arrests of Sajith and Bellamkonda Ram Prasad from Vijayawada, who facilitated the travel of individuals for illegal organ transplants in Iran.

Madhu Jayakumar, the primary accused and a native of Palarivattom, was located and arrested at New Delhi airport on November 7, after being

absconding for over a year. During his interrogation, Jayakumar revealed details about 27 recipients who had undergone kidney transplants in Iran with his help, as well as names of 11 donors. Notably, the NIA affidavit indicated that despite ongoing investigations, two individuals from Odisha were sent to Tajikistan in 2025 for organ transplants intended for wealthy recipients. The NIA is seeking additional custody of Jayakumar to investigate further into the financial aspects of the illegal organ trade, indicating that substantial amounts of money obtained from kidney trafficking were converted into cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and USDT. Jayakumar's health club, Stemma Club, is alleged to have served as a front for these illegal opera-

tions. The NIA emphasizes the necessity of continued custodial interrogation to confront Jayakumar with various evidence, including bank records and digital materials retrieved from the mobile phones of other suspects. Despite the defense arguing against extended custody, the NIA court acknowledged the severity of the allegations and granted an additional three days of custody on December 15, with Jayakumar currently detained until the scheduled release.

Furthermore, the NIA chargesheet highlights that donors, often from impoverished backgrounds, were seduced with the promise of substantial compensation, only to have their passports confiscated upon arrival in Iran, with no payments made for their organ donations.

Create a panel to control the Thottappally spillway's sand mining

Kochi, Dec 18: The Kerala High Court has instructed the chief secretary of Kerala to form a panel to assess sand mining at the Thottappally spillway in Alappuzha district, ensuring that there are no detrimental ecological or environmental impacts. The panel will be led by the Alappuzha District Collector and will include senior officials from the departments of Irrigation, Water Resources, Forest and Wildlife, as well as local Panchayat officials and an NGO with relevant expertise. This decision follows appeals from the Green Roots Nature Conservation Forum and a local resident against the District Collector's order that allowed sand removal to manage flooding in Kuttanad during monsoons. The petitioners argued that the real intent behind the sand removal was to enable

unlawful mineral extraction, leading to ecological damage in sensitive areas that serve as turtle nesting grounds. The Court emphasized the necessity of evaluating the ecological consequences of the proposed sand removal, particularly given its location within the jurisdiction of the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority. It directed that any sand removal be conducted only after consulting the newly formed committee. The bench stressed the need for monitoring to prevent the flood management efforts from devolving into unregulated mining operations and emphasized the importance of safeguarding the ecological integrity of the area. The court concluded by mandating the committee's formation within two months to address these concerns.

The largest fraud in temple history was the TTD land transfer to Oberoi hotels Karunakar Reddy, leader of the YSRCP

Tirupati, Dec 18: Senior YSRCP leader and former TTD chairman B Karunakar Reddy has accused the NDA coalition government of conspiring to transfer valuable TTD land to the luxury hotel group Oberoi under the pretext of tourism development. Reddy claims that more than 20 acres of prime TTD land near Alipiri, appraised at over ₹460 crore in registration records and potentially worth over ₹3,000 crore in the open market, was exchanged for tourism department land valued at roughly ₹18 crore. He characterized this act as a significant scam in TTD's history and an outright looting of Lord Venkateswara's property.

In a press release, he expressed concerns over the lack of transparency in the

land exchange, noting that registrations were executed quietly, which raises questions about the intent and legality of the transaction. Reddy alleged that the government provided substantial concessions to Oberoi, including waiving nearly ₹2 crore in building funds and around ₹26 crore related to stamp duty and lease charges.

He pointed to an order from June 2, 2007, during the tenure of former Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy, which protected the seven sacred hills of Tirumala, contending that it is illegal and immoral to hand over such protected temple land to a private hotel chain. Reddy claimed the TTD has not benefited from this land transfer.

Additionally, he questioned the legality of construction

approvals, suggesting that such construction occurred without necessary forest clearances despite the presence of red sandalwood trees. He criticized assertions that a hotel with 100 rooms could necessitate the use of 20 acres of sacred land. Reddy urged religious leaders to oppose what he described as a systemic plunder of Lord Venkateswara's assets and held high-ranking officials, including Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan, responsible for this situation. He called for the cancellation of the land transfer and appealed to devotees to protect the sanctity of TTD properties. There has been no immediate response from the ruling TDP regarding these allegations.

Seminar in Siahya Reviews Impact of Key Road, Rail Projects

Siahya, Dec 18: A seminar was held at the Seminar Hall of Government Siahya College to discuss the possible social, cultural, and economic impacts of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP) Road and the Bairabi-Sairang Railway Line. The programme brought together government officials, college faculty, NGOs, and community representatives to share views on how the two major transport projects could affect life in Siahya district and neighbouring areas. Shri S. Lalremtuanga, Deputy Chief Executive Member of MADC, attended as the chief guest. In his address, he said that every development project comes with both benefits and challenges. He urged the community and authorities to be prepared in advance so that the positive outcomes can be maximised and the negative effects minimised. The KMMTTP road is poised to significantly impact the Lai and Mara districts, emphasizing the need for careful planning. It is anticipated to stimulate substantial economic activity, benefiting local families if managed responsibly. However, there are concerns about potential negative effects if projects are misused. Collaboration among government, churches, NGOs, and the public is essential to guide youth and preserve cultural identity. Additional Deputy Commissioner Shri Abraham Beirazi Khithie stressed the importance of awareness campaigns and mindset changes for local communities to seize economic opportunities.

Cachar Police Seize Two Pistols in Fresh Arms Smuggling Attempt

Silchar, Dec 18: Within a week, the second attempt at arms smuggling was successfully thwarted by Cachar police, who also confiscated two handguns during a check. One car traveling from the Mizoram side was stopped on Tuesday night during the regular naka checking in front of Dholakhal BOP, according to SSP Partha Protim Das. A.32 pistol with magazine, one 7.65 mm pistol with magazine, and five rounds of 7.65 mm live ammo were found by the police team during a comprehensive search of the car. Das added that two people were detained: Lalkhumlien Hmar of Imphal East and Hmargaihzuol Hmar of Aizawl. Das continued, “The weapons were going to Hmarkhalien in Lakhipur, which borders Manipur.”

Milind Soman leads IOACON Walkathon in Guwahati, calls on doctors to lead by example in fitness



Guwahati, Dec 18: A large number of doctors from Guwahati took part in an early morning walkathon today at the Sarusajai Sports Complex as part of the IOACON Walkathon 2025. The event aimed to spread awareness on the importance of bone, joint and musculoskeletal health. The walkathon was organised in association with actor and fitness champion Milind Soman, who led the participants during the walk. The organisers said the walkathon was planned to inspire community members to adopt healthy habits and engage in regular movement. The initiative highlights the growing need for preventive care, early awareness and active lifestyles to support long-term

wellness of bones and joints. Many senior and young orthopaedicians from the city joined the walk alongside residents and volunteers. Speaking at the venue before the walk began, Milind Soman said he was excited to be part of the event in Guwahati. He told the gathering that he travels across the country for various fitness and awareness campaigns, but he had rarely seen such a huge gathering of doctors participating together in a walkathon. He described the moment as special and thanked the participants for showing interest in fitness and preventive health. Soman said that fitness is a simple but important component of daily life. He said that even small exercises done regularly can make a

big difference over time. He advised the crowd to include simple movements such as push-ups in their daily routine. He said that push-ups not only increase strength but also support cardiovascular fitness, and can be done easily at home or at work without equipment. He said that fitness should be seen not as a difficult task but as a habit that can be developed with consistency. During his brief address, he also highlighted a concern about the health of medical professionals themselves. He said that while doctors advise the public to stay healthy, nearly 30 percent of doctors in the country fail to take care of their own physical fitness. This, he said, was worrying because doctors should lead by example

and inspire their patients through their own practice of healthy living. He encouraged doctors to make time for exercise and self-care, even with busy schedules, and reminded them that their health is equally important. Orthopaedicians present at the walkathon shared that musculoskeletal problems are increasingly affecting people across age groups due to sedentary lifestyles, long screen time hours, lack of exercise, and poor posture. They said early awareness, preventive care, and correct posture can reduce long-term health risks and lower the burden on healthcare systems in the future. Participants stressed that strong bones and healthy joints depend not only on movement but also on balanced nutrition and timely medical care. Many participants said the walkathon was a welcome initiative that brought the medical fraternity and citizens together in a shared effort toward better health. Some participants said early morning walks refresh the body and mind and help strengthen community bonds. Others expressed hope that such events would encourage more people to adopt active lifestyles.

Tripura Govt sanctions Ex gratia for families of deceased in brick kiln fire

Agartala, Dec 18: The Dhalai district administration in Tripura has sanctioned Rs 25.16 lakh as ex-gratia assistance for the families affected by Wednesday’s tragic fire at Aparashkar Brick kiln Factory at Nakful under Kamalpur subdivision of the state. “Rs 4 lakh each has been approved for the families of the deceased, along with financial aid for the critically and less critically injured from the SDRF funds,” Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha informed on Thursday. Two critically injured persons would be provided Rs 2,50,000 each as financial assistance. “We stand firmly with the bereaved families and injured persons, ensuring timely relief and assistance during this difficult period,” Saha said.

A memorandum issued from the district administration on Thursday stated that the financial aid shall be provided the next of kin of the deceased persons and to the injured persons, after maintaining all codal formalities. “The payment shall be made from the State Disaster Relief Fund,” it stated. According to reports, a brick kiln chimney collapsed in Tripura’s Dhalai district on Wednesday, killing five workers and leaving three others injured. Three labourers died on the spot after the structure came down at the kiln in the Kamalpur area, police confirmed. Two others reportedly succumbed to their injuries during treatment in hospital.

3,100 indigenous families receive land pattas in West Karbi Anglong

Guwahati, Dec 18: Assam Cabinet Minister Pijush Hazarika on Thursday said that the state government is committed to protecting the land rights of indigenous people under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The minister made the remarks at a programme held in Amri under West Karbi Anglong district. The event was organised for land patta distribution under Purtimi Akemang 2.0, which is part of Mission Basundhara 2.0. Minister Hazarika attended the programme along with Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang and MLA Dorsing Ronghang. Officials said that land pattas

were handed over to 3,100 indigenous beneficiaries at the Amri Sports Complex. The government said the distribution aims to strengthen land ownership for indigenous families and provide legal protection to their land. The programme focused on improving dignity, restoring rights, and securing the future of local communities. Speaking at the gathering, Minister Hazarika said that the government is working to ensure that indigenous people have full rights over their land. He said that Mission Basundhara is a key step toward resolving land-related issues and providing transparency in land records. During the event, more than



100 people from the Congress and other political parties formally joined the BJP. The joining ceremony was held at the Amri Mandal of-

fice in Umswai in the presence of the CEM, MLA, Executive Members, and Members of the Autonomous Council. Minister Hazarika welcomed

the newcomers and urged them to work towards building a “Viksit Assam” and strengthen development initiatives in the region.

BJP alleges Akhil Gogoi has ‘secret links’ with accused in Zubeen Garg murder case

Guwahati, Dec 18: The Assam unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party today alleged that Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi maintains “secret links” with the accused in the Zubeen Garg murder case. The allegation was made through a press release issued from the BJP state office at Vajpayee Bhawan in Guwahati. BJP state spokesperson Jayanta Kumar Goswami raised the issue while responding to comments made by Akhil Gogoi on social media regarding the chargesheet filed by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in the case. Goswami referred to a Facebook Live session held by Gogoi on December 16, during which the MLA claimed that he had obtained a copy of the chargesheet related to CID Police Station Case No. 18/2025.

Questioning this claim, Goswami said that as per the order passed in PRC Case No. 4084/2025 by the Chief Judicial Magistrate’s court in Kamrup (Metro), copies of the chargesheet were forwarded only to the concerned jail authorities where the seven accused are lodged. These include key accused Siddharth and

Shyamkanu. The BJP spokesperson further said that a pen drive containing the chargesheet was handed over only to authorised family members of the accused who were present in court. He stated that no copy of the chargesheet has been officially provided to any third party so far. “Under these circumstances, if Akhil Gogoi has obtained a copy of the chargesheet, it could only have come from the accused themselves or their authorised family members,” Goswami alleged. He claimed this raised serious questions and indicated possible “secret links” between the MLA and the accused or their families. Goswami also accused Gogoi of repeatedly trying to undermine the SIT’s chargesheet. He alleged that the MLA was acting like a defence lawyer for the accused and was indirectly attempting to shield them. The BJP leader further claimed that Gogoi was part of a wider effort to create pressure on government witnesses identified by the SIT, which could affect the prosecution’s case.

Assam CM Extends Financial Aid to Arunachal Crash Victims’ Families

Guwahati, Dec 18: Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister of Assam, met with the families of 20 fatalities at the Gelapukhuri Tea Estate in Tinsukia district on Wednesday. The victims perished in a terrible traffic accident earlier this month in neighboring Arunachal Pradesh. The Chief Minister gave the grieving families checks totaling Rs 5 lakh each as ex gratia aid from the Assam government while he was there. Additionally, he declared that the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund would give each family an extra Rs 2 lakh. The Tinsukia District Commissioner was instructed by the Chief Minister to make sure that all qualified households be covered under the Orunodoi initiative right away. Additionally, he directed officials to provide ration cards to people without one so they could receive free rice and other necessities at reduced prices.

For those who have not yet received aid, I implore the district administration to expedite Orunodoi coverage. He said, “Those without ration cards must be given one right away.” Sarma also promised the impacted families ongoing support, which would



include helping the children affected by the tragedy with their education and looking into job options in collaboration with the tea estate authorities. The Chief Minister highlighted more general issues, such as the necessity of skill development and economic growth in Assam to lessen distress migration. Although skill development is crucial, he claimed that people are forced to leave the state in search of greater pay due to a lack of suitable employment. He emphasized the necessity of creating enterprises in Assam and setting up facilities for skill development in tea garden regions. In the meantime,

the owner of the truck from Bihar involved in the collision was taken into custody by Tinsukia Police with assistance from Bihar Police. Bhu-shan Kumar has been recognized as the accused. This arrest brings the overall number of suspects in the case to three. Two contractors who had previously employed the laborers were also taken into custody. Twenty persons were killed when a vehicle carrying twenty-one laborers fell into a nearly 1,000-foot gorge in the Anjaw area of Arunachal Pradesh on December 8. Assam Medical College and Hospital in Dibrugarh is treating the only survivor.

Mizoram Issues 18,000 ILPs at Sairang Railway Station

Aizawl, Dec 18: Aizawl district police issued 18,193 Inner Line Permits (ILPs) at Sairang Railway Station between September 14 and December 17, reflecting stricter monitoring of entries into the state, Superintendent of Police Zosangliana, IPS, said on Thursday. At a press briefing, the SP stated that nearly 60 per cent of the permits were granted to tourists, while the remaining 40 per cent were issued to labourers. During the same period, police deported three individuals who arrived by train without valid ILPs and removed 36 beggars from the district. Zosangliana added that weekly ILP verification

drives are being conducted at all police stations. So far this year, 160 such drives have taken place, resulting in the identification of 932 people either without valid permits or using invalid ILPs. Seventy-seven cases have been registered in connection with these violations. Regarding overall crime in the district, the SP said 1,764 cases have been recorded in Aizawl from January to December 17. These include 11 murder cases, 10 of which have been solved, with one still under investigation. There have been 2,000 accused individuals have been arrested in connection with registered cases. Property-related crimes, including theft and burglary,



year, with charge sheets filed in 1,009 cases. Investigations are ongoing in 421 cases, while 333 cases remain unresolved. Around 2,000 accused individuals have been arrested in connection with registered cases. Property-related crimes, including theft and burglary,

made up 66 per cent of all offences. Bawngkawn Police Station recorded the highest number of cases, registering 636 incidents this year. On drug-related offences, incidents or causes still under investigation. Zosangliana concluded that strict law and being.

BUSINESS

UTI AMC, HDFC, and Nippon India all rise to 7%

Mumbai: In Thursday's intraday trading on the BSE, the share prices of asset management companies (AMCs) such as HDFC Asset Management Company, Nippon Life India Asset Management (NAM India), Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC, and UTI Asset Management Company increased by up to 7% in an otherwise sluggish market. By contrast, the BSE Sensex was down 0.15 percent at 84,436 at 9:30 AM. On the BSE, shares of NAM India increased 7% to ₹925.95, while shares of HDFC AMC (₹2,674.95) and

UTI AMC (₹1,165.45) increased 5% and 4%, respectively, to ₹801. In order to improve investor transparency while balancing the impact on asset managers, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on Wednesday redesigned the cost framework for the domestic mutual fund (MF) market. In order to increase transparency, the Sebi has made significant revisions to the MF legislation regarding spending ratios and other criteria. In order to mitigate the impact of exit load, the regulator eliminated a provision that permitted AMCs

to charge an extra five basis points. Additionally, the cap on brokerage and transaction costs was lowered, with net cash market brokerage falling from 8.59 to 6 basis points and derivative transactions from 3.89 to 2 basis points. Statutory levies such as securities transaction tax (STT), CTT, GST, and stamp duty being excluded from the total expense ratio (BER) limits. This fiscal year, the plans will be announced, and they will take effect on April 1, 2026. At the net level, yields that AMCs earn are probably going to be impacted in the low

to mid-single digits, and some of that impact will probably be passed on to distributors. Lowering the net brokerage cost from 8.59 bps to 6 bps should lessen some of the impact, but removing an extra 5 bps will negatively affect yields. In the draft, this was suggested at 2 bps, which Sebi pointed out was not practical because research and brokerage services are combined. According to a note from ICICI Securities, BER has also been lowered, but the majority of the impact would be mitigated by regulatory charges and separate trading fees.

Aizawl families anticipate Nissan's GRAVITE, designed for evolving household needs

Aizawl: Nissan Motor India said its upcoming MPV for Indian families will be called GRAVITE and will be launched in early 2026. The seven-seater represents a renewed focus on comfort, modularity and convenient travel for diverse family arrangements.

According to the company, the GRAVITE has been conceptualised to align with evolving household lifestyles across India. Nissan said it will feature modular seating, flexible storage and intuitive cabin design suitable for extended road journeys as well as everyday errands. The name

draws inspiration from gravity, symbolising balance, comfort and connection among family members.

In Aizawl, dealers said families are increasingly prioritising cabin flexibility and comfort for frequent travel toward Lunglei, Champhai and Serchhip. Local consumers said long-distance travel often requires space for family members as well as luggage and supplies, making modular seating particularly valuable.

Nissan confirmed the vehicle will be produced at the Chennai plant, strengthening India's role in the company's global manu-



facturing chain. The GRAVITE will be followed by Tekton SUV in mid-2026 and a seven-seater C-SUV in 2027 as part of Nissan's renewed product offensive.

Auto retailers in Aizawl said a comfortable, practical MPV with flexible storage could find

demand among growing middle-income families, especially if servicing networks expand in Northeast markets. Consumers said that fuel efficiency, road handling and cabin comfort will strongly influence purchase decisions.

Today, shares of Nippon Life, HDFC AMC, UTI, and ABSL AMC increase by 7%



New Delhi: Shares of asset managers such as Nippon Life India Asset Management Ltd, HDFC Asset Management Company Ltd (HDFC AMC), UTI AMC and Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC Ltd rose as much as 7 per cent in Thursday's trade after the Securities and Exchange Board of India announced reforms to the total expense ratio (TER) framework. Analysts said the changes improved transparency, as the benefit of exit loads had been withdrawn, and were viewed as positive for long-term investor trust. They added that the revised TER structure also protected the broader mutual fund ecosystem by ensuring a more equitable distribution of costs and incentives.

"We believe that while making the charges more transparent for customers, the approved changes also protect the mutual fund ecosystem, which has generated wealth for retail customers and enhanced financial inclusion. The separation of levies while changing the TER structure should counter the impact from removal of exit load, while the cut in brokerages is much lower

than initially proposed. We expect the impact on AMCs, distributors and brokers to be very marginal," JM Financial said. Centrum Broking said the reduction in brokerage costs is expected to be largely neutral for AMCs, as the actual impact is likely to be much lower than indicated in the consultation paper.

The proposals will be notified in this fiscal, and will come into effect from April 1, 2026.

Nippon Life India Asset Management Ltd led the gainers, climbing 7.06 per cent to Rs 925.95. HDFC Asset Management Company Ltd surged 5.26 per cent to Rs 2,674.95. Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC Ltd gained 3.7 per cent to Rs 801 apiece. UTI AMC jumped 3 per cent to Rs 1,147.40 apiece. To be sure, SEBI has changed the way mutual fund expenses are calculated by introducing a Base Expense Ratio (BER) and separating taxes and regulatory charges from fund expenses. Under the new system, the Total Expense Ratio (TER) will clearly show three parts: the base expense (BER) charged by the fund, brokerage costs, and statutory or regula-

tory levies. Charges such as STT or CTT, GST, stamp duty, SEBI fees and exchange fees, which are now charged to the scheme on an actual basis over and above BER. Change in TER regime does not cut revenues for the mutual funds, JM insisted. "BER is below the TERs by 15bps on equity and hybrid schemes with an AUM of less than Rs 2,000 crore (except for AUM of Rs 500 crore to Rs 750 crore) and by 10bps for larger schemes. For schemes with an AUM more than Rs 2,000 crore, the final BER is 5bps above that proposed in the October draft," JM said. Earlier, GST on commissions to agents and other statutory levies were paid out of the TER. Looking at scheme P&L statements, we estimate that the removal of GST would give a benefit of 12-13 basis points to the larger AMC. "With a 10bps cut in slab, this will benefit the AMCs by 2-3bps. This would offset the adverse impact due to removal of exit load. For debt and other schemes, mutual funds generally operated below the TER limits, so, we do not see any impact on those schemes," JM said.

Britannia NutriChoice announces new millet cookies with Aamir Khan as campaign face

Aizawl: Britannia NutriChoice today announced the launch of its latest brand campaign built on the proposition that "one good choice makes the next one easier." The campaign features Aamir Khan as the face of the brand and seeks to initiate consumer conversations on mindful daily decisions, illustrated through relatable moments such as choosing whether to add sugar to tea. Conceptualised by Lowe Lintas, the films demonstrate how one positive action can set off a chain of healthier choices. As part of the campaign activation, Britannia NutriChoice expanded its portfolio with the launch of 100% Millets Apple Cinnamon flavoured cookies*, led by jowar and fortified with foxtail and ragi millets. The variant contains no added sugar, no palm oil and no maida, aligning with the brand's commitment to provide convenient snacking made with good ingredients. Priced at ₹55 for a 100g pack, the product will be available via modern trade stores and q-commerce platforms across



key metro markets.

Siddharth Gupta, General Manager – Marketing, said the new proposition is intended to make healthier snacking accessible and intuitive, while Lowe Lintas leadership underscored the behavioural influence of small choices.

Retail insights from Aizawl indicate increasing consumer interest in millet-based packaged snacks, particularly in local supermarkets across Dawrpui and Mission Veng. Traders anticipate that NutriChoice's new variant may attract young shoppers seeking "better-for-you" biscuit options during tea breaks.

Trump H 1B visa fee likely to hit Indian IT firms and reshape

New Delhi: Motilal Oswal Financial Services (MOFSL) reiterated its 'Buy' rating on Tata Power Company Ltd (Tata Power), following an analyst meet in Bhubaneswar on December 15, attended by senior management. MOFSL said the Tata group firm, looking to double Ebitda to Rs 30,000 crore by FY30, was close to finalising a new special power purchase agreement mechanism for the Mundra plant. It also has plans to sharpen its focus on captive generation projects. The domestic brokerage maintained its 'Buy' rating on Tata Power with a sum-of-the-parts-based target price of Rs 500 per share, citing long-term earnings visibility across transmission, renewables and



distribution, alongside potential upside from Mundra normalisation. A total of 43.36 lakh retail investors were invested in this In renewable energy, MOFSL said the company targeted total installed capacity of 20 GW by 2030. In rooftop solar, management expected revenue to grow at a CAGR of around 38 per cent over FY25-30. In hydro and

pumped storage, MOFSL said the 600 MW Khorlochhu and 1,125 MW Dorjilung hydro projects were expected to be commissioned in 2029 and 2032, respectively. The 1,000 MW Bhiyapuri pumped storage project, targeted for 2028, and the 1,800 MW Shirwata project, targeted for 2029, were under development. period. MOFSL said Tata Power.

Maruti Suzuki celebrates 35 lakh WagonR units, launches Swivel



New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki's WagonR reached a new milestone of a total production of 35 lakh units since it was launched in December 1999. The car joins the Alto and Swift as models that have reached this high number. The car is sold in more than 75 countries and recently crossed 1 crore sales globally in August 2025. Hisashi Takeuchi, Managing Director and CEO of Maruti Suzuki India Limited, noted that the production milestone shows the trust customers have in the brand. "The WagonR has been highly appreciated for aspects like its iconic tall-boy design, spacious interiors and fuel efficiency, which aptly reflect our

customers' needs and expectations. We are deeply grateful for their continued support and remain committed to providing 'Joy of Mobility' for generations to come," he noted. The swivel seat is a special chair that turns toward the door. This design helps passengers sit down and get out of the vehicle with less effort. Maruti Suzuki worked with a startup called TRUEAssist Technology Private Limited to create this solution. The seat is available as a kit that fits into the car at Maruti Suzuki Arena dealerships. Owners can put it in a brand-new WagonR or add it to a car they already own.

The car maker chose the

WagonR for this project because of its tall design. This shape provides a lot of head room and leg room for passengers. At first, the swivel seat was available at 200 dealerships in 11 different cities. The company plans to offer it in more places if many customers want it. The kit passed safety tests and comes with a 3-year warranty. It does not change the main structure of the car. Naina Padaki, Founder of TRUEAssist Technology Private Limited, said, "Working with the R&D engineers of Maruti Suzuki has been a delightful experience, and it is inspiring how deeply they think of the customers in every aspect."

Intel appoints former Trump advisor Robin Colwell to head government affairs

New Delhi: Intel has announced three senior leadership hires in government affairs, marketing & communications, and advanced technology strategy. Among the three new leaders, Intel announces former Trump advisor Robin Colwell as the new head of the company's government affairs. As per Intel's newsroom post, Colwell was deputy assistant to President Donald Trump and deputy director of the National Economic Council. There, she was responsible for developing Administration policies across all sectors of the U.S. Now at Intel, Colwell will look after the company's global engagement with policymakers, regulators, and industry leaders. Robin Colwell will be based in Washington, D.C. For Colwell, it's a very crucial role since she will be dealing with trade rules and regulations in the U.S. and abroad, all while managing Intel's relationship with the President and the federal government. Lip-Bu Tan, CEO of Intel, said, "Robin's broad experience and deep understanding of complex legal and policy environments will be invaluable to Intel." He further added, "She has a rare ability to navigate dynamic policy environments and deliver outcomes that Weckesser as senior vice president and chief marketing and communica-



tions officer (CMCO), and Pushkar Ranade as interim chief technology. These are announcing major sensor leadership changes that will reshape Intel's strategic direction and strengthen its executive team. Robin Colwell has joined Intel as

senior vice president of government affairs, where she will lead the company's global engagement with policymakers, regulators, and industry leaders. She will focus on building trust, advancing Intel's strategic priorities, and position-

ing the company at the intersection of public policy, technology, and manufacturing. Her leadership will be critical as Intel navigates policy, trade, national security, and opportunities with governments around the world.

Bharti Singh Backlash Erupts Over Body-Shaming Joke on Show

Mumbai: Comedian & Laughter Chefs Season 3 host Bharti Singh is caught up in a controversy due to body-shaming comments that were made in a recent episode of her show. This happened when the cast of Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2 visited her program for promotional shoots, and her comments about them have apparently drawn negative responses from audiences.

In the lighter moments, Bharti joked about the actress Ayesha Khan's height in comparison to comedian Krushna Abhishek's height. She said she could smell the arrival of Krushna when she saw the former actress, as if she was comparing the tallness of the actress to his own height. The joke immediately sparked an awkward reaction from the audience present. Ayesha Khan was visibly uncomfortable in the aftermath of this statement. This is because she was observed trying to inch closer to Kapil Sharma while attempting to cover up her stomach. Kapil Sharma, observing everyone was uncomfortable, asked Bharti if she was complimenting them. Actress Parul Gulati also intervened, telling them that she should not make a statement like that. This led to some people accepting her apology, including her, who apologized with, "Sorry, I am pregnant." This incident has again brought to the fore the concerns regarding body image, respect, and the limits of comedy on television.



Chiranjeevi and Venkatesh Chemistry Elevates Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu as Major Highlight
Chiranjeevi's MSVPG releases January 12, 2026

Hyderabad: The much-anticipated Chiranjeevi starrer Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu is shaping up to be a special treat for fans. Adding to the current excitement that Megastar will be seen in a comic role, here's another major highlight from the breezy entertainer. Venkatesh will be seen in an extended cameo in the film, sharing screen space with Chiranjeevi. And their combination scenes promise to be one of the most entertaining portions of the film.

According to sources, Venkatesh's appearance will run for nearly 20 minutes making it far more than a brief guest role. His por-



tion includes a full-fledged song, a high-energy fight sequence, and several comedy scenes featuring himself and Chiranjeevi. Given the impeccable comic timing of Chiranjeevi and Venkatesh, expectations are high that their scenes will be among the biggest highlights of the film. Industry insiders suggest that

makers released a shadow visual from the song that features the two actors. Buzz is that the song is set to be released as a New Year special, giving fans a festive treat ahead of the film's release. The announcement itself has already created significant buzz on social media with audiences eagerly waiting to see the two stars grooving together

Director Anil Ravipudi is known for churning out family entertainers and comedy-driven narratives. And with star power, humour, music, and mass appeal coming together, Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu is emerging as one of the most exciting Telugu films to watch out for next year.

Devoleena Celebrates Son Joy's 1st Birthday with Adorable Post

Mumbai: Devoleena Bhattacharjee, who won hearts as Gopi Bahu, embraced motherhood last year and frequently shares adorable moments of her baby boy online. Celebrating her son, Joy's first birthday on December 18, Devoleena shared a heartfelt Instagram post with a cute photoshoot and a sweet note for her little one. Sharing a series of adorable pictures of her son posing amid a cute setup, Devoleena's post melted hearts online. Captioning the pictures, the Bigg Boss 13 contestant wrote, "One year ago, my favourite human was born. Today, we celebrate him." She added, "Happy 1st birthday, my joy, my world. Mumma loves you a lot, jana..." The post also included a few sweet affectionate phrases in Assamese. Celebrities



like Daljiet Kaur, Kajal Pisal, Supriya Raina Shukla, and her Saath Nibhana Sathiya co-star Bhavini Purohit Dave reacted to the post and wished the munchkin a happy birthday. Fans were quick to shower Joy with birthday wishes. One user called him "cute," while another wrote, "God bless." A fan commented, "Such a cutie pie! Lots of love and blessings to this handsome boy." It has truly been a wonderful year for Devoleena. Not long ago, the actress celebrated her third wedding anniversary and lovingly described her husband as caring and supportive.

Kartik and Ananya's Chemistry Shines in 'Tu Meri Main Tera' Trailer

Mumbai: The trailer of the upcoming romantic entertainer Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri has finally been unveiled, and it is already creating a strong buzz online. Starring Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday in the lead, the trailer promises a refreshing blend of love, humour and emotional chaos. The film also stars Jackie Shroff, Neena Gupta and others.

Taking to their Instagram handles, both actors shared the trailer and wrote, "Kisse, kahaniya, charche, Dastaan.... Adhoore ishq ke hi hote hai #TuMeriMainTeraMainTeraTuMeri in cinemas 25 Dec." The trailer opens with the introduction of the lead actors. They are off to a vacation and happen to share the same place, which makes them friends later. However, they slowly fall in love, but there is an emotional twist. However, fans are loving their fresh romance. As part of the film's promotional spree, the lead actors made a special appearance at an event, where they were joined by the San Francisco-based Punjabi music sensation Talwiinder, who crooned the song Tenu Zyada Mohabbat from the film. In an Instagram video, Kartik, Ananya and Talwiinder were seen sharing the stage, creating buzz among fans. The Bhoool Bhulaiyaa ac-



tor kept his look casual yet stylish in a white T-shirt paired with denim jeans and a beige jacket, while Ananya made head turns in an all-red jumpsuit. Talwiinder, who is known for maintaining an air of mystery around his identity, stayed true to his signature style. He appeared on stage in a gothic-inspired outfit and with his iconic skeleton face makeup. The trio warmly greeted each other on stage before addressing the audience one by one. Kartik and Talwiinder's first joint appearance came amid the ongoing speculations that the actor could be the singer himself, who famously conceals his identity behind makeup.

Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri is directed by Sameer Vidwans, who previously collaborated with Kartik on Satyaprem Ki Katha. The film is produced by Dharma Productions and Namah Pictures, with Karan Johar, Adar Poonawalla, Apoorva Mehta, Shareen

Mantri Kedia, Kishor Aroora, and Bhumika Tewari as producers. The romantic drama follows the love story of two people who fall for each other as they try to find themselves. However, things take a turn when family pressures challenge their relationship, and they decide to part ways, hoping to meet again. Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri is scheduled to release at the theatres on December 25, coinciding with Christmas. In addition to the lead pair, the film features Neena Gupta, Jackie Shroff and Tiku Talsania in supporting roles. The trailer's positive reception—with audiences expressing their immediate love for the pair's innocence and infectious energy—has built significant anticipation for its release. Originally planned for an earlier date, Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri has been preponed and is now slated for a grand theatrical release on December 25, 2025.

BTS Reunion: Jungkook Teases Important Spring 2026

Agency: BTS fans can hardly contain their excitement as Jung Kook teases the group's highly anticipated 2026 comeback. The K-pop superstar is the latest cover star for Elle Korea, appearing on nine different versions of the magazine's December issue. While promoting his partnership with Chanel Beauty, Jung Kook gave fans a glimpse into what the first half of next year has in store.

"I think this spring will be more important than ever," he said, hinting at BTS' upcoming album and tour. "So I sincerely hope you all have a safe and enjoyable spring." His comments come as the septet prepares to reunite after completing their mandatory military service. Earlier this year, members RM, Suga, V, and Jimin were discharged from the South Korean military in June. Shortly afterward, they reunited with Jin and j-hope on



camera to announce that a new BTS album and tour were in the works. In October, RM further teased fans, saying, "Please look forward to late March," signaling that the group's activities will officially kick off in the spring of 2026. While BTS was on hiatus, the members focused on individual projects.

Jung Kook released his solo track "Never Let Go" during the summer of 2024, marking his first solo work in over a year. Now, with the band back together, the focus has shifted to creating new music and preparing for live performances, generating renewed anticipation among ARMY worldwide. Speaking with Elle Korea, Jung Kook also shared his thoughts on what makes music resonate with listeners. As BTS gears up for their spring reunion, fans can expect a mix of fresh material, powerful performances, and the emotional connection that has defined the group's global success.

'Saiyaara' Stars Ahaan Panday & Aneet Padda: Our Friendship Was Instant and Authentic

Mumbai: Some film romances look convincing. Others feel lived-in. Saiyaara falls into the second category, and that's exactly why audiences keep talking about Ahaan Panday and Aneet Padda long after the credits roll. As the film heads to its World Television Premiere, the two actors have opened up about what really powered their much-praised chemistry.

According to Ahaan Panday, there was no formula involved in creating what viewers saw on screen. For him, chemistry is not something that can be engineered. He believes that when actors genuinely get along, everything else follows and simply "happens naturally". That belief shaped how he approached Saiyaara from



the start. Instead of focusing on performance alone, the pre-production phase became about getting comfortable with each other as people. For Aneet Padda, the first interaction with Ahaan and director Mohit Suri could have gone either way. She admits she walked into that meeting nervous, unsure of what to expect. What she encountered instead was an

atmosphere that immediately put her at ease. She later described Ahaan's presence as "disarming", noting that it helped calm her nerves early on. That initial comfort turned into something deeper as the weeks went by. Long before filming began, the two spent months just getting to know each other. There were no cameras and no pressure. They sang, played the guitar,

and spoke openly about their fears and doubts. Aneet said those conversations mattered. By the time they reached the set, there was already trust between them. It helped them react naturally in scenes, without overthinking. When emotional moments came up, neither felt awkward or judged.

Aneet has spoken about how that early bonding changed the experience of acting together. She said it allowed both of them to feel "safe and comfortable" once the shoot started. That sense of security translated directly into their performances, giving Saiyaara its emotional weight. The World Television Premiere of Saiyaara will air on December 20 at 8 PM on Sony MAX.

'Border 2': Arjun Kapoor Eager for Action, Commends Varun Dhawan

Mumbai: Border 2, starring Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Ahan Shetty, and Diljit Dosanjh, is all set for release in 2026. The makers have recently dropped a teaser that grabbed attention. Arjun Kapoor has also expressed his excitement and called the film his childhood favourite.

Taking to his Instagram stories, Arjun Kapoor shared the teaser and wrote, "Nostalgia, pride and goosebumps ahead! The sequel to India's greatest epic and my childhood fav too. @iamsunnydeol sir cannot wait to experience your thunder all over again! @varundvn so so pumped for this one!" Earlier, Siddhant Chaturvedi also reviewed the teaser and wrote, "Grand Incoming," which summed up the powerful portrayal of the Indian Army. Helmed by Anurag Singh, Border 2 marks the return of Sunny Deol to the world of Border (1997). This time, the film will also star Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, Ahan Shetty, Sonam Bajwa, Mona Singh, and Medha Rana. Presented by T-Series and JP Films



and produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, JP Dutta, and Nidhi Dutta, the war drama is a sequel to the 1997 war drama Border. Set against the backdrop of the 1971 Indo-Pak war, Border 2 revisits the historic Battle of Longewala. The film shows how a small battalion of Indian soldiers fought a large Pakistani strike force. Mark your calendars! Border 2 is slated to release in the theatres on January 23, 2026, perfectly timed for the Republic Day weekend, making it one of the most awaited releases of the year.

The teaser was released

on 16 December, coinciding with the 44th Vijay Diwas, which commemorates India's victory in the 1971 war. In the lead-up to the teaser, the makers had rolled out character posters for the four leads, culminating in a poster featuring all of them last Friday. The teaser opens with gripping visuals of the war, as Sunny Deol's voice dares Pakistan to challenge India. The new heroes, Varun, Diljit, and Ahan, are shown on guard at different frontiers, with the trailer moving seamlessly between battlefield action and glimpses of their personal lives. In

a standout moment, Sunny's character rallies his soldiers, urging them to yell so loudly that "even Lahore can hear the war cries of Indian soldiers." The teaser ends with sweeping aerial, ground, and naval battles, marking a first for a Hindi war film. The iconic tune Hindustan Meri Jaan from the original movie plays as the title appears, instantly hitting the nostalgia button. The original Border, released in 1997, starred Sunny Deol, Suniel Shetty, Jackie Shroff, and Akshaye Khanna, and became one of Hindi cinema's most beloved war dramas.

'Padayappa' Re-Release Collections Top ₹12Crore Globally

Chennai: Rajinikanth's Padayappa has pulled off a box office feat few could have predicted. The 1999 blockbuster, which returned to theatres as part of its 25 year anniversary celebrations, has crossed Rs 12 crore worldwide in its opening weekend, emerging as one of the highest grossing re-releases in Indian cinema.

According to trade tracker Sacnilk, the film opened to an estimated Rs 4 crore worldwide on its first day. Instead of following the usual re-release pattern of sharp drops after day one, Padayappa showed steady growth across Saturday and Sunday, pushing its total weekend gross into double digits. Tamil Nadu led the charge, supported by strong collections from overseas markets with sizeable Tamil audiences. The numbers place Padayappa among the most successful re-releases in recent years, an achievement that underlines both Rajinikanth's enduring star power and the film's lasting connect with audiences. Trade analysts attribute the strong performance to a combination of nostalgia and theatrical appeal. Pa-



dayappa has long enjoyed repeated television telecasts and streaming viewership, yet the big screen experience appears to have drawn audiences in large numbers. Many theatres reported near full occupancy during evening and weekend shows, driven by fans revisiting a film that defined an era.

The film's sustained run is particularly noteworthy because re-releases typically depend heavily on opening day curiosity. In this case, repeat footfalls and strong word of mouth helped Padayappa buck the trend. Younger viewers, who knew the film largely through pop culture references and social media clips, also turned up in significant numbers,

contributing to the growing collections over the weekend. Originally released in 1999, Padayappa went on to become the highest grossing Tamil film of its time. Its re-release success reinforces its standing as one of Tamil cinema's most influential commercial films.

Directed by KS Ravikumar and produced by Rajinikanth under his Arunachala Cine Creations banner, Padayappa featured an ensemble cast that included Sivaji Ganesan, Soundarya, Ramya Krishnan, Radha Ravi, Nassar, Manivannan and Abbas. The film blended family drama with spectacle, anchored by Rajinikanth's commanding performance.

MacLachlan Praises Fallout Season Two Team

Agency: Kyle MacLachlan has a rare kind of sci-fi legacy that spans generations. Long before audiences saw him as Hank Maclean in the post-apocalyptic world of Fallout, he had already made his mark as Paul Atreides in David Lynch's Dune, released in 1984. As Fallout's much-awaited second season has finally premiered, the actor opened up on the show, learnings from Dune and their impact on the gaming world.

Season 1 of Fallout did what many one thought impossible, it cracked the code of video game adaptations. For years, the industry believed games simply couldn't translate to screen. Then came the Prime Video series and suddenly the conversation changed. Naturally, that success has brought expectations soaring for season 2. When asked if the pressure feels heavier this time around, MacLachlan told Hindustan Times, "We are in such good hands with our creators, writers, and the people involved, who are quite serious about creating an environment that fans will recognise and hopefully be able to experience .

Ophthalmologist Outlines Every Risk of Eye Infection

Contact Lens Wearers Should Be Aware Of

Contact lenses are a convenient alternative to glasses, offering a wider field of vision and more freedom in daily activities. But behind the ease and aesthetics lies a serious health risk if lenses aren’t handled with care. Corneal infections, some of which can lead to permanent vision loss, are a growing concern, especially among those who wear lenses for extended periods or neglect hygiene routines. “Contact lenses can disrupt the eye’s natural defenses, particularly the tear film that protects the cornea,” explains Dr. Neeraj Sanduja, Ophthalmologist and Founder of Viaan Eye and Retina Centre. “Improper use or storage creates an environment where harmful microorganisms can thrive,” he adds. Among the most serious complications is microbial keratitis, a painful and potentially blinding infection of the cornea. It can be caused by bacteria, fungi, or amoebas



such as Pseudomonas aeruginosa and Acanthamoeba, all of which flourish in moist, contaminated environments like old lens cases or tap water. “Sleeping in contact lenses or extending their wear time significantly reduces oxygen supply to the cornea,” warns

Dr. Sanduja. “This makes the eye more vulnerable to infections and microtrauma.” Common user errors, like failing to wash hands

before handling lenses, topping off old disinfectant instead of using fresh solution, or skipping regular case replacements, can introduce pathogens directly to the eye. “Lens-related infections often stem from poor hygiene,” says Dr. Sanduja. “Even something as simple as swimming or showering with lenses on can expose the eyes to waterborne microorganisms like Acanthamoeba, which are very difficult to treat.” Extended wear lenses or long hours of wear, even during the day, can gradually weaken the corneal surface. Some users also blink less when wearing lenses, leading to dryness that weakens the eye’s natural barriers. “Microtrauma during insertion or removal and dry eye from reduced blinking further compromise the cornea,” notes Dr. Sanduja. “The best way to stay safe is to follow hygiene protocols strictly, avoid water exposure, and never ignore discomfort.”

Hepatitis Hiding: Not Just Stomach Ache

Hepatitis, a liver condition affecting over 300 million people, often mimics common digestive issues, making diagnosis difficult. It can be unintentionally neglected until the liver starts to fail. Hepatitis develops when the liver gets inflamed due to viral infections or toxins like alcohol and drugs. It can cause liver cirrhosis, liver failure, or even cancer if left untreated. Diarrhea, chronic fatigue, and weakness are common symptoms of Hepatitis, as the liver plays a crucial role in processing nutrients. Chronic fatigue can impact concentration and memory, making it difficult to perform routine tasks. Dark urine and stool may appear tea-colored, while jaundice is caused by the accumulation of bilirubin, a waste substance the liver typically eliminates. Jaundice indicates a serious symptom of liver stress or damage and requires immediate medical care. Managing hepatitis involves a combination of medical treatment and healthy lifestyle choices. Antiviral medications can help control the virus and prevent complications like cirrhosis or liver cancer. In severe cases, a liver transplant may be necessary, but many individuals can manage their condition effectively through timely medication and supportive care. Simple changes, such as avoiding alcohol, eating a nutritious diet, engaging in regular physical activity, and staying updated with vaccinations, can greatly enhance liver health. Acting early not only improves recovery chances but also helps prevent long-term complications associated with chronic hepatitis.



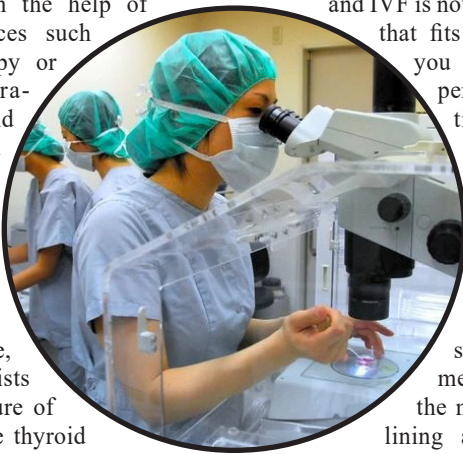
‘Knowing Your Numbers’ IVF And Miscarriage: Why It Matters

Couples who undergo the procedure of IVF (In Vitro Fertilization) hope that in such a way their family will be expanded, but at the same time there are fears and doubts. Miscarriage is one of the most emotionally traumatic process setbacks. Although a woman could miscarry at any pregnancy, the loss may have deeper emotional effects at IVF since every cycle would be associated with much physical, emotional, and financial resources. Getting to grips with the factors that may cause miscarriage and what might perhaps prevent it involves going deeper into, what many patients do not give much attention to; their numbers. These are levels of hormones, quality of an embryo, chromosomal measurements and measures of uterine health. It is about being informed, it is about being empowered, with regards to saying that you know your numbers. Such hormones as AMH

(Anti-Mullerian Hormone), FSH (Follicle-Stimulation Hormone), LH (Luteinizing Hormone), progesterone, and estradiol are involved mainly in the quality of eggs, the thickness of endometrium, and embryo implantation. The abnormal levels may decrease the success rate or in some cases will cause miscarriage. These interventions are made possible by regular monitoring, which enables fertility specialists to modify protocols and address imbalances before they can progress. Not every embryo is genetic viable. PGT-A could screen out aneuploid embryos and could determine chromosomally normal embryos, which were more likely to result in successful pregnancy. This is of great significance to the women who are past the age of 35 where their chances of several chromosomal abnormalities are very high hence the risk of miscarriage is high too. Implantation and maintenance of pregnancy may be

influenced by such structural problems as fibroids, polyps, or thin endometrium. Information about the thickness of the uterus lining, the flow patterns of the blood in your body, and anatomical defects is important prior to the embryo transfer. These problems can be identified with the help of imaging devices such as hysteroscopy or sonohysterography. Thyroid syndrome and blood clotting disorders are mainly cured with the help of conventional medicine, which consists of the procedure of removal of the thyroid hormones. Recurrent pregnancy loss is known to be caused by thyroid dysfunction, as well

as by such clotting disorders as anti-phospholipid syndrome or thrombophilia not diagnosed previously. These risks can be administered through simple blood tests, and when intervention is made early, the drug can highly benefit the outcome. Each person is distinct and IVF is not a treatment that fits all. Where you monitor the personal reactions made by your body this could be the way you consistently react to the stimulation medication to the manner your lining accumulates so that you as well as your doctor would adjust the protocols to achieve optimal results.



A neurologist discusses how daily routines impair brain health and how screen time contributes to sleep loss

Our always-on lifestyle is taking a hidden toll, not just on our energy levels, but on our brain health. Long days, never-ending digital alerts, and the urge to stay linked the whole time wear the brain down. Over months and years, this can pile up and boost the odds of bigger problems: fading memory, scattered attention, and in the worst cases, strokes or the creeping shadow of dementia. “Today’s world moves fast, and our minds are feeling the heat,” says Dr. Nasli R. Ichaporia, Director of Neurology at Sahyadri Super Speciality Hospital, Pune. What seems like harmless scrolling or

late-night work sprints can, over time, chip away at cognitive clarity, memory, and even mental resilience. “Even little things, like zoning out at a screen for too long, can lead to sore eyes and a foggy feeling,” adds Dr. Ichaporia. “Over months and years, this can pile up and boost the odds of bigger problems.” Dr. Ichaporia shares how common habits are endangering brain health and simple changes that can help reverse the damage. Screens are everywhere, from phones and laptops to TVs, and their overuse is affecting how our brains function. Extended exposure leads to screen fatigue, marked by burning



eyes and mental exhaustion. Blue light messes with sleep cycles, while constant notifications disrupt focus, increase stress, and create digital burnout. Multitasking across apps can even lower creativity and lead

to mental sluggishness by day’s end. A sedentary lifestyle does more than impact physical fitness. It directly affects cognitive function. Long hours of sitting slow blood circulation, limiting the brain’s access to oxy-

gen and nutrients. This can impair memory and even cause shrinkage of the hippocampus, the brain region essential for learning and comprehension, raising the risk of dementia over time. Modern diets, rich in sugar

and processed food, contribute to chronic inflammation that harms brain cells. A lack of nutrients like omega-3s, B vitamins, and antioxidants further weakens brain signalling and memory. The gut-brain connection is also key: poor diet can disrupt gut health, increasing risks of mood disorders and cognitive decline. Chronic stress isn’t just emotional, it’s physical. Prolonged stress elevates blood pressure, a major risk factor for strokes. Over time, it causes inflammation and arterial damage, increasing the likelihood of blocked or ruptured vessels in the brain, which can lead to either ischemic or hemor-

rhagic strokes. Sleep is vital for memory consolidation and cognitive clarity. But late-night screen use and work habits are cutting into vital rest. Without proper sleep, the brain’s ability to file memories and process information is weakened, leaving us forgetful, foggy, and mentally fatigued. Brain health doesn’t need drastic measures. Take regular screen breaks using the 20-20-20 rule, move daily, eat whole foods, prioritise sleep, and manage stress mindfully. And don’t skip routine health checks – keeping your blood pressure, cholesterol, and sugar levels in check helps protect the brain long-term.

Is It Only a Fever? Identifying Chikungunya’s Warning Signs This Monsoon

Once considered a fading threat, chikungunya is making an unsettling return across several parts of India and beyond. The virus, transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes, is no longer confined to seasonal outbreaks or tropical regions. Today, it’s being fuelled by a complex mix of climate change, urban overcrowding, and increased human mobility. Doctors and public health experts are raising red flags as cases resurface in both familiar and new locations. “Chikungunya is re-emerging mainly on account of climate change, vector proliferation, urban congestion and human mobility,” warns Dr. Subhashree Samantaray, Consultant, Infectious Diseases & Adult Immunisation, Manipal Hospitals, Bhubaneswar. Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall have expanded mosquito habitats, while rapid urbanisation, poor sanitation, and improper water storage in cities create ideal breeding conditions for Aedes mosquitoes – the primary vectors for the virus. Further compounding the issue is the importation of the virus by infected travellers into new areas, especially where competent vectors like Ae-

des aegypti and Aedes albopictus are already active. The European CDC has already linked the 2025 resurgence of chikungunya to such international transmissions. The symptoms of chikungunya begin with sudden fever, debilitating joint pain, headache, rash, and fatigue. While fever typically lasts less than a week, the joint pain can linger for weeks or even months, affecting quality of life. “Several patients, particularly older individuals, have symptoms similar to chronic arthritis,” says Dr. Samantaray. In rare cases, neurologic or cardiac complications can arise. The likelihood of relapse or recurrence varies based on individual, viral, and environmental factors. “A relapse often occurs in immunocompromised or elderly individuals after apparent recovery,” she explains. At the community level, factors such as stagnant water, low herd immunity, and ineffective mosquito control accelerate the spread. What’s worrying public health officials is the ease with which chikungunya can rebound. “Unlike some infectious diseases, it can’t be shut down between places without sustained efforts,” notes Dr. Saman-

taray. The solution lies in targeted mosquito control- eliminating breeding sites, using repellents and protective clothing, improving waste and water management, and conducting regular fogging in high-risk areas. Although two vaccines have received regulatory approvals in several countries, they are not yet widely available. “The dosing and recommendations are still being standardised,” she adds. With its dense population, irregular monsoons, and inconsistent sanitation, India remains particularly vulnerable. “Storing water during supply gaps often leads to inadvertent breeding grounds,” she points out. Unless prevention becomes a sustained public health priority, chikungunya is poised to stay and spread. As chikungunya re-emerges with new intensity, it’s clear that controlling the disease will take more than seasonal fogging or reactive public health campaigns. Until vaccines become widely accessible and standardised, prevention remains the most powerful defence – starting at home, in neighbourhoods, and in the way we manage our water, waste, and wellness.

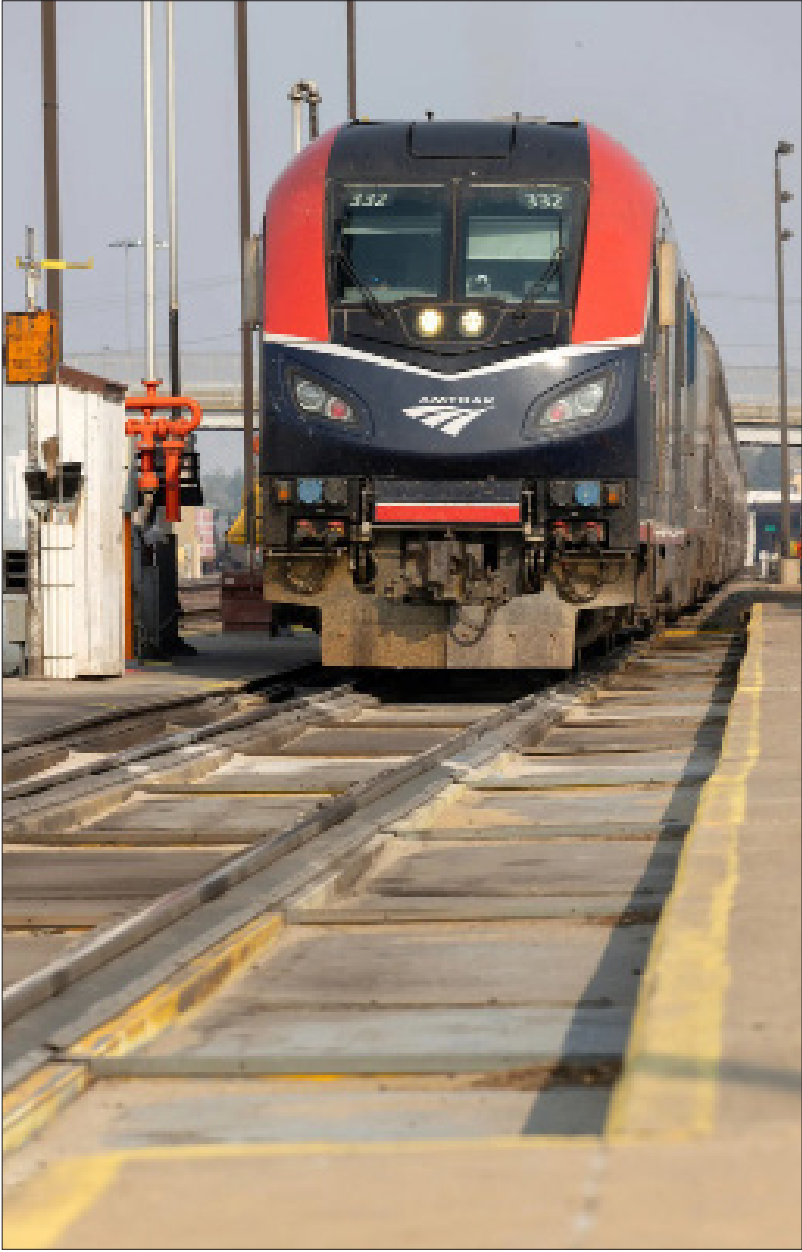


Monsoon Air Fresheners Humidifiers and Nasal Allergies

The monsoon is a welcome break from the scorching summer heat. But for many, it also brings with it a surge in respiratory issues, particularly nasal allergies. While most people attribute this to the weather or increased mould and dust, there are often overlooked indoor culprits: air fresheners and humidifiers. Dr. (Prof) Amit Kumar, Senior Consultant & Director, ENT, Narayana Hospital Gurugram helps us explore how these seemingly harmless household items may be triggering and worsening your allergy symptoms during the monsoon. Monsoon increases the ambient moisture levels (the level of dampness), which creates a perfect environment for mould, dust mites, and mildew to thrive. These allergens are among the most common triggers for allergic rhinitis, an inflammatory condition of the nasal passages. Symptoms include sneezing, nasal congestion, itchy or watery eyes, and postnasal drip. While external weather is not something we can exercise control over, we can maintain good indoor air quality, which can play a huge role in either alleviating allergy symptoms or worsening them. Air fresheners are commonly used during monsoons to mask musty odours caused by dampness. However, they may be doing more harm than good. Most air fresheners be it sprays, plug-ins, or scented candles release volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as benzene, formaldehyde, and phthalates. These chemicals can irritate the mucous membranes of the nose, eyes, and throat. For individuals already suffering from allergies or asthma, this can amplify their symptoms significantly. Studies have shown that regular exposure to synthetic fragrances can lead to increased sensitivity in the respiratory tract and, in some cases, chronic nasal congestion. Children, the elderly, and individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions are particularly vulnerable. Tip: If you like using air fresheners, choose natural alternatives like essential oils for a diffuser which you can then use sparingly in well-ventilated spaces in your home. Humidifiers are used to balance air quality when the indoor air becomes too dry. Humidity makes the air warmer and the levels usually increase during the monsoon. Hence using humidifiers can be counterproductive to maintaining ambient air quality. Excess humidity (>50-60 per cent) creates a breeding ground for dust mites and mould spores, both of which are powerful nasal allergens. Poorly maintained humidifiers can harbour bacteria and mould. You can prevent them from being released into the air when the device is turned on, by cleaning the humidifiers regularly. This can lead to a condition known as “humidifier fever” caused from inhaling air contaminated by unclean humidifiers which mimics flu-like symptoms and aggravates allergic rhinitis.



A Whistle-Stop Tour of America



If you ride the railroad’s Empire Builder route from Chicago to Seattle and back, as I did recently, you’ll watch the scenery evolve, from city to suburb to small town to north woods to sweeping grasslands to Great Plains to sandy buttes to snow-capped peaks to sagebrush meadows to pine-lined streams to small town to suburb to city.

But are you really seeing America?

Literally, perhaps: You are seeing it zip by. After a while, though, that can get to feel as if you are wearing a virtual-reality headset, and it may occur to you that to truly “see” America, you have to get off the train. So I bought a \$499 USA Rail Pass, good for up to 10 trips of any length in 30 days, and selected a half-dozen stops along the route. Since the Empire Builder runs once a day, I could, theoretically, have

24 hours in each place; 144 hours to actually see America — specifically, parts of it that look, and feel, nothing like the places most Americans live.

I knew there would be challenges. I wouldn’t have a car. The train was scheduled to arrive in some places at an ungodly hour. The trip runs more than 2,000 miles one-way; without delays, that takes 46 hours and 24 minutes. But there are, inevitably, ubiquitously, delays. The earliest I arrived at any stop was 20 minutes late. The latest was more than seven hours. That particular segment ended up running 23 hours and 30 minutes. And my pass entitled me only to one coach seat. No bed; no shower; shared bathrooms that, more often than not, looked long overdue for a cleaning. You haven’t truly struggled to sleep until you’ve done so in a rail car where almost everyone is struggling to sleep.

But I also met a lot of interesting people on the train: retirees, and young people, and Amish families, and the graduating class of Minot High School in North Dakota. Most memorably, I visited six American places that I would never otherwise have experienced. Or even known about.

If you can extrapolate anything from my odyssey, it’s this: There’s something remarkable about everywhere.

Stanley, N.D.
» Population: 2,321, I was the only person to get on or off the train in Stanley. Two days in a row. Stanley is unaffectedly wholesome: wooden houses and churches and a lovely city park. Humble as it is, the town also has some architectural gems, including the domed 1914 Mountrail County Courthouse, and the Art Deco 1930 Mountrail County War Memorial Auditorium. My least populous stop, Stanley was full of surprises, like its still-functioning movie theater, the large Israeli flag draped across one house’s front porch, and the swarm of sea gulls scavenging in the Dairy Queen parking lot, a thousand miles from an ocean. Its big draw, though, sits behind the counter at Dakota Drug on Main Street: what is believed to be the nation’s last operational Whirla-Whip machine. “There’s a place in Illinois claims to have one,” a lady working the fountain said. “But they use soft serve.” A real Whirla-Whip — a phenomenon from the 1930s that once proliferated throughout Middle America — mixes ingredients of your choice into hard ice cream. I had chocolate with peanut butter, pickles and bacon. Two cheerful teenagers were working there, alongside two equally upbeat ladies. One showed me a guest register with comments from around the country.

How to Help Someone Through a Panic Attack

A meteorologist in Australia was delivering the weather report on live television this week when he started having a panic attack. Nate Byrne, the news presenter, later explained to BBC News that he was heading to the studio’s “weather wall” when he realized he was suddenly out of breath.

“The specific position — in front of the wall — is a trigger for me,” he said. “My body starts tingling. I start sweating. Just everything in my body is screaming: Run. Go. Get out.” Because he had dealt with on-air panic attacks before, he and his colleagues knew what to do. Mr. Byrne explained what was happening to viewers, then quickly tossed to the anchor of the show while he went off camera to recover. How can you help if a friend, family member or colleague is having a panic attack? We asked experts for tips.

First, what is a panic attack?
» A panic attack is a sudden wave of overwhelming fear and anxiety that is accompanied by physical symptoms.

For some people it can produce the same sensations as a heart attack, including chest pain and tightness, or a racing heartbeat, said Dr. Harmony Reynolds, a cardiologist at NYU Langone Health in New York City. Both panic attacks and heart attacks can also cause difficulty breathing, the feeling that you might faint, nausea, sweating, numbness in the arms and “a sense that something is terribly wrong,” she added.

A person who is having a panic attack may not speak as coherently as they normally would because they’re dealing with high anxiety. But despite the intense feelings happening inside, a person’s outward appearance can mask their distress.

“You often don’t know that somebody is having a panic attack unless they tell you,” said Lynn Bufka, a clinical psychologist and spokeswoman for the American Psychological Association, who has been treating patients with panic attacks and panic disorder for nearly 30 years.

When do you need to go to the emergency room?

» It can be hard to distinguish between a panic attack, which typically doesn’t warrant a trip to the emergency room, and a heart attack. If there’s any doubt, or if someone is having

thoughts of self-harm or suicide in addition to panic symptoms, then it’s best to go to an E.R. for an evaluation, the experts said. Panic attacks usually resolve within about 15 minutes, while heart attack symptoms can last longer or might go away and come back. So if symptoms linger, seek medical attention, Dr. Reynolds said. If someone is experiencing similar symptoms in specific situations, like being in a crowd or during public speaking, then a panic attack is more likely, she added.

What are the warning signs?
» If someone close to you is prone to panic attacks, familiarize yourself with the signs that one is coming on — and encourage them to do so as well. Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, experienced more than 100 panic attacks when he was in his 30s.

When they first started, he went to the doctor numerous times. “I think I’m dying,” he would say. “Could you check my heart?” But each time he was given a clean bill of health. Eventually he learned to observe his body’s sensations “in a neutral, nonreactive fashion,” he said, so that his physical symptoms didn’t overwhelm him. And he often reminded himself that

the feelings he was experiencing were transient: “This is fleeting, you’ve been through this before.” **How can you help someone during a panic attack?**

“One of the most important steps is to stay with the person to keep them calm,” said Dr. Ramaswamy Viswanathan, the president of the American Psychiatric Association. Speak slowly and use reassuring words that will let them know they are safe, and that the panic attack won’t last long, he added. Panic attacks will typically “rise in intensity quickly, often within a few minutes — and stay on peak for several minutes before they fall off in intensity,” Dr. Viswanathan said.

Ask the person who is suffering to focus on their breath — you can even do a breathing exercise alongside them. Aim to breathe slowly from the belly, not the chest, to help open up the lungs. In some cases, Dr. Viswanathan said, it can help to do physical, repetitive movements like lifting their arms over their head or stomping their feet, too.

Panic attacks usually become less challenging once a person learns coping strategies, Dr. Bufka said. That was the case for Mr. Byrne, the meteorologist, who wrote about his panic attacks in 2022. In the article, he said that he had worked with a psychologist and

» Down Second Street, past the post office and a hot pink house festooned with rainbows, I found the florist’s, in the same spot it has occupied since at least 1903. The 1938 “WPA Guide to North Dakota” notes that the shop’s founder, Nels Lindberg, is credited with coining the phrase “Say it with flowers.” “He said it at a convention, but he didn’t copyright it,” explained Barb Lee, who bought the shop, Rugby Greenhouse, from Mr. Lindberg’s family 47 years ago and still owns it. “Nels was killed in a car accident while delivering flowers,” she told me, adding that Mr. Lindberg’s business partner, Jesse Hutchinson, expired in the greenhouse out back. “They both died doing what they loved,” she said, smiling.

Stanley, N.D.
» Population: 2,321, I was the only person to get on or off the train in Stanley. Two days in a row. Stanley is unaffectedly wholesome: wooden houses and churches and a lovely city park. Humble as it is, the town also has some architectural gems, including the domed 1914 Mountrail County Courthouse, and the Art Deco 1930 Mountrail County War Memorial Auditorium. My least populous stop, Stanley was full of surprises, like its still-functioning movie theater, the large Israeli flag draped across one house’s front porch, and the swarm of sea gulls scavenging in the Dairy Queen parking lot, a thousand miles from an ocean. Its big draw, though, sits behind the counter at Dakota Drug on Main Street: what is believed to be the nation’s last operational Whirla-Whip machine. “There’s a place in Illinois claims to have one,” a lady working the fountain said. “But they use soft serve.” A real Whirla-Whip — a phenomenon from the 1930s that once proliferated throughout Middle America — mixes ingredients of your choice into hard ice cream. I had chocolate with peanut butter, pickles and bacon. Two cheerful teenagers were working there, alongside two equally upbeat ladies. One showed me a guest register with comments from around the country.

had also used beta blockers, medications that can ease the physical symptoms of the “fight or flight” response to stress. When he first had a panic attack on TV, he said, “I thought that my career was over.” But “talking about my anxiety and seeking treatment mean that it’s something I can live with and manage,” he wrote. “It means I can keep doing the thing I love.” If you experience recurrent panic attacks, you may want to seek out a therapist. Forms of cognitive behavioral therapy, in which a clinician prods you to challenge the fears and sensations you might experience during a panic attack, can be among the most effective treatments.

The process can help change your thought patterns, desensitizing you to the underlying distress that can trigger panic attacks. Some medications, including antidepressants like selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or S.S.R.I.s, may also be helpful for managing panic attacks. As disconcerting as panic attacks can be, it’s important to remember that they are highly treatable, and that, as suddenly as they can crop up, they begin to fade. These include chest pain, anxiety, and sweating. If someone suspects a heart attack or stroke, they need immediate medical attention.



What’s the Best Way to Explore Kenya?



By the time we reached the third waterfall on the Kahunira trail, my wife, Kiki, and I had been walking through the forested backcountry of Kiambu County, Kenya, for nearly three hours. Along the way, we had tasted sweet lady finger bananas in the market town of Githunguri, sipped a sour Kikuyu home brew called muratina proffered by laborers at a rural gravel quarry and made a heart-pounding shortcut across rust-flecked irrigation pipes that traversed a steep gorge fringed with tea plantations. Our companions were two dozen young Kenyans who’d learned of the excursion through Lets Drift, an outdoor recreation community that creates weekly hikes, bicycle excursions and mountaineering treks in the countryside outside Nairobi.

Upon arriving at the forest-shaded waterfall, some members of our cohort stripped down to swimsuits, performed acrobatic dives off boulders that edged the cascade pool and posed for selfies in the midafternoon sun. In a part of Africa where the conventional tourism industry was built around a wildlife-focused, British colonial footprint, Lets Drift stands out as an exuberant Kenyan-centered enterprise. Its aim is to celebrate outdoor recreation and, at the same time, generate a sense of community among the country’s growing urban middle class. Created in 2018 by Alex Kamau and Paul Njuguna, both from greater Nairobi, Lets Drift attracts roughly 8,000 participants each year, many of whom participate in activities like hiking, e-biking, backcountry camping and digital detox retreats.

“Our mission is to make adventure more accessible and affordable for Kenyans,” Mr. Kamau said. Lets Drift also welcomes international travelers looking for an unconventional experience in Kenya. Within the traditional model of East African tourism, outsiders endeavoring to “meet the locals” often wind up having roadside photo-and-souvenir encounters with Kenyans wearing traditional Masai or Samburu costumes. But on the Kahunira waterfall trail, the Kenyans we interacted with wore Lycra and hiking boots, and carried day packs. Like us, they were tourists; unlike us, they weren’t traveling all that far from home.

‘Affordable and accessible’
The decision to begin our Kenya sojourn by joining a Nairobi hiking club flowed out of my habit of perusing online local newspapers of the places I one day hope to visit. After reading a December 2020 Business Daily Africa feature about Lets Drift, I began to follow the Kenyan hiking community on Instagram. The outdoor images posted there resonated, not because I found them exotic, but because I found their celebration of exploring the wilderness within driving distance of Nairobi relatable to my own youthful summertime explorations of the backcountry trails of the Colorado Rockies.

Indeed, just as the notion of who was able to travel long distances was democratized by railroad and steamship technologies in the 19th century, social media has democratized the kinds of stories — and

storytellers — that can inspire and inform us about places before we go there. In giving us a peek into what local people do for fun in the places we seek to visit, hiking clubs like Lets Drift (or similar communities tied to things like sports, art or cuisine) enable us to explore ways that we, as tourists, can respectfully join in. Our relaxed five-hour Kahunira waterfall hike looped us back to the town of Githunguri, where we shared a classic Kenyan meal of nyama choma (barbecued goat) and ugali (cornmeal porridge) with our fellow hikers as we waited to catch a shared minivan back to Nairobi.

In keeping with Lets Drift ritual, we addressed each other by alliterative trail names — Dazzling Daisy, Jolly John, Kurious Kiki, Relaxed Rolf.

When I mentioned that I hadn’t seen the Kahunira waterfalls described in any guidebooks or on any travel websites, Wango Alfred, a 25-year-old artist and photographer from Nairobi who’d served as our guide, told me that Lets Drift scouts out its own routes. “We rarely seek out the same places as international tourists,” he said. “We like to keep things affordable and accessible for everyday Kenyans. Sometimes this means walking across private agricultural lands, so establishing relationships with local leaders and spending money at the village level — like we are right now — counts for a lot.”

I asked him: “Was it strange to have a couple of Americans come along?” “All kinds of people join us,” he said, noting that Nairobi is a cosmopolitan place that mixes cultures within Kenya, which means Lets Drift hikes might involve people from various ethnic groups socializing with those from other groups: Kikuyu with Kalenjin, Luo with Kenyan Somalis and Kenyan Asians — all of them learning about one another’s cultures as they go. “When Americans or Europeans join us, it feels like we get to travel outside of Kenya and learn things about those places, too. The goal is simply to relax and be present, to feel the ground as we get to know new people, whoever those people might be.”

‘To evangelize outdoor adventure’

In the days following our hike, Kiki and I combined day visits to Nairobi sights like the Karen Blixen Museum and the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust elephant orphanage, with evening meet-ups with our new Kenyan hiking friends. At a restaurant called the Talisman in the city’s Karen suburb, we had beef stir-fry with a 27-year-old foreign-relations lawyer who’d hiked under the name “Malignant Marc” Chirchir. At the BigFish in Westlands, we had brown ugali and tilapia that had been “wet-fried” in a vegetable stew with “Radiant Ruth” Kuria, a 34-year-old study-abroad administrator. Our conversations mixed the local with the global. Kiki and I also paid a visit to the Nairobi Garage, a Silicon Valley-style co-working space not far from Nairobi’s central business “Our first goal was to evangelize outdoor adventure among Kenyans,” Mr. Kamau said. “And at the same time, we’re trying to decolonize that idea of travel.”

India B outclass India by 83 runs opening Physical T20 Series

Mumbai: Opener Wasim Iqbal slammed a brilliant 66 off 51 balls to help India B beat India A by 83 runs in the first game of the three-match Physical Disability T20 Series at the Wankhede Stadium.After opting to field, India A struggled to control the India B batting line-up as Iqbal led the way for India B. Iqbal shared a 77-run second-wicket stand with Vikrant Keni. After that, India B continued to lose wickets at regular intervals. Iqbal ended with five boundaries and seven sixes. For India A, the best bowler was Jeetendra VN (2-23), as per a release.For India B, the other batter to impress was GS Shiva (41). India B ended with 170 for

nine in their 20 overs. In their response, India A struggled from the start, losing wickets at regular intervals. Only number eight, Akash Patil (30), showed some fight, but that was not enough. India A was bowled out for a paltry 87 in 16.5 overs. For India B, the best bowler was right-arm medium-pacer Ganesh Pisal (4-25). This series is part of a warm-up for upcoming international assignments.This was the first big game for most of the players at the iconic Wankhede Stadium, the venue where India won the 2011 World Cup under Mahendra Singh Dhoni.Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA)’s support for the series, a state as-



sociation affiliated to the BCCI, has been a massive boost for the series.”Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) has always been a pioneer in taking progressive initiatives for the betterment of the game, and hosting the Physically Disabled T20 Cricket Series adds yet another meaningful milestone to that legacy.

Gukesh vs. Anand is scheduled as world champion of Tata Steel Chess returns

Mumbai: At the Tata Steel Chess India 2025, Viswanathan Anand will compete for the first time since 2019 after a six-year hiatus. Anand will take on current world champion D Gukesh in the eagerly awaited event. Anand has tutored Gukesh through the WestBridge Anand Chess Academy. A mentor-versus-protege match of this caliber will be held in India for the first time, attracting a lot of attention from the domestic and global chess communities. The tournament is scheduled from January 7 to 11 at the Dhono Dhanyo Auditorium. Rapid and Blitz formats will feature in both the Open and Women’s sections, with the organizers confirming equal prize money for both categories. The Open field includes global stars such as Wei Yi, Wesley So, Hans Niemann, and Volodar Murzin. From India, notable participants include R Praggnanandhaa, Arjun Erigaisi, Vidit Gujrathi, and Aravinth Chithambaram. Their participation is expected to enhance the competitive



level of the tournament and provide a platform for emerging talents to face world-class opposition.

The Women’s event will be led by World Cup winner Divya Deshmukh, who will compete alongside top international players, including Aleksandra Goryachkina, Kateryna Lagno, Nana Dzagnidze, D Harkika, and Carissa Yip. Indian representation is further strengthened by Vaishali R. Vantika Agrawal, and Rakshit Ravi. ...the world of chess has changed massively with the emergence of talented players across the country specially in India.”I

am really excited to accept the challenge from the young chess prodigy in this marquee tournament of India,” said Anand in a press release. Tournament Director Dibyendu Barua highlighted the event’s global stature and described Vice President (Corporate Services) at Tata Steel, said that Viswanathan Anand’s return has brought an added sense of significance and excitement to the tournament.

Sumit Nagal to lead India’s challenge at the milestone 10th edition

— *The Bengaluru Open is set to return for its landmark 10th edition, scheduled to take place from January 5-11, 2026*

Bengaluru: Scheduled to take place from January 5-11, 2026, at the S M Krishna Tennis Stadium in Bengaluru. A flagship event on the ATP Challenger Tour, the tournament continues to grow in stature as one of India’s most prominent international tennis competitions, as per a release. Upgraded in 2025 from an ATP Challenger 100 to a Challenger 125 event, the tournament now offers a total prize purse of over USD 225,000, drawing top players from around the world. The elevated status has ensured a strong and competitive field, reinforcing its position as a key fixture on the global tennis calendar.As international tennis returns to enthrall Bengaluru’s sports enthusiasts, the landmark 10th edition of the Bengaluru Open will see Sumit Nagal lead India’s challenge. A former champion of the tournament in 2017, Sumit is among the country’s most accomplished singles players, with Olympic representation and multiple ATP Challenger titles to his name. Joining him is Aryan Shah, a promising young Indian talent whose consistent performances on the ITF and ATP Challenger circuits mark his emergence at this milestone edition.The official main-draw singles acceptance list for the 2026 edition features a strong lineup of international players, led by ATP Tour title winner and former Top-100 Spaniard Pedro Martinez, former ATP Top-25 player and Davis Cup regular Daniel Evans of Great Britain, and former Top-35 player and US Open quarterfinalist Lloyd Harris of South Africa.The field is further strengthened by former junior World No.1 and Australian Open boys’ champion Harold Mayot (France), Davis Cup match-winner Borna Gojo (Croatia), ATP Challenger Finals champion Duje Ajdukovic (Croatia), former ATP Top-100 player



Cedrik-Marcel Stebe (Germany) and 2019 US Open boys’ singles champion Jonas Forejtek (Czech Republic).Also set to compete are Jay Clarke (Great Britain), Benjamin Hassan (Lebanon), Matej Dodig (Croatia), Timofey Skatov (Kazakhstan), Max Houkes (Netherlands), Iliia Simakin, Beibit Zhukayev (Kazakhstan), Petr Bar Biryukov, Matteo Martineau (France), Antoine Ghibaud (France), Michael Geerts (Belgium), Dan Martin (Canada) and Neil Oberleitner (Austria), underlining the depth and competitiveness of the international field. Organised by the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA), Bengaluru Open continues to uphold high standards strengthening Bengaluru’s reputation as a preferred destination for international tennis. As the tournament marks its landmark 10th edition, it remains committed to delivering world-class competition while providing Indian players the chance to face top international opposition on home soil. The alternates list features: Vadym Ursu (Ukraine), Vladyslav Orlov (Ukraine), Karan Singh (India), Eric Vanshelboim (Ukraine), Takuya Kumasaka (Japan), Stefano Napolitano (Italy), Eero Vasa (Finland) and Maxime Janvier (France).

BCCI’s Scheduling Blasted T20I Called Off Due To ‘Excessive Fog’ In Lucknow

Lucknow: The fourth T20I between India and South Africa was called off on Wednesday owing to poor visibility after a dense layer of smog engulfed the Ekana Stadium raising serious questions about BCCI’s scheduling of matches in northern part of India during peak winter month. The venues allotted for the full series against the Proteas included New Chandigarh, Dharamsala, Lucknow, Ranchi, Raipur, Visakhapatnam, Cuttack, Ahmedabad, Gu-

wahati and Kolkata during November and December. It is also a period when pollution levels in the host cities like Lucknow, New Chandigarh and Dharamsala are usually at its worst. The fourth T20I was officially abandoned without a ball being bowled due to “excessive fog”, the reality was that a thick blanket of smog enveloped the Ekana Stadium, severely hampering visibility.

“The fourth India-South Africa T20I is called off due to ex-

cessive fog,” said the BCCI in its latest update. The Air Quality Index (AQI) remained in the hazardous range, above 400 in Lucknow on Wednesday, raising serious questions about the BCCI’s commitment to players’ welfare.Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya was seen wearing a surgical mask to counter the pollution while the Indian team warned up ahead of the game.Fans on social media questioned the BCCI’s decision to host the match in Lucknow.

Australia, England Players Wear Black

New Delhi: A moment of silence was observed Wednesday before the third Ashes Test with players from Australia and England wearing black armbands to mark the tragic mass shooting at Sydney’s Bondi Beach. In a sombre start to the first major sporting event in Australia since Sunday’s attack left 15 dead and dozens wounded, both sides bowed their heads at Adelaide Oval in tribute to the victims. Singer-songwriter John Williamson led a moving rendition of his popular “True Blue”, which portrays Australians from all backgrounds sharing the same hopes and aspirations.

Prithvi Shaw Makes Stunning U-Turn Being Bought By Delhi Capitals

Mumbai: India batter Prithvi Shaw on Tuesday took a notable U-turn on social media as he posted a heartbreak emoticon on his Instagram story shortly after going unsold twice at the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 auction, before deleting the post as the Delhi Capitals bought his services in a late bid. After going unsold at the base price of Rs 75 lakh in the opening session, Shaw’s name appeared in the accelerated auction of unsold players. However, he once again received no bids during the day. Shaw then posted a story on his Instagram account, writing “It’s Ok,” accompanied by a heartbreak emoji. But things took a surprising turn for him as, towards the end of the auction, his name was revived for a third time, this time by the Delhi Capitals, who picked him up.

Shaw responded promptly, deleting his earlier post within six minutes and replacing it with another, a



reshare of the franchise’s post that included a photo of Shaw taking a selfie with DC captain Axar Patel, welcoming him back to the fold. Back to my family,” Prithvi Shaw titled this new post with a heart emoji, making a quick U-turn. In this latest Insta story, Prithvi Shaw, who scored the fastest double century in the Ranji Trophy in October this year, shared his surprise at returning to the franchise he played for from 2018 to 2024.

The 26-year-old Prithvi Shaw has played five Test matches and six ODIs for India since making his debut against Sri Lanka in October 2018. His most recent ODI was against Sri Lanka on July 23, 2021. After making his domestic debut for Mumbai in the 2016-17 season, Shaw, the right-handed batter and right-arm off-break bowler, recently moved to Maharashtra to represent them in the domestic circuit from this season.

T20 World Cup trophy in view ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026 Trophy tour begins from Ram Setu, India and Sri Lanka

New Delhi: In a breathtaking celebration of heritage, unity and cricketing spirit, the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026 Trophy Tour with DP World was launched today over the Adham’s Bridge, culturally revered in India as the Ram Setu, a symbolic gateway linking the two co-hosts, India and Sri Lanka, according to a release.Against the dramatic backdrop of India’s southern coastline, a two-seater paramotor ascended into the sky carrying the coveted T20 World Cup trophy in full view. The flight traced the shimmering chain of limestone shoals below, reaching the farthest authorised point over the bridge before circling back, capturing sweeping aerial visuals and the emotion surrounding this historic launch moment.The dramatic lift-off, framed by the vast expanse of sea and sky, serves as a powerful metaphor for the scale, ambition and global reach of the tournament.The 10th edition of the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup, featuring 20 teams, 29 days of high-intensity cricket and eight world-class venues (five in India and three in Sri Lanka), will take place from February 7 to March 8, 2026, promising to be one of the most compelling editions yet of the sport’s most explosive

format.“Launching the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026 Trophy Tour with DP World above the Ram Setu, a site steeped in history, symbolism and shared cultural identity, sets an inspiring tone as we build towards this landmark event. This tour represents far more than the physical movement of a trophy. It is a unifying journey that brings continents, cultures and cricketing communities together, igniting passion among fans worldwide and strengthening the shared spirit that defines our game,” ICC Chairman Jay Shah said.As we prepare for the 10th edition of this global spectacle, our aim is for supporters everywhere to feel connected to the road to India and Sri Lanka. With every stop, the Trophy Tour will heighten the sense of anticipation and invite fans across the world to join us in celebrating what promises to be an unforgettable ICC Men’s T20 World Cup,” he added.

Devajit Saikia, Honorary Secretary, BCCI, said, “The T20 World Cup brings a unique intensity and emotion, and launching the Trophy Tour at the iconic Ram Setu perfectly captures the magnitude of the journey ahead. “India has successfully hosted two 50-over



World Cups in the last three years, and we are delighted to welcome fans to yet another world-class event. This edition will showcase the extraordinary growth and depth of the T20 format in India.As co-host, the BCCI remains fully committed to providing outstanding facilities for players and curating a tournament experience for fans that will resonate long after the final ball is bowled. The Trophy Tour marks the beginning of a campaign that will gather immense momentum as it travels across the cricketing world.”

The significance of the junior team’s bronze medal at the World Cup for Indian hockey

New Delhi:It had to be an inconceivable fightback to end the near decade-long wait for a Men’s Junior Hockey World Cup medal. To break the pattern of coming within touching distance only to falter at the final stage in India’s previous two campaigns, it needed a whirlwind passage of unrelenting and chaotic hockey, good fortune and mental fortitude as the batch of 2025 went one better than the fourth-place finishing teams of 2021 and 2023.

Though they couldn’t match the achievement of the golden boys of 2016, who not only claimed the nation’s second World Cup title ever but also set the bar high for future teams, the current players won India its fourth ever medal in 14 editions of the tournament. But the campaign that started

India’s Men’s Junior Hockey Team won their first-ever Bronze medal at the FIH Hockey Men’s Junior World Cup 2025. The young squad defeated their opponents in the third-place match, marking a historic milestone for Indian hockey.

with runaway victories against lowly-ranked teams in the pool stage, seemed to be going down a similar path to those from the last two World Cups.India overcame the quarterfinal hurdle despite their opponents playing better hockey, winning by close margins — 1-0 vs Belgium in 2021, 4-3 vs Netherlands in 2023 and 4-3 (2-2 in regulation time) in the shootout vs Belgium in 2025.In



what seemed a cruel case of déjà vu, India didn’t have a great start to the bronze medal once again finish second-best to a team that was tactically, technically and mentally better than the hosts. If it was France in 2021 and Spain in 2023 — both times India losing 3-1 — it

would be Argentina in 2025. Until, India decided to flip the script in the final quarter, with four goals in nine breathtaking minutes overturning a two-goal deficit to a 4-2 victory.In the end, it came down to which team kept its nerves during the high-pressure climax.

Sri Lanka names squad for five match T20I series against India

Mumbai: Sri Lanka have announced a 15-member squad for their T20I tour of India, with Chamari Athapaththu set to continue leading the side as they begin preparations for next year’s ICC Women’s T20 World Cup in England.Athapaththu’s leadership will be supported by the experienced Harshitha Samarawickrama, who will serve as her deputy.Sri Lanka have included 17-year-old ambidextrous spinner Shashini Gimhani, who returns to the side for the first time since August 2024. The squad also consists of a maiden call-up for Nimesha Madushani, according to the ICC website.The five-match T20I series will kick off on December 21 in Visakhapatnam, which will also host the second and third matches. The remaining two games of the series will be played in Thi-

ruvananthapuram.This series marks India’s return to action after their triumphant win at the ICC Women’s ODI World Cup 2025. The five T20Is between India and Sri Lanka will serve as preparation for the T20 World Cup next year, which will be held in England from June 12.The last time the two teams met in any format was in the ODI World Cup opener on September 30, while their previous T20I was at the T20 World Cup in October 2024.

India has a dominant record against Sri Lanka, with 20 wins in 26 matches, and the visitors’ last victory in India dates back to 2014. Coincidentally, that win had also come in Vishakhapatnam, the venue for the first two games in the upcoming T20I series.Sri Lanka squad: Chamari Athapaththu (c), Hasini Perera, Vishmi Gunaratne, Harshitha Sama-



rawickrama, Nilakshika De Silva, Kavisha Dilhari, Inesha Dulani, Kaushini Nuthan-gana, Malsha Shehani, Inoka Ranawera, Shashini Gimhani, Nimesha Madushani, Kawya Kavindi, Rashmika Sewwandi, Malki Madara.