

In Brief

Young Businessman Killed in Accident

Hailakandi: A tragic road accident on the Hailakandi bypass late last night claimed the life of a young man, sending shockwaves of grief across the town and leaving the local community in deep mourning. The deceased has been identified as Imraj Hussain Laskar (25), a resident of Ward No. 05 of Hailakandi town and a well-known young businessman of Harbartganj Bazaar. According to police sources, the incident occurred when Imraj was returning home on his motorcycle after finishing his work for the day. While passing through the Hailakandi bypass, his motorcycle collided head-on with an Alto car.

Bike rally in Khumtai

Bokakhat: Over two hundred teachers in Khumtai, Golaghat district, organized a bike rally to promote awareness on road safety, child marriage, drugs, and anaemia, following directives from the Deputy Commissioner. This initiative is part of ongoing awareness programs implemented at various levels, including educational institutions, across the district, led by teachers from the Garigaon and Butlikhowa Cluster Resource Centres.

Rescue 24 missing youths

Agartala: Tripura Police rescued 24 missing youths from Unakoti district after locating them in Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh, following a coordinated operation. The investigation began after a complaint was filed on December 24. Upon tracing the youths' location, Tripura Police collaborated with their Arunachal Pradesh counterparts to ensure their safe return. A Tripura Police team will soon retrieve the youths, and further investigations are ongoing to determine how they ended up in Arunachal Pradesh. Tripura Labour Minister Tinku Roy had written to Arunachal Pradesh Minister for Labour and Employment Nyato Dukam, seeking urgent intervention for the rescue and repatriation of around 24 child labourers allegedly trafficked from Tripura.

Forced conversion to another religion is illegal

Tripura CM Manik Saha on Veer Bal Diwas

Agartala, Dec 28: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha, speaking on December 25 at a Gurdwara in Chandmari during Veer Bal Diwas, stressed the importance of a social movement against forced religious conversion, labeling it a crime. He honored the martyrdom of Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, the younger sons of Sikh Guru Gobind Singh, whose sacrifices continue to inspire future generations. This observance, designated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2022, commemorates their immense courage in refusing to renounce their faith despite extreme persecution by Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.

Saha conveyed that the story of the Sahibzade exemplifies an enduring struggle against oppression, asserting that their deaths were due to their steadfastness in faith. He further articulated that Veer Bal Diwas serves as a critical reminder for individuals to speak against forced conversions, emphasizing that religious choice should remain a personal matter.

Any attempts at conversion through



coercion or manipulation, he stated, constitute a criminal act, while drawing attention to the persecution of Kashmiri Pandits. Moreover, the chief

minister expressed alarm over the declining Hindu population in Pakistan, noting significant differences between the experiences in East and West Paki-

stan after India's independence, with the Hindu demographic decreasing at an alarming rate. He advocated for collective action in protesting forced

religious conversion, urging that efforts should extend beyond national boundaries and seek recognition at international forums.

Manipur Police will bolster their anti-extortion measures

Imphal, Dec 28: In order to prevent threats against traders, contractors, government officials, and petrol pump owners around the state, the Manipur Police announced on Tuesday that they will bolster the anti-extortion apparatus. According to a police official, the Petroleum Dealers Association of Manipur and senior police authorities met to make the decision. Senior Superintendents of Police from the relevant districts attended the meeting, which was chaired by Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Lupheng Kailun at the Police Headquarters. Reviewing the current security measures at retail outlets (ROs) that deal with petroleum goods, including gas stations, was decided upon during the meeting. Additional security



measures will be implemented, including the vetting of all employees working at ROs. Mobile police teams will also be deployed at strategic locations to ensure the safety of fuel outlets, the official said. He added that the anti-extortion mechanism would be further enhanced to effectively counter threats targeting petrol pumps, traders, contractors and government officials. In the past few days, Manipur Police have arrested two persons in connection with extortion cases involving petrol pumps.

Amit Shah promises to discuss Assam tribal councils' constitutional status

Guwahati, Dec 28: In order to start institutional conversation with three indigenous groups in Assam that are requesting constitutional legitimacy for their autonomous councils, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has agreed to designate an interlocutor. Delegations from the Rabha, Mising, and Tiwa groups, who have been advocating for improved constitutional status for their local councils, made the commitment at meetings. Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister of Assam, thanked Shah for interacting with the delegates and extended his "sincere gratitude" for the progress. "Deeply reassuring and heart-warming" is how he characterized the Home Minister's guarantee. The chief minister stated that the choice "reflects the Government of India's commitment to inclusive governance, dialogue, and the protection



of the constitutional aspirations of Assam's indigenous communities." Through their council systems, the three indigenous groups have long sought increased autonomy and constitutional rights. The central government's willingness to formally address their issues through a recognized institutional

framework is indicated by the appointment of an interlocutor. The action is viewed as a major step in meeting the goals of Assamese indigenous communities, whose concerns about constitutional protections and tribal autonomy have continued to be a contentious political issue.

Gaurav Gogoi slams anti-Karbi slogans

Guwahati, Dec 28: Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi condemned slogans raised against the Karbi community amid ongoing unrest in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, deeming them disrespectful and contrary to Assam's values. He urged societal unity and called on the state government to address the underlying issues leading to tensions. The conflict intensified after protests, particularly in Kheroni,

where non-tribal slogans towards the indigenous Karbi community sparked violence, resulting in two fatalities and numerous injuries. The situation underscores the deep-rooted divisions between indigenous Karbis and non-tribal settlers, who the Karbi community accuses of encroachment threatening their land and identity, especially significant given the region's protections under the Sixth Schedule



of the Constitution.

Eight KCP cadres are detained by security authorities during several raids in Imphal

Imphal, Dec 28: Security Forces conducted coordinated operations in Imphal East and West districts on December 26, resulting in the arrest of eight active members from various factions of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP). The operations led to the seizure of firearms, ammunition, communication devices, and other incriminating evidence. Initially, an active cadre of KCP (Ibungo Ngangom) named Kshetrimayum Binoy Singh alias Kebi, aged 41, was arrested at a farmhouse in Langol Game Village Zone-III under Lamphel Police Station in Imphal West. Authorities recovered a mobile phone and an Aadhaar card from him. Additionally, three members of KCP (Taibanganba) were apprehended at the Langol Game Village Relief Camp in Zone-II.

They were identified as Amom Somendro Singh alias Kangleibung (32), RK Bishworjit Singh alias Boinao (38), and Ningthoujam Santosh Singh (30), all from various locations in Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts. Two mobile phones were found in their possession.

In a significant development, four active cadres from KCP (PWG) were



arrested in the Andro Leitanpekpham area under Andro Police Station in Imphal East. The arrested individuals were Ningthoujam Birjit Meitei alias Tocha (36), Pangabam Meiraba Meitei alias Nongpokngakpa (32), Mutum Norin Meitei (33), and Ningombam Robi Meitei alias Akhup (32), all hailing from Imphal East. Authorities seized a .32 caliber pistol with a magazine, three live .32 ammunition rounds, four mobile phones, an Aadhaar card, a sky-blue Santro car (registration number MN01W 9427), and two Baofeng radio sets from their possession. The operations underscore the ongoing efforts to combat the presence of insurgent groups in the region.

ADRE appointment letters will be distributed by Assam in January

Guwahati, Dec 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma declared on December 26 that the Assam government would provide recruitment letters to candidates who passed the Assam Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE) in early January. On January 9, Grade IV recruits will receive their letters, and Grade III appointees the following day. Starting at 10:00 am, both ceremonies will be held in Guwahati's Sarusajai Stadium. In a post on the social media site X, the Chief Minister announced the news and instructed all chosen candidates to show up for the distribution program on the specified dates. One of the state government's largest recruitment campaigns, the ADRE exercise aims to fill thousands of positions in a variety of departments. A sizable number of appoint-



ments are expected to be formalized during the course of the two-day event, according

to the staggered distribution timetable. The final step in the protracted recruiting process,

which has seen lakhs of candidates fight for government positions around Assam, is for

candidates to physically visit the stadium location to pick up their official papers.

NATIONAL

Naveen Patnaik denies rumors of the BJD’s demise

party will serve Odisha for 100 more years

Bhubaneswar, Dec 28: Naveen Patnaik, the president of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), denied rumors that the party was in decline following its loss in the 2024 elections on Friday, stating that the BJD will survive for a another century and remain dedicated to serving the people of Odisha. Speaking to employees on the occasion of the BJD’s 29th foundation day at the party office in Bhubaneswar, Naveen—who was ousted from government last year after serving as Odisha’s chief minister for five terms in a row—said that losing elections was a normal part of the democratic process. In a democracy, there are victories and defeats. He claimed that some individuals and organizations are purposefully disseminating false information that the party will fail.

Naveen stated unequivocally that the BJD was far bigger than individual leaders. “One or two leaders are not the focus of the Biju Janata Dal. It is a people’s movement with strong ties to the pride and ambitions of Odia. For another hundred years, the Biju Janata Dal would exist, he declared. Over the years, the BJD has developed a wide base of support and solid grassroots ties. However, the party has been under constant pressure from political rivals since losing to the BJP in the 2024 elections. A number of prominent figures left the BJD and joined the BJP, including former Rajya Sabha member Amar Patnaik and current members Mamata Mahanta and Sujit Kumar. There were also rumors that Sujata Karthikeyan, a former IAS official and the wife of Naveen Patnaik’s trusted lieutenant



V.K. Pandian, might join the party. In light of this, Naveen aimed to dispel any unfavorable rumors and boost party employees’ confidence. According to Naveen, patience is crucial in politics. He emphasized that the youth were the party’s greatest asset and called on them to become more involved, especially on social media, in order to combat what he called false information propagated by the BJD’s rivals. “Together we will transform today’s challenge into tomorrow’s opportunity and continue our effort for an empowered Odisha,” he said. Naveen maintained that the BJD remained an immensely successful regional party rooted in the ideology of his father, Biju Patnaik. “Since 1997, we have served the people of the state based on Biju Babu’s ideology. Seva (service), swabhiman (self pride) and sangram (struggle) are our

mula mantra (motto),” he said. Highlighting his government’s record, Naveen said development was the BJD’s core identity. “The period from 2000 to 2024 was a golden period for Odisha. We fought poverty, starvation, infant mortality and natural calamities, and gave the state a new identity,” he asserted. He cited welfare schemes such as Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) and efforts to attract investment and generate employment. Naveen also criticised the Mohan Charan Majhi-led BJP government, alleging administrative failure. “In the last 18 months of the double-engine sarkar, eight question papers have been leaked. There seems to be no government. Law and order has worsened and crimes against women are rising. Even minor girls are not safe,” he said.

Gujarat returns to India’s tiger map after more than 30 years



Gandhinagar, Dec 28: After more than thirty years, Gujarat has regained its status as a tiger-present state, as confirmed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in a preliminary report following a detailed study. The NTCA identified a tiger residing in the Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary located in Dahod district, thus reinstating Gujarat in the national tiger population census. The state had lost its tiger status in 1992, following the extinction of tigers in 1989. Gujarat Forest and Environment Minister Arjun Modhwadia noted that while no official communication had been received yet from the NTCA, the confirmed presence of a tiger in Ratanmahal is a source of pride for the state’s residents. Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi expressed pride in the state’s re-inclusion in the national tiger map, stating, “After 30-plus years, Gujarat roars back onto India’s tiger map,” highlighting conservation success and the effectiveness of vigilant forest teams.

Historically, Gujarat had a significant tiger population, which dwindled until the last census in 1989 noted only pugmarks without any subsequent sightings, leading to the loss of its ‘tiger state’ designation. A faint hope for revival appeared in 2019 with the spotting of a tiger in the Mahisagar district, which tragically died soon after. The recently identified tiger was first captured on a camera trap on February 22, followed by forest staff observing large footprints in the area. Confirmatory images collected later indicated that this tiger had established its presence within the sanctuary. An NTCA

More than three decades after tigers went extinct in the state, Gujarat has been officially recognised once again as a tiger-present state, with the NTCA confirming the presence of a tiger in its preliminary report based on a detailed study.

team, after visiting Gujarat, issued a preliminary report supporting the presence of one tiger and recognizing the region as suitable for tiger habitation while suggesting measures to enhance conservation. Minister Modhwadia informed that several initiatives are in progress to create a favorable habitat for the tiger. Continuous monitoring is underway that includes improved security, availability of water resources, fire protection, and an expanded network of camera traps. The state has also strengthened the prey base, ensuring the presence of species like wild boar, nilgai, monkeys, as well as the relocation of chital and sambar during monsoon periods. Furthermore, training for forest officials and frontline staff in tiger conservation and breeding is being organized, while there are plans to introduce a female tiger to build a sustainable population. There is also a push from the state government to declare the Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary as a formal tiger reserve in the future. This confirmation also positions Gujarat as the only state in India where all three major big cats—Asiatic lion, tiger, and leopard—coexist. The state government has characterized this development as a point of pride and credited continuous forest conservation efforts for the resurgence of this apex predator in Gujarat’s ecosystems.

Bajrang Dal leader was detained after attacking a Kashmiri shawl vendor

Dehradun, Dec 28: Uttarakhand police have arrested a Bajrang Dal leader, Ankur Singh, and registered an FIR following the attack on a Kashmiri shawl seller in Udhham Singh Nagar, who was threatened with death. The incident prompted action from the Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA) and led to a statement from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

asserting a zero tolerance policy toward violence against Kashmiri traders. The JKSA confirmed that multiple arrests have been made, and police teams conducted raids to ensure accountability under the Police Act. Authorities emphasized that Kashmiri traders, considered equal citizens, deserve protection against harassment. The MHA and Uttarakhand government assured

that no external pressures would affect the prosecution, and investigations would continue thoroughly to identify all responsible individuals. The assault has raised concerns among the Kashmiri trader community, but officials reassured them of their safety and rights. The timely police response has been praised for reinforcing the rule of law, restoring confidence among



Kashmiri traders affected by the incident.

At the airport in Bengaluru, phony customs officers deceive the public, and authorities issue a high alert

Bengaluru, Dec 28 The Customs department at Kempegowda International Airport has issued a high alert due to a fraud racket involving impostors posing as Customs officials cheating individuals, especially from economically weaker sections. These scammers exploit victims’ fears through phone calls and social media, falsely claiming a passenger has been detained and demanding

immediate payments to resolve the situation. The Customs commissioner has warned that officials never contact people for fines or penalties via phone or social media and do not accept payments to personal bank accounts; all official transactions occur through authorized channels. The fraudsters typically befriend victims online, then falsely claim a friend or relative has been detained,

threatening jail or harassment unless payments are made at once. After transferring money, victims lose contact with the fraudsters. Customs confirmed that no legal harassment occurs for non-payment, and procedures are conducted under strict legal and CCTV oversight. The public is urged to remain vigilant and report suspicious calls or messages to authorities.

Ad hoc positions to cover leadership voids in higher education at IIT

New Delhi, Dec 28: In important roles at prestigious universities and organizations that make policy under the ministry of education, appointment delays and ad hoc arrangements have become commonplace. In order to prolong the terms of the chairpersons of IIT BHU (Varanasi), IIT Dhanbad, IIT Guwahati, IIT Bhubaneswar, IIT Palakkad, and IIT Jammu, the government received permission from the President of India last month.

These institutions’ chairpersons had served out their tenure. Additionally, the ministry assigned the current chairpersons of IIT Ropar, IIT Delhi, and IIT Kharagpur the additional responsibility of chairpersons of IIT Goa, IIT Roor-



kee, and IIT Patna. These IITs were expected to have regular chairpersons appointed by the government. These nine IITs will maintain their ad hoc set-up through the final week of May 2026. Finalizing the minutes of important meetings has also been delayed. The IIT Council, which is made up of the directors and chairpersons of all 23 IITs, met on August 25 under the direction of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The

minutes have not been finalized as of December 26. What decisions have been made is unknown. Additionally, policy organizations lack a leader. Yogesh Singh, the vice-chancellor of Delhi University, was given the additional responsibility of chairing the All India Council of Technical Education, which regulates technical education, by the ministry this week. Similarly, after Jagadeesh Kumar’s term ended in

April, Vineet Joshi, the higher education secretary, has been in charge of the University Grants Commission. There is a chairperson in charge of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. The ministry has been sitting on the appointments of directors of IIM Bangalore and IIM Shillong for over six months. In-charge directors are managing them. Two ministry officials said the delay occurs mostly at the top. “The sections concerned process the files and submit them to the minister’s office. It gets stuck there for months. To run the institutions, an ad hoc arrangement is the option till regular appointments are approved,” said an official.

The true test of Modi’s G RAM G: From MGNREGA dole to discipline

New Delhi, Dec 28: Beyond the cacophony of protest, the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025, or G RAM G, was passed by Parliament. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which had guaranteed a day’s wage to anyone seeking it for twenty years, has been revised. On paper, the new law provides 125 days of employment as opposed to MGNREGA’s 100. In essence, it transforms India’s rural safety net into a planned, productivity-driven mission rather than a rights-based assurance. Rukmini Devi, 40, waits outside the panchayat office with her faded work card in Mahoba, Bundelkhand, where MGNREGA-funded ponds and check dams still gleam in the December sunshine. She claims, “They said the new law gives more work.” “But will it arrive when we need it?” Her query encapsulates the current state of uncertainty in rural India. MGNREGA, which was passed in 2005, was bold in its simplicity: it gave rural households a legal right to 100 days of unskilled labor with wages received within 15 days. Between 2014 and 2024, it generated an average of 2.6 billion person-days of employment yearly and cost the exchequer between Rs 70,000 and Rs 90,000 crore annually, or roughly 0.35 percent of GDP (gross domestic product). MGNREGA became India’s economic shock absorber during the Covid pandemic, providing employment to more than 110 million people in FY 2020–21—the greatest number since the nation’s independence. The G RAM G Bill says there will be more workdays, but under different conditions. With the Center providing 60% of the funding and the states providing 40%, it transforms the program into a centrally-sponsored initiative. The responsibility for ensuring work will be divided for the first time. The government claims because doing so will increase accountability and make rural labor “productive.” States, however, view it as an unfunded mandate. According to Tamil Nadu’s finance department, the state’s yearly liabilities could increase by more than Rs 4,300 crore. The



bill might be more severe for less wealthy states like Bihar or Odisha. A top state official states, “We are committed to employment, but this turns a legal right into a fiscal negotiation.” G RAM G fixes annual ceilings, as contrast to MGNREGA, which grew with hardship. MGNREGA’s actual spending in 2023–2024 exceeded its budget of Rs 60,000 crore by almost Rs 30,000 crore to Rs 89,400 crore. Such overruns are intended to be avoided by the new administration. In order to guarantee labor availability for agriculture, it also establishes a “seasonal pause,” which permits states to halt operations for up to 60 days during planting or harvest.

Economists caution that this might benefit farmers but harm the impoverished who lack land. The poorest people in rural India frequently rely on those same months to make ends meet. India’s evolving welfare narrative is traced through Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s personal experience with MGNREGA. He rejected it as evidence of the failure of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime while serving as chief minister of Gujarat. “I will keep MGNREGA alive, not as proof of its success but as a monument to your failures,” Modi declared in a 2015 Lok Sabha speech. However, MGNREGA turned become his government’s most important stabilizer by 2020 as Covid lockdowns cleared cit-

ies. It produced 3.8 billion person-days of employment for more than 73 million households in FY2021–2022. It is difficult to overlook the irony that the prime minister who previously mocked it for “digging holes and filling them” is now in charge of its replacement.

That experience, together with philosophy, has informed the new law. The Sangh Parivar’s economic philosophy, which values “shram samskar” (dignity of labor) and independence over reliance, is strongly aligned with G RAM G. Welfare is only acceptable to the Sangh when it is linked to constructive labor and communal development. The employment guarantee is thus brought closer to this Swadeshi economic mindset by G RAM G. These days, every day of work must result in something tangible, such as a watershed project, a rural road, a solar cluster, or a water tank. Plans for the village will connect jobs with climate-resilient resources and local infrastructure. According to a senior BJP MP, “this is not a dhole.” It’s work-based empowerment. Gandhi preferred gram swaraj above ongoing subsidies. For the Union government, that framing is politically potent. It allows Modi to recast MGNREGA not as a Congress-era relic but as a Viksit Bharat 2047 tool—fiscally disciplined, digitally tracked and mission-driven. The rural development ministry says geotag-

ging and mobile attendance have already reduced leakages by 30 per cent since 2019. Now, with G RAM G, it wants to link employment to long-term infrastructure. In theory, this could raise rural productivity; in practice, the risks of bureaucratic control and uneven implementation remain. Critics argue that the reform trades elasticity for efficiency. Under MGNREGA, if rural distress rose, the scheme’s funding automatically expanded. Under G RAM G, work and funds will depend on pre-approved plans and budget limits. The ‘right to work’ has become an administrative endeavour. The compensation clause for delayed employment, a vital safeguard, is gone. In states like Jharkhand, where 40 per cent of rural households depend on wage labour, this could mean fewer workdays when incomes fall most sharply. The politics around this transition are predictably heated. Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, called the bill “anti-village and anti-worker”, accusing the government of erasing Mahatma Gandhi’s name and the principle of decentralised power. Yet BJP leaders defend it as a genuine reform. “We are not ending MGNREGA; we are upgrading it,” says a Union minister. “Our workers will build assets, not just fill pits.” Fiscal consolidation has played its part too. India’s fiscal deficit target for FY2025-26 is 5.1 per cent of the GDP. Keeping welfare costs predictable is crucial to that arithmetic. In that light, G RAM G is as much about macroeconomic discipline as about ideology. By transferring cost responsibility to states, the Centre caps its exposure while retaining control through planning and digital oversight. Economically, it’s a tidy solution; politically, it passes the burden downward. Whether it works will depend on execution. The government expects the new framework to generate around 3.5-3.8 billion person-days annually, similar to MGNREGA’s recent averages, but with “higher asset quality”. That promise will be tested in districts like Barmer, Kalahandi and Dantewada, where the scheme is often the only lifeline.

What the CBI told the Supreme Court regarding the rape case in Unnao

New Delhi, Dec 28: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has challenged the Delhi High Court’s order that suspended Kuldeep Singh Sengar’s life sentence in the Unnao rape case, deeming it “contrary to law” and “perverse.” The High Court had ruled that Sengar, a former BJP MLA, was not a “public servant,” which the CBI contested, arguing that an elected official holds a constitutional position and therefore must be considered a public servant under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The CBI contends that the High Court erred by not applying a purposive interpretation of the POCSO Act, which focuses on protecting children from abuse by individuals in positions of authority. Sengar was convicted of kidnapping and raping a minor in 2017, with the case gaining significant attention after the survivor’s attempted self-immolation in protest. Following the High Court’s ruling, the survivor and her mother protested near India Gate, facing further issues with law enforcement. The CBI emphasized that Sengar’s release poses a threat to the survivor and her family due to his influence and resources, underscoring the principle that post-conviction, incarceration should be the standard rather than bail.

Tripura CM blames the left front for the drug problem, claiming that inaction allowed the situation to worsen

Agartala, Dec 28: On December 25, Tripura Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha launched a scathing attack on the previous Left Front administration, accusing it of knowing about the growing drug problem in the state but doing little to combat it. Speaking at the Sansad Khel Mahotsav 2025 at the Dasarath Deb State Sports Complex in Badharghat, Dr. Saha said that the drug problem was a part of a global conspiracy and that the previous CPI(M)-led administration had failed to take decisive action to stop it. “CPI(M) leaders at the time did not take any action despite knowing everything,” he claimed. The Chief Minister claimed that strong steps had been taken to combat drugs and drug trafficking since the BJP government took office. He claimed that in order to eradicate drugs from Tripura, the state has implemented a zero-tolerance policy and conducts frequent seizures. In order to end this threat, he continued, “we are taking strict action against drug smugglers and intensifying enforcement.”

Dr. Saha also emphasized how sports help develop young people who are self-assured and disciplined. In order to develop character, self-assurance,



and a strong work ethic, he encouraged young people to concentrate on athletics. He emphasized the importance of families and stated that parents should actively encourage their kids to do sports, pointing out that exercise also aids in stress management and preserving mental health.

“A healthy mind resides in a healthy body,” the Chief Minister said, highlighting the broader social benefits of sports. He further referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision for promoting sports in the country, mentioning that the Prime Minister has spoken about hosting the Commonwealth

Games in 2030 in Gujarat. Dr Saha underlined the importance of merit, coaching and mental discipline in sports, stating that along with practice, meditation plays a crucial role in achieving excellence. He described Sansad Khel Mahotsav as an important platform for sportspersons and students, saying it would help nurture talent while also supporting the government’s broader efforts to keep youth away from drugs. The event saw participation from athletes, students and officials, as the state government continues to link sports promotion with its campaign against substance abuse.

Gaurav Gogoi promises to remove the BJP in four months and accuses the Assam government of “gundaraj.”

Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi accuses Assam government of promoting lawlessness and vows to remove BJP within four months.

Guwahati, Dec 28: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma’s administration has come under heavy fire from Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, who claims it is in charge of the state’s pervasive corruption and lawlessness. His remarks followed new accusations about land deal commissions made against a BJP lawmaker. “Another hour, another controversial BJP leader close to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is in the news for the wrong reasons,” Gogoi posted on social media. “Charging commission for land deal, stealing FCI grain, encroaching upon tribal land, cow syndicate, coal syndicate—this is the gun-



daraj in Assam under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.” Using the hashtag #NatunAxom (New Assam), the Congress leader proclaimed that his party will “remove these people from power in four months from today.”

Gogoi’s comments come after an audio recording purportedly showing Palasbari BJP MLA Hemanga Thakuria talking about commissions for land transactions went viral on social media.

The recording has generated a lot of conversation throughout the state.

Land brokering is mentioned in the alleged audio, and it is claimed that the speaker requested commissions totaling several lakhs of rupees. According to one claim, a commission of Rs 8 lakh is required for one bigha of property. The speaker in the video allegedly states that they plan to serve as an MLA for 25 years and frequently

mentions the need for “benefit,” which raises concerns about the behavior expected of elected officials.

Thakuria has denied the accusations, claiming that the audio clip was politically motivated and twisted. He said that he was the target of attacks because of his development projects in the Palasbari constituency, such as plans for an Indian Institute of Management and road construction.

Nitin Nabin will start a two-day tour to Assam



Guwahati, Dec 28: On December 26, Nitin Nabin, the national working president of the BJP, will arrive in Guwahati to begin a two-day visit to Assam. Party leaders have hinted that the talks would influence the schedule for the state assembly elections in 2026. Nabin is expected to attend a number of organizational meetings in addition to the BJP state executive meeting at Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra. On his first trip to the state after taking on the national position, he was welcomed by party members at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport. His schedule on December 26–27 includes a visit to the BJP’s Assam

headquarters for a state core committee meeting, where leaders are anticipated to discuss organizational readiness and political developments. Manoj Baruah, the vice president of the BJP in Assam Pradesh, claims that the state executive meeting will evaluate organizational problems, examine the present political climate, and have in-depth conversations about electoral strategy and policies. The goal of the discussions, he said, is to finalize a clear plan for the 2026 Assam Legislative Assembly elections, which are set for March and April of that year. BJP Assam president Dilip Saikia will preside over the meeting, which will include a special

speech from Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. It is anticipated that some 800 party employees, MLAs, state office holders, executive and council members, and members of Parliament will take part. December 27 is also scheduled for meetings of the manifesto drafting committee and the state election management committee. On December 14, Nabin, 45, was named national working president of the BJP. As the party gets ready for the upcoming election and policy difficulties, party leaders have connected his appointment to the leadership push in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

New land verification for the Lada-Sarli Frontier highway is ordered by Arunachal

Itanagar, Dec 28: A new physical re-verification of land and compensation related to the Lada-Sarli Frontier Highway project in the East Kameng district, covering Packages I through V, has been mandated by the Arunachal Pradesh government. The Department of Land Management created specialized re-verification panels after a fact-finding committee turned in its report. The East Kameng deputy commissioner will oversee the exercise directly. Every land parcel that falls within the authorized Right of Way shall be physically confirmed on the ground in accordance with the official order, closely adhering to the approved strip plan. The results will then be compared against compensation awards that were previously made by a committee that was established in January 2025. In accordance with the Manual 2022, the re-verification teams are required to create comprehensive comparison statements that include beneficiary names, land area, standing assets, chainage, and compensation payable. Any deviation or difference from previous estimations needs to be noted in detail. The entire procedure will be captured on camera and recorded in accordance with established guidelines. For Packages I and II, III and IV, and V, distinct committees have been established. To



guarantee sector-wise evaluation, these include representatives from the departments of land management, public works, horticulture, fisheries, agriculture, and forestry. With assistance from the executive engineer and project experts, PWD Highways’ chief engineer will facilitate the Right of Way’s ground demarcation. Logistical support will be provided by the district administration. The committees have been instructed to turn in their reports within 45 days of the order’s issuance. Three CRPF platoons will help on the ground to ensure security and transparency throughout the exercise, while the Anti-Corruption Bureau will keep an eye on things. To cover the costs of re-verification, an amount of Rs 60 lakh has been approved. After receiving clearance from the chief secretary of Arunachal Pradesh, the order was issued on December 23, 2025.

Biswa Bandhu Sen, Speaker of the Tripura Assembly, dies



Agartala, Dec 28: While receiving treatment at Aster CMI Hospital, Biswa Bandhu Sen, the Speaker of the Tripura Legislative Assembly, passed away late on Thursday night, December 25. He was seventy-two. Due to a major brain hemorrhage, Sen had been in serious condition since August. Before being evacuated to Bengaluru for specialized care, he was first hospitalized to a hospital in Agartala, where he had emergency surgery. His condition did not get better despite months of treatment. On December 27, his mortal remains are anticipated to be returned to Tripura. In a social media post, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha announced Sen’s passing and offered his sympathies to Sen’s family. A senior political figure, Sen was serving as Speaker of the 13th Tripura Legislative Assembly at the time of his death. He represented the Dharmanagar Assembly constituency and was elected to the Assembly four times. He began his political career with the Congress, winning two terms, before later joining the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Protesters will meet the Assam chief minister in Guwahati after West Karbi Anglong stabilizespline

Guwahati, Dec 28: Even though a strong security clampdown is still in place and a vital tripartite meeting is set for December 26 in Guwahati, normalcy has started to return to violence-affected areas of Assam’s West Karbi Anglong district. No new incidents have been recorded in the last two days. Following the disturbance that resulted in two fatalities and numerous injuries earlier this week, authorities confirmed that prohibitory orders, a night curfew, and the suspension of mobile internet services are still in place in the affected districts. To stop any flare-up, security personnel like the Army, Central Reserve Police Force, and Rapid Action Force are still on duty. “Restrictions are still in place as a precaution, but the situation is normal now,” an official stated. The district’s worst-affected section, Kheroni, which is home to groups of Karbi, Bihari, Bengali, and Nepali people, was the focal point of the violence. Due to claims of encroachment



on Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) and Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) properties in the tribal region, tensions between the indigenous Karbi people and Hindi-speaking settlers have been simmering for years. The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), the state govern-

ment, and demonstrators will gather in Guwahati on Friday. According to officials, KAAC chief Tuliram Ronghang and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma are anticipated to attend. Following a 15-day hunger strike by Karbi agitators calling for the removal of alleged illegal settlers—who they claim are from Bihar—from grazing reserve lands in the districts of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, there was disturbance. In the early hours of Monday, police withdrew three protestors from the site; the administration later claimed that this action was necessary for their medical care, but violence broke out. One person was murdered by police gunfire on Tuesday, while another was burned alive inside Kheroni’s home. Over 60 police officers were among the more than 70 injured individuals. Chief Minister Sarma stated on Wednesday that a stay order issued by the Gauhati High Court prevented the rapid eviction of suspected encroachers.

The impasse persists as 108 ambulance employees threaten a hunger strike and accuse GVK EMRI of poor management

Guwahati, Dec 28: On Saturday, December 27, hundreds of employees of the 108 Mritunjay Ambulance Service continued their sit-in protest at Chachal in Guwahati, marking the 27th day of the ongoing work stoppage and protest. In talks with Dr. Lakshmanan S., Managing Director of the National Health Mission (NHM), Assam, on Friday, representatives of the protesting workers made grave accusations of corruption, harassment, and poor management against GVK EMRI, the private organization running the state’s 108 ambulance service. The employees who were protesting claim that the NHM did not make a decision right away. But according to reports, Dr. Lakshmanan promised the delegation

that the issues brought up would be brought before the state government for additional review and suitable action. A major demand of the protestors includes the reinstatement of over a thousand 108 ambulance workers who were allegedly terminated from service over the past few months. The employees have termed the terminations arbitrary and unjust, claiming they have severely affected both livelihoods and emergency healthcare delivery. Escalating their agitation, the protesting staff warned that failure by the government to respond decisively within the next two days would compel nearly 3,000 employees of the 108 ambulance service to begin an indefinite hunger strike at the protest site in Chachal. The pro-



longed agitation has raised concerns over the impact on emergen-

cy medical services across Assam, even as negotiations between the

employees and authorities remain inconclusive.

Former Arunachal MLA Yadap Apang dies

Itanagar, Dec 28: Former Arunachal Pradesh MLA Yadap Apang, wife of ex-chief minister Gegong Apang, passed away at 71 due to age-related ailments on December 25 in Pasighat. She is survived by her husband and



six children, including former Union minister Omak Apang. Elected to the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly in 1995, she was dedicated to public service and active in media as a director of Arunachal Times Publications. Her contributions to community welfare and education were significant. Condolences from Governor KT Parnaik and Chief Minister Pema Khandu highlighted her compassionate service and dedication to the people. Last rites will be held on Sunday.

BUSINESS

Fintech Skydo set to expand to US



New Delhi: Fintech for international payments After raising \$10 million in a Series A fundraising round headed by Susquehanna Asia Venture Capital, with participation from current investor Elevation Capital, Skydo is entering the US market. As part of its expansion strategy, the Bengaluru-based company is focusing on small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in the United States. Movin Jain, co-founder of Skydo, told Business Standard that the company is aiming for a portion of the US market valued at \$1 trillion in total payments. The business has already raised \$5 million in 2024. “Now is the time for us to spend some more time in international markets. We will be starting with expanding to the US and over time we want to expand to other countries. The vision is that any company in any part of the world should be able to make or receive payments to any other company in a different part of the world,” Jain explained. At present, Skydo serves over 30,000 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), freelancers, and startups in India.It has received the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) in-principle approval to operate as a payment aggregator-cross border (PA-CB). The company is targeting \$5 billion in annualised payment volume within two years. Apart from the utilisation of funds to expand globally, the firm is planning to roll out features to its existing product suite, expansion of its distribution network and product development. “We are already doing export payments. We want to do import payments and a few other innovations that are lined up in our roadmap. We also want to continue expanding our distribution through various channels,” Jain explained. Jain said that once the company’s global expansion takes off, a majority of its revenue will come from outside the Indian market.The company further stated that the Series A round will unlock local collections across over 20 countries in Latin America, Africa, South East Asia and the Middle East, along with regulatory licensing in key markets.

Strong foundations and significant investments will drive India’s FDI in 2026

New Delhi: Strong macroeconomic fundamentals, big-ticket investment announcements, persistent attempts to improve the ease of doing business, and a new generation of investment-linked trade agreements are all projected to contribute to the healthy expansion of FDI inflows into India in 2026. The government periodically examines the FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) policy after conducting thorough stakeholder discussions in order to make sure that India continues to be a desirable and investor-friendly location. This year, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has met with several stakeholders to discuss methods to encourage foreign direct investment. Piyush Goyal, the minister of commerce and industry, also conducted meetings in November on how to increase investment by streamlining, expediting, and improving processes. Important factors that are keeping foreign investors focused on India despite global challenges include investor-friendly policies and regulatory practices, a strong return on investment, a skilled workforce, easing compliance burdens, decriminalizing minor industry-related offenses, and streamlined approvals. Amidst worldwide concerns, total foreign direct investments (FDI) exceeded \$80.5 billion in 2024–2025. Over \$60 billion was invested abroad between January and October of 2025. According to DPIIT Secretary Amardeep Singh Bhatia, a number of government initiatives have drawn notable investments to India over the past eleven years. In 2024–2025, it reached an all-time high of \$80.62 billion. We hope that FDI this year (2026) would surpass the \$80.62 billion statistics from the

previous year,” he told PTI. Additionally, India is relying on its free trade deal with the four-member European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which has pledged to provide \$100 billion in foreign direct investment to the nation over a 15-year period. On October 1, 2025, the agreement went into effect, and Swiss healthcare giant Roche Pharma declared that it would invest 1.5 billion Swiss francs, or roughly Rs 17,000 crore, in India over the following five years. The sovereign wealth funds of the EFTA countries—Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein—will not make any foreign institutional or portfolio investments; instead, this will be pure FDI. A similar commitment of \$20 billion has been made by New Zealand under its trade pact with India, which is slated to be implemented in 2026. Certain reports have also projected a positive outlook for foreign direct investment into India. According to UNCTAD’s World Investment Report 2025, global FDI flows fell by 11 per cent in 2024 to \$1.5 trillion. However, this figure conceals wide differences in performance across economies. Developed countries experienced a 22 per cent contraction, while flows to developing economies were stable. In Asia, particularly, east and southeast Asia, as well as India, investors maintained strong project activity, the report has said. Some of the major global firms have announced big-ticket investments this year. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has announced an investment of \$17.5 billion by 2030 to help build infrastructure and sovereign capabilities for the country’s AI-first future. Amazon plans to invest \$35 billion



in India over the next five years to expand its businesses from quick commerce to cloud computing and artificial intelligence.Google will invest \$15 billion over the next five years to set up an AI hub in India. iPhone maker Apple is expanding its presence in India, and South Korean electronics major Samsung is also expanding its manufacturing portfolio in the country. Arcelormittal Nippon Steel India is aiming to increase the colour-coated steel capacity to 10 lakh tonnes per year by 2026 from the present 7 lakh tonnes.As per the National Statistical Office (NSO), the Indian economy grew 8.2 per cent in the second quarter of 2025-26. The government, on its part, has come out with the second edition of the Jan Viswas bill to promote ease of doing business by decriminalising minor industry-related offences. Experts, too, have stated that India’s strong economic fundamentals and resilience, along with a sustained reform push, will be a big reason for a

revival of FDI in 2026. “As India diversifies its economic relationships amid geopolitical uncertainties and moves up the value chain in manufacturing and services, these developments are expected to channel greater long-term FDI into services, software and electronics,” Rumki Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte India, said.Rudra Kumar Pandey, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, said FDI from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has emerged as a strategic and increasingly durable pillar of India’s foreign investment landscape.“Technology-led services are expected to remain the primary magnet for foreign capital, with increasing emphasis on artificial intelligence, data analytics, cloud infrastructure, and Global Capability Centres focused on AI deployment and applied research,” he added. The top investors in India include Mauritius and Singapore (together accounting for about 49 per cent), followed by the US (10 per cent),

the Netherlands (7.2 per cent), Japan (6 per cent) and the UK (5 per cent).The key sectors which attracted the maximum FDI in India include the services segment, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, trading, construction development, automobile, chemicals and pharmaceuticals.FDI is allowed through the automatic route in most of the sectors, while in areas such as telecom, media, pharmaceuticals and insurance, the government approval is required for foreign investors.At present, FDI is prohibited in certain sectors. They are lottery, gambling and betting, chit funds, nidhi company, real estate business, and manufacturing of cigars, cheroots, cigarillos and cigarettes using tobacco. FDI is important as India would require huge investments in the coming years for its infrastructure sector to boost growth. Healthy foreign inflows also help in maintaining the balance of payments and the value of the rupee.

What will happen to ICICI credit card holders in 2026?

New Delhi: A new set of modifications to ICICI Bank’s credit card fees and perks has been revealed; these will take effect in January 2026. The new regulations will affect how cards access popular benefits, collect points, and make purchases. They will be implemented gradually between January and February of next year. Spending on online gaming is impacted by one of the major shifts. Transactions made on online gaming sites including Dream11, MPL, Rummy Culture, and Jungle Games would be subject to a 2% fee from ICICI Bank. Deposits and other gaming-related

payments will be subject to the fee, which will also apply to any future additions of additional gaming merchant categories. The popular BookMyShow Buy-One-Get-One movie ticket deal will no longer be available without conditions. Cardholders must have spent at least Rs 25,000 in the preceding calendar quarter in order to be eligible for the reward.Users of Instant Platinum credit cards will no longer be able to take advantage of this offer starting in February 2026, although other credit cards that meet the spending requirements will still be able to do so. High-value trans-

portation expenditures will incur extra fees. Transportation-related transactions above Rs 50,000 under specific merchant category codes would be subject to a 1% tax, primarily affecting costly trip reservations. Reward points for bus and train reservations will also be limited on a monthly basis. Mid-tier cards will have a monthly reward ceiling of Rs 10,000, while premium cards like Emerald and Sapphire will only be able to earn up to Rs 20,000. With a 1% tax on transactions of Rs 5,000 or more, loading funds into third-party wallets like Paytm, Am-

azon Pay, and MobiKwik will also become more expensive. Additionally, costs for foreign currency and dynamic currency conversion have been updated, and they now differ depending on the type of card. ICICI Bank has also increased branch cash payment charges and introduced foreclosure charges on cancelled Instant EMIs. Meanwhile, HPCL Super Saver credit cardholders will continue earning rewards on insurance payments only up to Rs 40,000 per month. Cardholders may want to review their spending habits ahead of these changes to avoid unexpected costs.

In a historic ramp-up in India, Foxconn’s women-led iPhone manufacturing hires 30,000 workers

New Delhi: Taiwanese contract manufacturer Hon Hai Precision Industry, commonly known as Foxconn, has rapidly recruited nearly 30,000 workers at its new iPhone assembly plant located near Bengaluru in a remarkable span of just eight to nine months. This quick scaling represents one of the fastest factory ramp-ups in India to date, as reported by The Economic Times. The Devanahalli facility, which predominantly employs women and is staffed mostly by first-time workers aged 19 to 24, exemplifies Apple’s strategic efforts to diversify its supply chain away from China. Spanning 300 acres, the factory commenced test production of iPhone 16 models around April-May and has subsequently progressed to assembling the latest iPhone 17 Pro Max devices. Notably, over 80% of the facility’s output is earmarked for export, illustrating India’s increasingly pivotal role in Apple’s global manufacturing strategy. The workforce is characterized by a high proportion of female employees, with approximately 80% being women,

many beginning their careers in the manufacturing sector. To accommodate the growing labor force, Foxconn has constructed six large dormitories, with several already operational and more under development. As the plant approaches its peak operational capacity next year, it is anticipated to employ up to 50,000 individuals. This expansion is projected to make the Devanahalli facility the largest by employment and production capacity in India.The facility is on track to host a greater number of women workers at a single location than any other establishment in the country, whether governmental or private. To support workforce migration from neighboring states, plans for the campus include developing it into a mini township that will encompass residential, medical, educational, and recreational amenities. Workers at Foxconn receive complimentary accommodation, subsidized meals, and earn an average monthly salary of approximately Rs 18,000, which is relatively high for women in blue-collar manufacturing positions.

Samsung is requesting a PLI extension in order to increase its display manufacturing in India

New Delhi: Instead of moving operations from other nations, Samsung wants to increase its manufacturing presence in India by focusing on local production, exports, and component manufacturing. The business has submitted an application for components to be manufactured in India under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme. Additionally, it has contacted the government to request an extension of the recently concluded smartphone PLI program. According to JB Park, president and CEO of Samsung’s Southwest Asia division, the corporation is eager to establish India as a major hub for manufacturing and technology. Additionally, he stated that Samsung is in discussions with the government regarding the potential continuation of incentives under a new phase of the PLI program. Samsung has no intention of relocating its current production facilities from nations like Vietnam to India. The company’s primary worldwide production hub is still Vietnam. But if demand increases organically, Park said, India might see more investment. According to him, it is not economically viable to move capacity that has already been installed. The news source stated that extending operations at Samsung’s Noida factory would be the sensible course of action if the company needed to add more capacity. Samsung is willing to purchase semiconductor chips from India as long as they are reasonably priced and up to par. This could help India achieve its goal of becoming a more powerful participant in



the global supply chain for chips.According to Park, Samsung likes to collaborate with local partners whenever feasible and will progressively increase the number of Indian suppliers as quality and technology advance. Samsung is up against fierce competition in India’s high-end smartphone market, particularly from Apple, which has expanded its production facilities there. Because of geopolitical concerns, Apple has been moving production away from China. Although iPhones have grown in popularity among younger consumers in recent years, Park stated in the news article that Samsung is not unduly concerned because user tastes tend to alter over time. He emphasized that Android phones still account for around 90% of smartphone users in India, where Sam-

sung is still in a dominant position. Samsung attributed the increase of its shipments from India to the PLI program. Exports accounted for 42% of Samsung’s India income in the fiscal year 2025. The company’s revenue in India surpassed Rs 1 trillion, up 37% over the previous year. High-end flagship cellphones are among the many goods that Samsung exports from India. According to Park, export growth is consistent and sustained as long as policy support persists. In order to increase smartphone display assembly at its Noida facility, Samsung is awaiting government approval. Initiated in 2021, the project is a brownfield expansion. According to the news article, the corporation is also trying to enhance sourcing from Indian vendors in order to increase local value addition over time.

Oben Electric aims to make Rs. 100 crore in FY26 after raising Rs. 85 crore

Chennai: Bengaluru-based electric motorcycle maker Oben Electric said on Thursday that its pre-Series B round had successfully raised Rs 85 crore. Several well-known Indian American family offices, including Raj K Soin, Musa Dakri, Ramesh Bhutada, and other current investors, participated in the round. As seen by Oben Electric’s ten-fold revenue increase over the last 12 months, the capital indicates strong investor confidence in the company’s vision, engineering depth, market traction, and customer trust. The company is expected to reach sales of Rs 100 crore in FY26 and COGS (cost of goods sold) break even by March 2026, indicating great operational discipline, thus the investment is timely. Driven by high dealership demand and client validation, the firm aims to achieve EBITDA break-even by 2027 as it expands to 150 exclusive showrooms and service centers by March 2026 and 500 showrooms in the following two years. Strong dealer confidence is still seen by the company, as evidenced by excellent dealership applications and recurring interest from current dealers as they become successful. Oben Electric now has Rs 285 crore in total capital after this pre-Series B transaction. Additionally, the business is actively discussing closing its Series B. By expanding its distribution network and raising brand awareness, the additional funding will propel Oben Electric’s next stage of



expansion. The business will also expedite the development and launch of new products at the same time. Oben Electric is committed to further optimizing its bill of materials through design enhancements, improving production efficiency, and scaling manufacturing for long-term sustainability. The company is built on a foundation of strong vertical integration. In 2025, Oben Electric extended their sales channels to online retailers such as Amazon and Flipkart. The change has increased customer accessibility and helped maintain demand at both digital and physical touchpoints. Currently, Oben Electric has more than 85 showrooms in 18 states and more than 70 cities. “This fundraise is a strong validation of investor confidence in Oben Electric’s operating momentum, capital discipline, and growth roadmap,” stated Madhumita Agrawal, the company’s founder and CEO. With this additional finance, we are confident that we will reach COGS break-even by March 2026, which is a signif-

icant milestone for any large-scale EV OEM. We are well-positioned to move closer to EBITDA break-even in 2027 as we broaden our distribution network, supported by increasing dealer demand and customer validation. We are still committed to growing responsibly while creating an Indian electric motorbike firm that will set new standards. Earlier this year, Oben Electric introduced the Rorr EZ Sigma, its next gen city commuter motorcycle designed for enhanced everyday usability. With features like reverse mode, refined ergonomics, and a connected colour TFT display with smart features, the model has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from customers for its comfort, ease of use, and smart functionality.Raj K Soin, chairman and chief executive officer, Soin International and ex-founder of MTC Technologies (USA): “When I met Madhumita and Dinkar I was very favourably impressed by their plans and focus towards building an independent e motorbike company.

Farman Haider: I don't want to fit into a single stereotype

New Delhi: Farman Haider claims that after portraying a number of dramatic, frequently violent characters on television, he came to the want to stop and reconsider the kinds of narratives he was conveying. He acknowledges, "If I look at my previous shows, most of my characters were very toxic in their own way." This time, the character's emotional composition grabbed me in; he is cool, collected, incredibly sensitive, and appreciative of other people's feelings. His strength lies in such tenderness.

According to Farman, who is currently in Jagadhatri alongside Sonakshi Batra, the appeal was in showing a man who strikes a balance between discipline and sensitivity. He describes himself as "fun, loving, emotionally intelligent, loyal, and extremely protective of the people he loves." At the same time, he flips

a switch and becomes serious, disciplined, and focused when duty calls. As an actor, I was drawn to that contrast because it illustrates the complexity of actual people. He continues by saying that he no longer accepts projects on a whim.

"I consider the character's journey, past, and internal conflicts when selecting a role." He says, "I need to see if there's anything I can learn as an artist." In an industry where typecasting is common, especially on television, Fahman acknowledges that breaking out of a successful image is not easy. "Once a character becomes popular, audiences want to see you in the same space again," he mentions, adding: "But I believe change begins with how seriously you take your craft. Sometimes that change is internal, sometimes it's physical, your body language, your look, your energy. I try to give my 100 per cent



to each role so that people see the difference." Farman who has been a part is television for quote sometime now, says that TV has changed in a progressive way.

"Television has changed over the years, and the challenge now is to create characters that feel real, layered and emotionally grounded," he says, adding: "I enjoy characters that have a social or emotional message, even if it's subtle. I don't want to repeat myself just because something worked once." Ask him whether he only prefers lead roles, and thr actor tells us, "For me, the size of the role is not as important as the impact of the character. If the part is well-written and meaningful, I'm open to playing it, hero or not."He concludes, "I don't want to be boxed into one image. I want to keep exploring, keep learning, and keep surprising myself as an actor."

Javed Akhtar challenges burqa logic

New Delhi: Javed Akhtar never backs down from awkward discussions, and at the 2025 SOA Literary Festival, he once again provoked an important and critical discussion. "Why should a woman feel self-conscious about her appearance?" As he criticized the notion of women hiding their faces with burqas, the seasoned lyricist and screenwriter asked that direct question. Akhtar argued that face-covering is more about ingrained peer pressure than it is about individual freedom, sparking a thought-provoking discussion on choice, dignity, and social conditioning. Speaking during a workshop sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and the Indian Performing Rights Society, Akhtar questioned the social reasoning for the expectation that women hide their faces with burqas. Students and members of the public attended the event, which became especially interesting during the interactive portion when a young girl brought up Akhtar's



previous comments on growing up with non-burqa-wearing women. She posed the question, "Does covering oneself necessarily make a woman less strong?" to which the writer responded in an open and honest manner. "Why should you feel self-conscious about your face?" Akhtar inquired. "Why ought you to be? In my opinion, both men and women who wear skimpy clothing don't appear re-

spectable. It is not a nice thing if a man wears a sleeveless shirt to work or school. He ought to wear respectable clothing. Additionally, a woman ought to dress appropriately. But Akhtar made a clear distinction between covering one's face and wearing modestly. However, why does she hide her face? What about her face is so nasty, disgusting, and dehumanizing that it is covered? Why? He challenged the audience to consider the deeper reasons for the behavior by asking, "What is the reason?" Such choices are rarely made in isolation, according to Akhtar, who described it as a result of societal conditioning. Peer pressure is what this is. She is brainwashed if given the option. He added that approbation from one's immediate social group frequently plays a crucial part, saying, "If she claims to be doing it on her own, then she is brainwashed." "Because she is aware that doing this will be appreciated by some of her peers." .

Ishaan Khatter considers the workplace atmosphere in Hollywood

New Delhi: Actor Ishaan Khatter claims that working on the Hollywood film The Perfect Couple, which was shot in Cape Cod, has changed his viewpoint on entourage culture. Khatter recalled his time on set, describing a setting that was very different from what he was used to in India. He pointed to the lack of the support network that frequently surrounds actors back home when he said, "They gave me a house and a car and then asked me to drive myself to set." He didn't have a personal team with him during the shoot, in contrast to Indian productions. Khatter clarified, "There was no personal team, no assistants, and no safety net." Every day, I was washing my own laundry. While driving to the set, I was cooking for myself, cleaning, and practicing my lines.

The actor stated that he worked alone for over three months. He remarked, "I didn't know a single person there; I didn't have a single person from my team." Khatter thought about how insulated performers may be in India after the encounter. "As actors in particular, we are extremely pampered," he said. He questioned where convenience ends and entitlement begins, even though he accepted that cultural norms and job systems clearly influence access to domestic help in



India. "Where is the limit? That should be an individual question. It can't be the expectation generally," he added. Additionally, Khatter emphasized that depending on the project, different entourages may be required. Recalling his work on Neeraj Ghaywan's Homebound, he remarked, "It also depends on the project." Neeraj was quite detailed. Due to the predetermined style, we had a single hair and makeup crew for each actor. Letting go of my people made me very joyful. However, he noted that some roles

call for specific training and assistance. "In two months, I had to look like a prodigious horse rider for The Royals." He remarked, "So they had to get me a coach." The actor's comments come amid ongoing conversations within the Hindi film industry about the growing scale and cost of actors' entourages, which can include assistants, security personnel, stylists, hair and makeup artists, and photographers. According to Khatter, the issue arises when such arrangements go beyond the demands of the role.

Women are expected to be flawless, and we don't let ourselves fail

Kritika Kamra

New Delhi: Actor Kritika Kamra discusses her approach to acting in a field that rarely permits full immersion, her most recent movie, The Great Shamsuddin Family, and the artistic decisions that have shaped her career thus far. She also discusses the significance of the female gaze in narrative and the underlying expectations that women still have to deal with at home and at work in an exclusive chat. As an actor who has frequently chosen emotionally challenging parts in films like Tandav, Bambai Meri Jaan, and Bheed, Kamra believes that her character's complexity is a logical progression of her previous decisions. She quickly shifts the credit, though. To be honest, I don't really get credit for a character's layers. She explains, "As an actor, you're trying to play something with honesty, but the depth of a role largely comes from what the writer and director give you." This production was noteworthy for an actor who is constantly looking for significant roles. "Parts like that are always sought after, and this was unquestionably one of them." The way women are portrayed throughout the story was what made the experience particularly fulfilling. "It's not just about my character; all the characters, especially the female ones, are written with a strong female gaze, especially Anusha's (the director)." She has this beautiful ability to say important things with humour — she can make you laugh and think at the same time." It's a quality Kamra says actors deeply value. "That's a quality we all enjoy reading and performing, and I got that with this project. I hope audiences feel the same when they watch it." Unlike actors who remain emotionally tethered to their roles long after the camera stops rolling, Kamra believes in knowing when to let go. "I'm not really a method actor, so I don't carry mannerisms with me or dwell on characters long after I've finished playing them." What stays with her instead is something more intangible. "But I do believe that every experience gives you a little more growth as an actor." For Kamra, acting is more about viewpoint than it is about performance. Understanding people is the main focus of our work, and you grow more sympathetic to each character, even if they are not at all like you or even decent people. You begin to comprehend the motivations behind people's actions. You don't always realize where it's going you, and it's a very subtle shift every time, almost like an evolution," she remarked. She is open about the reasons that complete immersion isn't feasible in the field. Naturally, memories stick with you, but the character itself does not. To be honest, I have no idea how people manage to stay submerged for extended periods of time. For Kamra, acting is less about performance



and more about perspective. "Our job is essentially about understanding people, and with each character, you become more empathetic — even if the character is nothing like you, or not even a good person. You start to understand the reasons behind why people do what they do. It's a very slight shift each time, almost like an evolution, and you don't always realise where it's taking you," she said. She's candid about why total immersion isn't practical or even possible in the industry. "Memories stay with you, of course, but not the character itself. Honestly, I don't know how people stay immersed for long periods. The environment we work in isn't really conducive to that. We shoot in sheds, and we work constantly. I can't do just one project a year; how would I pay rent?" There's also little room, she says, for disappearing into a role. "And realistically, nobody on set or in life allows you the luxury of being another person for an extended period of time." Reflection, however, is unavoidable. "At the end of the day, you might lie in bed thinking about what you shot, or when you re-watch your work, which I hate doing, you think about what you could have done differently." But there's a line she's careful not to cross. "It's never about the character refusing to leave you. If that happened, I'd find it a bit worrying." Beyond acting, Kamra speaks with striking honesty about the expectations placed on women, expectations that exist even when they aren't voiced at home. "All the time, a woman is expected to be perfect, perfect at home, perfect at work, everything all at once." She acknowledges her own privilege, but also the weight of social conditioning. "Even though I have progressive, liberal parents who don't place those expectations on me, society does." That pressure, she feels, is learnt early and absorbed deeply. "And subconsciously, watching your mother and the women around you, it gets ingrained in you."

Radhika Apte on the work hour debate

New Delhi: The work hour debate for female actors, especially new mothers has been doing the rounds for the last few months. It all started ever since actor Deepika Padukone was reportedly ousted from filmmaker Sandeep Reddy Vanga's Spirit for demanding fixed working hours as a working mother. Actor Radhika Apte, who was recently seen in Saali Mohabbat and is a new mum herself having celebrated the first birthday of her daughter recently, agrees with the demands and feels happy that the conversation has finally started. Giving her full support to the matter, she says, "I will not be able to work unless the producers now agree to 12 hour shifts, and by 12 hours, I mean, including travel, makeup and hair. Otherwise we are basically working for 16 hours as you're on set for a minimum of 14 hours, including your hair makeup and just a little bit of extended shift. Then you have at least an hour-and-a-half of travel, wherever you're working from." Insisting on the need of fixed hours, she asserts, "You can't be away for 16 hours, otherwise you will never get to see your child. You don't have weekly offs. Sometimes you don't have lunch breaks. So, it's not possible to work that way for me. I will not be able to work on most of the projects because a lot of people won't agree with this. It would really depend on who agrees with that. Also, my time to work now is my time away from my child. So I need to really like it enough to do it."



Rekha was skeptical about Mukesh Agarwal's appearance and had Amitabh in her vision: Bina Ramani

New Delhi: Fashion designer Bina Ramani recently spoke on a podcast on Bollywood actor Rekha's choice to wed Delhi businessman Mukesh Aggarwal. In an interview with ANI, Ramani discussed Rekha's private life, emphasizing the actor's alleged emotions for Bollywood star Amitabh Bachchan and the events that led to her union with Aggarwal. Ramani claims that



Rekha looked for stability elsewhere because her hopes of receiving attention from Bachchan were never fulfilled. But once Aggarwal committed suicide some months into the marriage, the pursuit came to a tragic conclusion. Ramani recalled her initial impression of Aggarwal and mentioned how much he admired Rekha. "My friend described Mukesh as the most ardent and devoted fan of Rekha," she stated. She claimed that he knew every detail of Rekha's life and could quote any line from any film. Their meeting and rapid engagement were made possible by this adoration as well as Rekha's wish for a fresh start. Regarding how their personalities differed, Ramani stated: "He was not descriptive. Not much. He was dark and short, but he was really pleasant when you got to know him. However, you wouldn't recognize him even if he passed you six times. In contrast, she was a diva. "With so much sincerity in his eyes, he told me if he could just speak to Rekha," Ramani continued. "You have no idea what it would mean to me if I could meet her someday, and what you would have accomplished, she would be the happiest person on earth," he remarked.

Rekha and Aggarwal first connected over the phone. "I think I introduced them over the phone, and she didn't even know what he looked like," Ramani remarked. After two or three minutes of conversation, she asked me to give her his phone number. She warned me not to give him her phone number. After getting his number, she gave him a call. Ramani claimed that Rekha was hesitant

like a nice man, but this is in your hands and I don't want to take any decision for you," Ramani remarked. Ramani went on to say that Rekha's experience of loss at the time may have contributed to her acceptance of Aggarwal's compulsive love: "But she (Rekha) realized what feels good for her at that time from that heartbreak that she was in." Maybe she desired that compulsive love. Marriage was soon the result of the couple's mutual admiration and communication.

The speed of the wedding surprised even those close to them. Ramani said, "Then suddenly we read in the paper or TV that they got married. I was in shock. I didn't expect it to be so soon." Reflecting on the marriage, Ramani described it as a fantasy, with the couple ultimately living separate lives in different cities. "I think in due course, with Rekha's life being in Bombay, it was part fantasy, wishing for the best. There was no way she could have adjusted to Delhi," she said. Tragedy struck when Aggarwal died by suicide before divorce proceedings were complete. The aftermath was marked by intense public scrutiny. In a later interview, Rekha described her emotional response and said, "One went through the whole gamut of feelings. The initial shock and then denial that 'no, this can't be really happening to me' and later on, this intense anger, and then you go on this self pity trip that 'what did I do wrong? I never meant to hurt anybody'. Then, trying to understand it, in vain, of course, because you never understand it. And then, finally, of course, acceptance."

about Aggarwal's appearance despite their developing romance. "They were in Delhi and Bombay (Mumbai), two distinct cities. He was ecstatic. He was in shock that this had happened to him. After exchanging photos, she called me and asked, "Can you see him standing next to me?" It's Amitabh Bachchan's vision, after all. "No, not really, but he seems

FOOD

Give Yourself A Break with These Super Simple Weeknight Dinners

Chances are you spent a lot of time in the kitchen last week, cooking up a Thanksgiving feast for all your friends and family. Whether you had just a small handful of dinner guests or an entire dining room full of them, you deserve some time to sit back and relax outside of the kitchen. These super simple weeknight dinner recipes will let you do just that. Clocking in at 45 minutes or less, they'll give you back some much needed "me" time. Plus, they're all under 500 calories per serving (so you can save room for even more holiday cookies)!

Healthy Chicken Fajita Stuffed Peppers

This convenient recipe combines two delicious meals in one. Add it to your weekly menu to bring some heat to your dinner and pack up any leftovers to enjoy a better-than-takeout lunch the next day.

Instant Pot Shrimp Risotto

Think you can't master risotto in less than an hour? Think again! With the help of your trusty Instant Pot, you'll get restaurant-quality shrimp risotto in just 40 minutes, more than enough time to catch up on an episode of your favorite series or start that movie everyone's been talking about.

Chicken Fingers With Curried Ketchup

Who doesn't love chicken fingers?! Especially when they're served with a zesty cumin and curry-flavored dipping sauce like these yummy ones are. Trust us — they're so tasty double-dipping is not



only acceptable, it's necessary.

Steak Frites With Herb Mustard

Upgrade your classic steak and potatoes dinner with this flavor-packed version. You'll brush your steak with an herby mixture of mustard and olive oil and season your frites with paprika and cayenne to up the dish's flavor profile. It's a quick and easy way to give your family a bistro-quality dinner in less time than it probably would take you to grab a table at an actual restaurant!

Asian Chicken Burgers

Pack your typical weeknight burger with flavor thanks to this sweet-meets-savory burger. You'll use hoisin sauce, ginger,

soy sauce and sambal oelek to season your chicken burger and a heaping layer of thinly sliced mushrooms and red onions add even more texture.



Quick Winter Desserts That Are Desi, Comforting And No-Fuss

Winter has a way of making dessert feel less like an indulgence and more like a necessity. As the evenings grow longer and colder, there's an undeniable craving for something sweet, warm and comforting, preferably homemade. But not every winter dessert needs hours in the kitchen or elaborate preparation. Some of the most satisfying sweets come together at the last minute, using familiar ingredients like jaggery, nuts, seeds and dairy that are already staples in Indian homes. These desserts are practical, quick and rooted in everyday flavours, making them perfect for busy winter days when you still want something special after meals. If you're looking for easy dessert ideas that feel seasonal without being heavy, these winter-friendly options are worth trying.

Here Are 5 Last-Minute Winter Desserts To Make At Home

1. Gur And Dry Fruit Laddoos

These laddoos are a winter classic for a reason. Made with melted jaggery, ghee and a mix of chopped dry



fruits, they come together quickly and don't require any complicated steps. The jaggery adds depth and warmth, while nuts like almonds and cashews give texture and richness. These laddoos are perfect to make in small batches and store for a few days, making them a reliable go-to dessert during colder weeks.

2. Dates And Nuts Energy Bites

Dates and nuts are a natural pairing in winter desserts. Blended together and shaped into bite-sized balls, they make a quick dessert that feels indulgent without

needing added sugar. The natural sweetness of dates balances beautifully with almonds and cashews, resulting in soft, chewy bites that are easy to prepare and satisfying to eat. These energy bites work especially well for late-evening cravings or as a post-dinner sweet.

3. Coconut And Sesame Balls

Roasted sesame seeds mixed with coconut and jaggery make for a traditional winter dessert that's both flavourful and aromatic. The nuttiness of sesame pairs well with the subtle sweetness of coconut, while

jaggery binds everything together. These balls are easy to shape and don't need cooking beyond roasting the seeds, making them ideal when you want a desi dessert without spending too much time in the kitchen.

4. Yogurt And Honey Fruit Bowls

For days when you want something lighter yet comforting, a yogurt and honey fruit bowl works beautifully. Thick curd topped with seasonal fruits like oranges or pomegranate adds freshness, while a drizzle of honey ties it together. This dessert feels refreshing but still win-

ter-appropriate, especially when the curd is taken out of the fridge a little earlier and served slightly cool rather than cold.

5. Peanut Chikki Cups

This is a fun twist on the classic peanut chikki. Instead of setting it flat, the jaggery and peanut mixture is shaped into small cups while warm. Once set, these bite-sized cups make for a playful and nostalgic dessert. They are crunchy, sweet and perfect for portion control, especially when you want just a small something after meals. Most of these desserts pair well with hot chai or plain warm milk. Serve them in small bowls or plates, and avoid serving them straight from the fridge.

Letting desserts come to room temperature or gently warming them makes a noticeable difference in taste and texture during winter. Laddoos, energy bites and chikki cups can be made in advance and stored in airtight containers for a few days. Yogurt-based desserts are best assembled fresh, but fruits can be prepped earlier to save time.

Pizza in the Kulhad? This Is How It's Made

Food trends come and go, but some manage to stick simply because they feel fun, indulgent and a little over the top. Kulhad pizza is one such idea that has taken street food lovers by surprise. It combines two things Indians already love, pizza and kulhads, and turns them into a single, gooey, comfort-filled dish. Served piping hot, layered generously and eaten straight out of an earthen cup, kulhad pizza feels less like a meal and more like an experience. It's messy, cheesy and unapologetically indulgent. The good news is, you don't need a street-side stall or fancy equipment to try it. With a few basic ingredients and a little layering, you can recreate this viral favourite right in your own kitchen.

What Is Kulhad Pizza?

Kulhad pizza is a layered, baked or cooked dish served inside a clay cup (kulhad). Instead of a traditional pizza base, it uses crushed bread, pizza sauce, vegetables and lots of cheese, stacked and cooked together. The kulhad adds an earthy flavour and keeps the dish warm for longer, making it perfect for serving hot and fresh. Why Kulhad Pizza Is So Popular

Kulhad pizza works because it is familiar yet different. It delivers all the flavours of a classic pizza but in a more indulgent, scoopable form. The clay cup not only adds rustic charm but also enhances aroma and heat retention. It is easy to customise, quick to assemble and visually appealing, which explains why it has become a street-food favourite and a social media hit.

Ingredients Required:Kulhads (earthen cups): 4Bread slices or pizza base crumbs: 4 slices (or about 1 cup crumbs)Pizza sauce: ½ cupChopped vegetables (Capsicum – ½ cup,

Onion – ½ cup, Sweet corn – ¼ cup, and Olives – 2 tbsp)Mozzarella cheese (grated): 1 to 1½ cupsButter or olive oil: 2 tbsp (for greasing)Oregano: 1 tspChilli flakes: 1 tsp

Steps:Lightly grease the inside of the kulhad with butter or oil.Add a layer of crushed bread or pizza base crumbs at the bottom. Spread a spoonful of pizza sauce evenly.Add chopped vegetables and season with oregano and chilli flakes.Sprinkle a generous layer of grated mozzarella cheese.Repeat the layers once more for a fuller kulhad.Cook on a



covered pan on low heat or bake in an oven until the cheese melts and turns bubbly. Serve hot straight from the kulhad. How To Make Kulhad Pizza Even More Flavourful

While you can always make kulhad pizza with this easy recipe, here are some ways to enhance its taste:Add a thin layer of butter or garlic butter between layersMix processed cheese with mozzarella for extra creaminessAdd a pinch of pizza seasoning or dried basilFinish with a drizzle of chilli oil before servingSmall tweaks like these elevate the overall taste without complicating the recipe.

How To Serve Kulhad Pizza

Kulhad pizza should always be served hot. Pair it with garlic bread, peri-peri fries or a simple coleslaw. It also works well as a party starter or evening snack with cold drinks or mocktails. Since the kulhad retains heat, serve carefully.

Is Coffee Creamer Bad for You

Do you start your morning with a splash of liquid coffee creamer? Morning after morning, you may be wondering whether it's a healthy way to begin the day. Here's what you need to know.It's hard to deny – the stuff tastes good. Sweet? Yes! Creamy? For sure! The wide variety of flavors (including seasonal favorites like pumpkin spice, eggnog and peppermint mocha) makes these easy-to-pour bottles a staple in many fridges. People with dietary restrictions also have reasons to

smile. Despite their name, most liquid creamers are lactose-free; they're also gluten-free.

The steep rise in milk alternatives has also spawned a wide selection of coffee creamers made from almond, coconut and oat milk that rival the creaminess of traditional varieties. No matter which you choose, the calorie, fat and sugar content of coffee creamers are very similar with one tablespoon typically containing 35 calories, 1.5 grams of fat and five grams of add-

ed sugar (which is equivalent to just over one teaspoon). Contrary to popular belief, "creamers" actually contain no cream (more on this below). On the plus side, some brands are now offering products that contain a blend of milk, cream, sugar and flavorings that contains a similar amount of fat and calories as the traditional varieties. Brands like Chobani and Organic Valley make flavored creamers with simple

ingredient lists. Naturally, you may be wondering: If there's no dairy in a typical coffee creamer, then what are they actually made of? Creamers tend to be nothing but concoctions of water, oil, sugar and thickeners. While many versions used to be made with hydrogenated oils (a.k.a. trans fats), they have been reformulated since these types of artificially made fats are no longer allowable as food additives. While the removal of trans fats is for the best, the ingredient lists on many brands of creamers have not improved much; they've just been replaced with other flavorless oils, usually soybean oil. Coffee creamers come in fat-free and sugar-free varieties as well. They're made from the same mixture of water, oils and thickeners in slightly varied portions, plus additional artificial sweeteners. These typically equate to 10 calories less per serving.



Is Dark Chocolate Safe to Eat

Dark chocolate is considered a treat that has health benefits due to its high concentration of antioxidant flavonoids. However, recent reports have raised concerns about the levels of heavy metals, specifically cadmium and lead, in some dark chocolate brands. Cadmium, which originates from soil, can negatively impact health, particularly affecting cognition in children and pregnant women, and can be harmful to those with diabetes due to its tendency to accumulate in the kidneys.

Despite the potential risks, the consuming dark chocolate may Human bodies can lessen cadmium by consuming nutrients such as calcium D, iron, and zinc. sumer Reports coned tests on 23 brands dark chocolate, suring cadmium lead content against maximum allowdoses established various health authorincluding California's sition 65 and the Europe-Safety Authority (EFSA). the upper limits for cadmium set at 4.1 micrograms for all ages 28 micrograms for a 180-pound adult micrograms for children, varying based on the



necessity to stop not be required. the effects of adequate um, vi Con duct o f mea and the able b y ities, Propoan Food Notably, exposure are (Proposition 65), (EFSA), and 3 to 7 source.

What patients should know about the FDA’s approval of “Jascayd for progressive pulmonary fibrosis”



The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted approval for Jascayd (nerandomilast) tablets, designed for adults suffering from progressive pulmonary fibrosis (PPF). This decision is significant as PPF progressively scars lung tissue, impairing airflow and making breathing increasingly difficult over time. Historically, patients have faced limited treatment options, primarily focused on symptom management. However, this new approval indicates a strategic shift towards actively slowing lung damage, rather than merely alleviating symptoms. Previously, Jascayd was authorized for idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), and this latest endorsement broadens its application to encompass a wider range of interstitial lung diseases characterized by ongoing deterioration despite standard treatments. The FDA’s endorsement confirms that Jascayd satisfies stringent criteria for safety and therapeutic benefit, thereby providing healthcare professionals with an evidence-based tool to enhance lung functionality for a broader patient demographic. To elucidate, PPF is not a singular disease; it is a term describing a pattern seen in various interstitial lung conditions where irreversible lung scarring occurs. This scarring compromises the lungs’ ability to expand and facilitate gas exchange, leading to increased breathlessness, fatigue, and difficulty carrying out daily activities for the affected individuals. Once scarring manifests, it cannot be undone, underscoring the urgency of interventions aimed at decelerating the progression of the disease. The FDA’s decision hinges on the findings from the large-scale FIBRONEER-ILD clinical trial, which

tracked 1,178 adults diagnosed with PPF over a duration of at least 52 weeks. Participants were administered either 9 mg or 18 mg of Jascayd, or a placebo, twice daily. Researchers assessed lung function through forced vital capacity (FVC), quantifying the volume of air exhaled after a deep inhalation. Results showed that patients receiving Jascayd experienced a significantly slower decline in lung function compared to the placebo, with those on the 18 mg dosage exhibiting an average decrease in lung capacity of 72 mL, and those on the 9 mg showing an 85 mL decline, as opposed to a 151 mL decline in the placebo cohort. Additionally, participants receiving Jascayd experienced fewer exacerbations, decreased instances of respiratory-related hospitalizations, and a lower mortality rate throughout the study period. Jascayd is administered orally, twice per day, at doses of either 9 mg or 18 mg, 12 hours apart. Safety profiles aligned with prior studies involving IPF patients, with common adverse effects encompassing diarrhea, nausea, loss of appetite, and weight loss. While these side effects are typically manageable, vigilant monitoring is essential, particularly for patients already facing challenges related to weight or nutritional intake. The approval of Jascayd marks a pivotal progression in the approach towards managing progressive lung scarring, emphasizing an early and targeted therapeutic strategy. By shifting the focus to maintaining lung capacity preemptively, this treatment offers a potential for improved independence, reduced hospital admissions, and enhanced quality of life for patients and their families, even with modest enhancements in breathing function.

LIFESTYLE Gen-Z Style Report 2025: Ananya Panday, Aneet Padda And Others Who Ruled Fashion

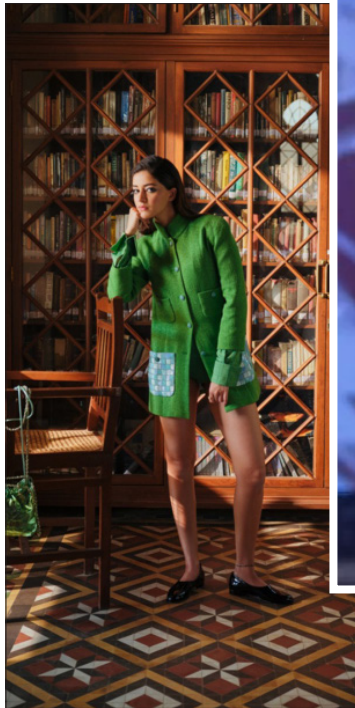
In 2025, Gen-Z stars notably asserted their presence in the fashion realm, showcasing their confidence through a variety of striking performances and bold style choices. This year was marked by a blend of high-octane couture and playful experimental fashions, exemplifying this generation’s willingness to take risks with their attire.

As the year concludes, several Gen-Z personalities emerged as fashion icons. Ananya Panday captured attention in a glamorous shimmery fringe dress by Tony Ward, which achieved a harmonious blend of drama and elegance. The dress featured a sheer nude base adorned with intricate embroidery and metallic accents, complemented by a high neckline, full sleeves, and a short hem, while her soft, side-swept hair brought a vintage Hollywood flair to her ensemble.

Khushi Kapoor dazzled in a custom mini outfit from Gaurav Gupta, which showcased high necklines and an all-over shimmer. This heavily embellished ensemble made a bold statement without overwhelming her frame, matched perfectly with strappy heels, youthful soft curls, and meticulously chosen jewelry.

Pratibha Ranta embraced edgy glamour, donning a shimmery black bodycon by Maison Rabih Kayrouz. This outfit accentuated her curves with silver sparkling details while maintaining a modern appeal. The minimal accessories and ruffled waves allowed the texture of the outfit to take precedence.

Ahsaas Channa took a more experimental route with a striking blue ensemble featuring pink undertones. The design involved a pleated, structural body and a



dramatic floor-length trail, made playful with stuffed-toy pumps and kawaii-inspired nail art.



Lastly, Aneet Padda showcased understated drama in a fully designed black bodycon gown by Gaurav Gupta. With its sharp neckline and sculpted silhouette, the gown relied on clean styling to draw attention, with minimal ac-

cessories and sleek waves letting the gown’s craftsmanship shine. Overall, these Gen-Z stars have made powerful statements in fashion, each delivering unique and memorable looks that push the boundaries of conventional style.

After The Festive Feast: How Christmas Indulgence Impacts Blood Sugar

The Christmas decorations may be coming down, but for many people living with diabetes, the effects of the festive season often linger far longer than the celebrations themselves. December brings disrupted routines, indulgent meals, late nights, and travel – all of which can quietly push blood sugar levels off balance. While the season is meant for rest and togetherness, it can also become a metabolic stress test for those managing diabetes or prediabetes. The days following Christmas are often when the real impact shows up – unexpected glucose spikes, fatigue, and difficulty regaining routine control. Understanding why this happens is the first step toward regaining balance. Dr. Shrinath P Shetty, Consultant – Endocrinology at KMC Hospital, Mangalore, notes that the festive period brings together several risk factors at once. “Christmas celebrations typically involve sweets, plum cake, chocolates, and sugary beverages, and it becomes difficult to say no in social settings,” he explains. Beyond sugar-heavy foods, Dr. Shetty highlights other contributors such as irregular meal timings, late dinners, reduced physical activity due to travel or guests, and



unplanned eating during holidays. “Many patients also struggle with medication routines, especially when alcohol is involved,” he adds, noting that skipping or delaying diabetes medication can worsen glucose control. Festive indulgence doesn’t just affect short-term readings. It can disrupt overall glucose trends. Dr. Tejaswi V, Consultant – Diabetes and Endocrinology at Manipal Hospital, Kanakapura Road, Bengaluru, points out that studies show measurable declines in glucose control during holiday breaks, even in otherwise well-managed patients. “Irregular meals, reduced exercise, alcohol consumption, and emotional stress collectively sabotage metabolic balance,” she explains. Sustained high sugar

levels, she warns, do more than cause temporary discomfort. “Persistent elevation increases infection risk, delays wound healing, and can trigger acute diabetic complications,” Dr. Tejaswi says. While a single high reading may not be alarming, repeated spikes can lead to cumulative metabolic damage. The good news is that regaining control doesn’t require extreme restriction. Dr. Shetty advises focusing on mindful eating in the days after festivities. “Opt for smaller portions, increase protein and nuts over refined carbohydrates, and plan your treats instead of eating impulsively,” he suggests. Physical activity plays an equally important role. “If you’ve had a heavy meal the previous day, compensate with a

longer walk, swimming, or light exercise,” he adds. Alcohol intake should be kept within recommended limits, and medications should never be skipped. Dr. Tejaswi also stresses the importance of structure. “Increase glucose monitoring frequency after festive meals, maintain medication schedules rigidly, and include vegetables and lean protein at every meal,” she advises. Even short five-minute walks after meals can significantly help stabilise blood sugar. By restoring routines, eating mindfully, and staying active, people with diabetes can protect their long-term health while still enjoying life’s celebrations. The festive season may be over, but taking care of your body remains a year-round priority.

Festive Season, Fragile Joints? Doctors Explain The Risks Of Inactivity

As the year winds down, routines soften. Work slows, holidays begin, and days often revolve around warmth, rest, and indulgence. While this seasonal pause feels well-earned, it can quietly disrupt something fundamental – our bone and joint health. Reduced movement, longer sitting hours, and festive eating habits may seem harmless in the short term, but together they create the perfect conditions for stiffness, muscle loss, and accelerated wear on the skeletal system. Bones and joints thrive on movement. When activity drops, so does the mechanical stimulation that keeps them strong and resilient. The effects may not be immediate, but they build steadily, especially during the colder months when inactivity becomes habitual. Doctors often describe movement as essential lubrication for the joints, and for good reason. Dr. J V Srinivas, Lead Senior Consultant – Orthopaedics & Joint Replacement, Aster RV Hospital, Bangalore, explains how even gentle activity plays a critical role in maintaining joint health. “Prolonged inactivity reduces mechanical loading on bones, which is essential for maintaining bone density,” he explains, warning that this can accelerate bone loss and increase the risk of osteopenia and osteoporosis, particularly among older adults and postmenopausal women. Muscle strength is another key factor. When muscles weaken due to inactivity, joints lose crucial support, placing additional strain on areas like the knees, hips, and lower back. Over time, this imbalance can trigger pain and mobility issues. Extended sitting doesn’t just affect muscles; it interferes with joint nourishment. Dr. Srinivas points out that reduced movement slows the circulation of synovial fluid, the nat-

ural lubricant that keeps joints mobile and healthy. This can result in stiffness, reduced range of motion, and discomfort, particularly in the neck, spine, and shoulders. Poor posture during long sitting hours further adds stress to spinal discs and ligaments, increasing the risk of chronic back and neck pain. Echoing this concern, Dr. Surendra U Kamath, Senior Orthopedics, KMC Hospital, Mangalore, stresses that a sedentary lifestyle has far-reaching consequences. “Sitting all year results in loss of bone density, muscle weakness, joint stiffness, and osteoarthritis,” he notes, adding that prolonged inactivity also hampers blood flow and raises fracture risk. Year-end celebrations often bring sugar-heavy, carbohydrate-rich diets, and that, too, affects bone and joint health. Dr. Sushanth B Mummigatti, Consultant – Orthopaedic & Trauma Surgeon, Manipal Hospital, Goa, explains that festive eating patterns frequently lead to lower protein intake, which can increase inflammatory markers in the body. Combined with reduced activity, this inflammation and muscle tone loss can intensify joint pain. Weight gain during this period further compounds the problem. Extra body weight increases pres-

sure on load-bearing joints such as the knees, hips, and spine, accelerating cartilage wear and worsening osteoarthritis symptoms. The good news? Preventing damage doesn’t require intense workouts. All three experts agree that small, consistent movements make a significant difference. Dr. Mummigatti highlights the importance of load-bearing activities like walking, jogging, and cycling, which stimulate bone growth and improve joint nutrition. Dr. Kamath recommends simple habits such as standing for five minutes every hour, taking brisk walks, and incorporating stretching or yoga into daily routines. Indoor activity, adequate vitamin D exposure or supplementation, and mindful eating – especially controlling sugar intake – can help maintain muscle tone and bone strength through the winter months. Year-end rest is important, but complete inactivity comes at a cost. Bones and joints rely on regular movement to stay strong, flexible, and pain-free. By staying gently active, eating mindfully, and breaking long sitting spells, you can protect your musculoskeletal health – ensuring you start the new year not just refreshed, but physically resilient too.

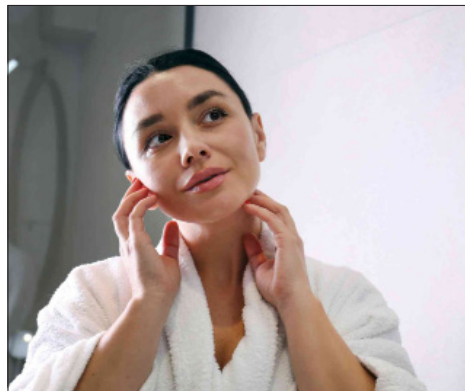


Why Winter Is Harder On Your Skin Than You Think And How Experts Say You Can Fix It

Winter is often mistaken for a season of relief for the skin, but dermatologists agree it is one of the most disruptive periods for skin health. As temperatures drop, humidity levels fall, and indoor heating becomes constant, the skin’s natural ability to retain moisture weakens. The result is a familiar mix of tightness, dullness, flaking, irritation, and, surprisingly, acne. Unlike summer-related skin concerns that are often driven by sweat and sun exposure, winter problems stem from barrier damage. When the skin barrier is compromised, moisture escapes more easily, inflammation increases, and pores clog faster, creating a cycle of dryness and breakouts that can feel difficult to manage without the right approach. Explaining the science behind winter skin changes, Dr. Veena, Dermatologist, Kaya Bangalore, notes, “Low temperatures and dry air reduce the skin’s ability to re-

tain moisture, while frequent washing and indoor heating further disturb its natural balance.” She adds that this disruption often leads to rough texture, dehydration, sensitivity, and recurring pimples triggered by clogged pores in dry conditions. Dr. Anamika Sharma, Consultant Dermatologist, Kailash Hospital & Neuro Institute, Noida, echoes this observation, pointing out that winter-related complaints actually rise in clinical settings. “Cold air, low humidity, and indoor heating work together to strip the skin of its natural oils, weakening the protective barrier that keeps moisture locked in,” she explains. This weakened barrier makes the skin more reactive, leading to itching, scaling, and sensitivity. Adding to the complexity, Dr. Mandeep Singh, HOD – Plastic, Dermatology, and Cosmetic Surgery, Paras Health, Gurugram, highlights that winter acne is often misunderstood. “We often

see a combination of dry patches along with pimples, largely due to excessive use of harsh soaps, hot showers, and heavy or comedogenic moisturisers that clog pores,” he says. Experts unanimously stress that winter skincare should prioritise gentleness. Dr. Sharma advises reassessing cleansing routines, as harsh or foaming cleansers can worsen barrier damage. “Applying a moisturiser immediately after cleansing helps seal in hydration, especially when formulations contain ceramides, humectants like hyaluronic acid and glycerin, and emollients such as squalane,” she says. Dr. Veena adds that moisturising is most effective when done on slightly damp skin, helping trap hydration. She recommends barrier-supporting ingredients such as niacinamide, panthenol, and natural lipids to improve comfort and resilience. For acne-prone skin, Dr. Singh emphasises that skipping mois-



turiser is a mistake. “Dehydrated skin can actually worsen breakouts,” he explains, advising non-comedogenic, fragrance-free creams over heavy, pore-clogging formulas. Winter breakouts

require a balanced approach that reduces inflammation without over-drying the skin. According to Dr. Veena, advanced treatments like Neo Elite laser offer a gentle, non-invasive option that targets inflammation and clears breakouts quickly with no downtime, making them suitable during colder months when skin is more sensitive. Daily Habits That Make Or Break Winter Skin Lifestyle choices play a critical role in skin health during winter. Dr. Singh advises avoiding prolonged hot showers, which accelerate moisture loss, and protecting exposed skin from cold winds. Dr. Sharma reminds us that ultraviolet exposure remains constant throughout the year, making sunscreen essential even in winter. Adequate hydration, antioxidant-rich foods, sufficient sleep, and using humidifiers in heated indoor spaces further support skin resilience, according to all three experts.

SPORTS

Manchester City is nearing a deal with Antoine Semenyo following United's rejection

New Delhi: Antoine Semenyo is a forward for Bournemouth, and Manchester City is reportedly in the advanced stages of negotiations to sign him in January. As the winter window draws near, the Premier League winners think they are in a strong position to win the competition for one of the division's most productive attackers since they have made positive progress recently.Despite Old Trafford's interest early in the process, Semenyo is reportedly more interested in moving to Manchester City than Manchester United. Following rumors that the 25-year-old would want to work under Pep Guardiola, United is reportedly slowing down its chase, while Chelsea has also withdrawn from talks. Due to his contract status, Semenyo has become one of the most talked-about names in January. Only the first ten days of January are covered by the Bournemouth winger's sixty-five million pounds release clause, which consists of a sixty million pounds fixed price and five million pounds in add-ons. The clause, which allowed Bournemouth to keep him last summer while admitting considerable potential interest, was added when he



signed a new contract in July. If a relocation is postponed until the summer window, that valuation is anticipated to decline somewhat. City is not the only team following the Ghanaian international. Tottenham, Chelsea, and Liverpool have all made varied degrees of inquiries, with Liverpool evaluating the terms of a transaction while their forward alternatives remain uncertain. Chelsea declined to move forward despite initial interest, and Tottenham are said to be outsiders. Bournemouth acknowledges the possibility of losing a crucial player in the middle of the season and is realistic about their situation. If a buying club agrees, the Cherries are willing to negotiate conditions that would let Semenyo stay with the team through the end of the season. He moved from Bristol City to Bournemouth in 2023, and under Andoni Iraola, he has become into a key player.

New Delhi: The selection committee here on Wednesday selected 24 people for the Arjuna awards, including teenage chess star Divya Deshmukh and pioneering decathlete Tejaswin Shankar. The only candidate for this year's Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award was India men's hockey team vice-captain Hardik Singh. The 27-year-old Hardik has been a staple in India's midfield and was a member of the Olympic squads that won medals in Tokyo in 2021 and Paris in 2024. He was a member of India's gold-winning Asia Cup team this year. Five years after the Arjuna award was officially recognized by the Sports Ministry, a Yogasan athlete named Aarti Pal has been suggested for it in a first, a well-placed source. In the sport that will serve as a showcase sport at the 2026 Asian Games, Aarti is the current national and Asian champion. Following a meeting here on Wednesday, the awards selection panel decided on 21 additional names for the Arjuna. Among those on the panel are former hockey player M M Somaya, former badminton player Aparna Popat, and Indian Olympic Association (IOA) Vice President Gagan Narang. The first Indian woman to win the

National Sports Awards

Hardik Singh is the only Khel Ratna nominee; there is no cricket player on the shortlist



World Cup is Deshmukh, who is 19 years old. Alongside Tejaswin Shankar, who finished second in the Asian Championships earlier this year after winning a historic silver medal at the Asian Games in 2023, fellow chess player Vidit Gujrathi has also been suggest-

ed for the Arjuna. Gymnast Pranati Nayak, rifle shooter Mehuli Ghosh, a two-time World Championship bronze winner in addition to many medals at the Asian Championships, and India's top women's badminton duo of Tree-sa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand

are all recommended for the Arjuna. Gayatri is the daughter of Pullela Gopichand, a former All England champion and national badminton coach. However, there are no cricket players on the list. The final cricket player to win the award was pacer Mohammed

Shami in 2023. The Khel Ratna, which is the country's highest sporting honour, comes with a medallion, a citation and a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh, while the Arjuna award makes the winner richer by Rs 15 lakh. Last year, the Khel Ratna was bestowed on four athletes -- world champion chess player D Gukesh, men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh, para-athlete Praveen Kumar and shooter Manu Bhaker.

Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna: Hardik Singh (Hockey)

Arjuna Awards: Tejaswin Shankar (Athletics), Priyanka (Athletics), Narender (Boxing), Vidit Gujrathi (Chess), Divya Deshmukh (Chess), Dhanush Srikanth (Deaf Shooting), Pranati Nayak (Gymnastics), Rajkumar Pal (Hockey), Surjeet (Kabaddi), Nirmala Bhati (Kho Kho), Rudransh Khandelwal (Para-Shooting), Ekta Bhyan (Para-athletics), Padmanabh Singh (Polo), Arvind Singh (Rowing), Akhil Sheoran (Shooting), Mehuli Ghosh (Shooting), Sutirtha Mukherjee (Table Tennis), Sonam Malik (Wrestling), Aarti (Yoga), Treesa Jolly (Badminton), Gayatri Gopichand (Badminton), Lalremisiami (Hockey), Mohammed Afsal (Athletics), Pooja (Kabaddi).

FC Goa silently protests during an ACL2 match to draw attention to the uncertainties in the ISL

New Delhi: During the first few seconds of their AFC Champions League Two group-stage encounter against FC Istiklol of Tajikistan on Wednesday, FC Goa players momentarily stopped play in order to raise awareness of the uncertainties surrounding the Indian Super League's future. The event happened at the beginning of FC Goa's last continental campaign group encounter. The Goan team was eliminated from qualifying after losing their last five games, but they took the opportunity to draw attention to the chaos plaguing Indian domestic football. FC Goa explained the gesture's purpose in a statement published on X, emphasizing that it was not directed at their rivals or the tournament organizers. "As a symbolic gesture to highlight the uncertainty currently affecting Indian football, FC Goa's players briefly paused active play for the opening seconds of our AFC Champions League Two match," the team stated.



The club emphasized that the action was not intended as a protest against the Asian Football Confederation or the competition itself, but rather was done in good faith. "This action was solely intended to draw attention to the broader challenges facing the domestic football ecosystem. It was not directed at our opponents FC Istik-

lol, the AFC, or the AFC Champions League Two, all of whom we respect greatly," the statement added. Since July, when Football Sports Development Limited, the ISL's organizers, notified the All India Football Federation that the nation's premier competition would be suspended, Indian football has been plagued by uncer-

tainty. The 15-year Master Rights Agreement's renewal, which ended on December 8, was unclear, which led to the decision. A committee created by the Supreme Court supervised the floating of a tender for the ISL's commercial rights in an effort to break the deadlock. The situation was made more difficult by the fact that no bidders were drawn to the procedure. When the AIFF General Body rejected a proposal from ten ISL clubs seeking "perpetual" operational and commercial control of the league on December 20, the issue worsened. The federation decided to create a committee to review the idea and determine a course of action rather than approve it. In light of this, clubs and players' mounting concerns about the future of Indian football were reflected in FC Goa's gesture on the European scene. The halt was significant, but it also served as a reminder that domestic unpredictability still looms large over the sport's present and future.

Serena Williams denies tennis return

Re-entering anti-doping test pool

New Delhi: After re-entering the International Tennis Integrity Agency's (ITIA) anti-doping testing pool, Serena Williams has definitively put a stop to rumors of a possible tennis comeback. The action sparked a heated public discussion, but Williams posted on X to explicitly address the rumors. Many people speculated that Williams might be getting ready to resume competitive tennis after she re-registered with the ITIA.

Players in the pool are required by the ITIA to report their daily whereabouts and to be available for sporadic testing. Williams' public rejection demonstrated that returning to the pool does not imply an impending comeback to the sport, even in spite of these conditions. Williams has re-entered the anti-doping pool, a procedure that necessitates athletes adhering to particular anti-doping rules, the ITIA confirmed to Reuters. Since her last performance at the 2022 US Open, she has not participated in any competitions. On the official ITIA website, Williams is still cat-

egorized as "retired players." This retains her existing standing as a professional tennis player while also ensuring that she complies with agency standards regarding anti-doping regulations.

After six months of out-of-competition testing, any player in the anti-doping pool would be qualified to compete again under ITIA regulations, should they decide to do so. Williams has not shown any signs that she is thinking about initiating this procedure. Recently, Williams shared images on social media of herself on court with her younger daughter, Adira River, which further fuelled speculation about her professional intentions.

However, these personal moments have not correlated with any shift in her status as a retired athlete. Williams first announced she was "evolving away from tennis" in a 2022 Vogue article, marking a significant transition in her career. Her statement at the time indicated a deliberate and personal decision to step back from professional competition.

India's challenge at the historic 10th Bengaluru Open will be led by Sumit Nagal

New Delhi: When the historic 10th edition of the Bengaluru Open returns from January 5 to 11, 2026, at the S.M. Krishna Tennis Stadium in Bengaluru, top Indian player Sumit Nagal will lead the challenge in the men's singles category. The ATP Challenger Tour's premier event is becoming one of India's most well-known international tennis championships. The Bengaluru Open is still a crucial component of the ATP Challenger Tour. Top players from all around the world compete in the tournament, which was upgraded from an ATP Challenger 100 to a Challenger 125 event in 2025 and now offers a total prize purse of over USD 225,000.



ful singles players, having won several ATP Challenger titles and represented his country at the Olympics. He was the tournament's 2017 champion. Aryan Shah, a bright young Indian prospect whose steady performances on the ATP Challenger and ITF circuits indicate his arrival at this historic event, will accompany him. The ATP Tour champion 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 are at the top of the official main-draw singles acceptance list for the 2026 edition. 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 Forejtsek (Czech Republic) further bolster the field. The depth and competitiveness of the international field are further demonstrated by the

participation of 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 Martin-eau (France), Antoine Ghibaud (France), Michael Geerts (Belgium), Dan Martin (Canada), and Neil Oberleitner (Austria). The Bengaluru Open, which is run by the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA), maintains its high standards and enhances Bengaluru's standing as a top location for international tennis. As the event enters its historic tenth edition, it is still dedicated to providing top-notch competition and giving Indian players the opportunity to compete against elite international teams at home. 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).

The next tennis star of India is identified by Paula Badosa

New Delhi: Shrivalli Bhamidipaty received a lot of acclaim from Spanish player Paula Badosa, who even hinted that India might have found its next tennis sensation. Both athletes are now representing the AOS Eagles in the fourth season of the World Tennis League (WTL) at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium in Bengaluru. Bhamidipaty's strong serve and aggressive style of play captivated the 28-year-old Badosa, who in 2022 achieved a career-high ranking of No. 2 on the WTA Tour. "You have a potential star here, India! Badosa remarked, "I have been pleased with her serve and aggressive game since the first day I hit with her." One of the most promising female tennis players in India is Shrivalli Bhamidipaty. She has consistently risen the WTA rankings while competing on the professional circuit, hitting a career-high singles ranking of No. 300 in October 2024 and a doubles high of No. 266 in June 2025. With more than \$69,000 in prize money, Bhamidipaty has won two ITF singles titles and six ITF doubles titles. She also plays for India in team events. In April 2025, she made her Billie Jean King Cup debut, winning all five of her singles matches, including triumphs over opponents with better rankings, which helped India advance to the World Group play-offs. She has won the ITF tour's



Oasis Solapur Open and the Fenesta Open National Championship on the home circuit. Bhamidipaty's reputation as one of India's rising tennis stars is cemented by her strong game and steady performances, which help her advance her abilities both domestically and abroad. Badosa had one of her strongest Grand Slam seasons in 2025, which was marked by her first-ever major semifinal appearance at the Australian Open. Before losing in straight sets to World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka in the semifinals, the 11th seed shocked World No. 3 Coco Gauff 75, 64 in the quarterfinals, her maiden

Top 10 victory at a Grand Slam. Badosa's run in Melbourne demonstrated her resilience after earlier career injuries and pushed her back into the WTA Top 10 for the first time since 2022. But she lost the plot a wee bit due to injuries and is currently ranked No.25 in the world. Looking ahead to 2026 and the Australian Open, Badosa will aim to build on that momentum and go even deeper, hoping to convert her breakthrough semifinal into a first Grand Slam final, using her powerful baseline game and experience from previous deep runs at majors.