

Dr. Nomal Chandra Borah, the founder of GNRC, is given two national lifetime achievement awards

Guwahati, Dec 21: In appreciation of his five decades of contributions to Indian healthcare, Dr. Nomal Chandra Borah, founder of the GNRC Universal Health Mission and the GNRC Group of Hospitals, has received two major national lifetime achievement awards.

In recognition of Dr. Borah's contributions to neurology, nursing leadership, healthcare education, and community-based health initiatives, especially in the Northeast, the Indian Academy of Neurology (IAN) and the Association of Nurse Executives (India) (ANEI) gave the awards. The award honors outstanding contributions to the development of neurological science, research, and clinical treatment and is given by the Indian Academy of Neurology, the nation's premier professional association for neurologists. Dr. Borah's journey from modest beginnings to becoming one of India's most renowned neurologists was described by IAN in its citation as a "awe-inspiring life story of grit, determination, and service." IAN emphasized his contribution to the es-



tablishment of Northeast India's first comprehensive neuroscience center, the expansion of neurological services to hitherto underserved areas, and the start of DNB Neurology training in the area. The academy described his contributions as "monumental for the State and the Nation" and praised his efforts in research, academic publishing, and

mentoring young physicians. The second award, the Lifetime Achievement Award 2025 from the Association of Nurse Executives (India), acknowledged Dr. Borah's impact on healthcare delivery and nursing leadership on a national scale. He was described as a "visionary neurologist and dedicated social reformer" by ANEI, a

national organization that comprises senior nursing executives and administrators. His programs, including GNRC Medireach, Swasthyamitra, and the Universal Health Mission, which have concentrated on preventive and reasonably priced healthcare for underserved and rural people, were included in the citation. Additionally,

ANEI recognized his contribution to the establishment of the Asian Institute of Nursing Education in 2004, which has since grown to become a reputable center for leadership development and nursing education. Dr. Borah's impact on nursing leadership and healthcare delivery at the national level was acknowledged with the second honor, the Lifetime Achievement Award 2025 from the Association of Nurse Executives (India). He was described as a "visionary neurologist and dedicated social reformer" by ANEI, a national organization that represents senior nursing executives and administrators. His programs, including GNRC Medireach, Swasthyamitra, and the Universal Health Mission, which have concentrated on preventive and reasonably priced healthcare for underserved and rural people, were recognized. Additionally, ANEI recognized his contribution to the establishment of the Asian Institute of Nursing Education in 2004, which has grown to become a reputable center for leadership development and nursing education.

In Brief

National Tourism Convention

Itanagar: Anini in the Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh won the title of "Best Emerging Adventure Destination" at the 17th Annual Convention of the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI), which took place in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir. Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Shri Omar Abdullah gave the esteemed award in recognition of Anini's increasing prominence in India's adventure tourism scene and its dedication to the growth of sustainable tourism. The award was received on behalf of the district by Shri Lamwang Aran, District Tourism Officer (DTO), Anini, during the convention.

Tripura gets Rs 451 crore boost

Agartala: In one of the largest funding campaigns for the state's tourist industry in recent years, the Union Ministry for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) has authorized 21 tourism projects totaling Rs 451 crore for Tripura. According to Chief Minister Manik Saha, the initiatives would greatly improve the infrastructure for tourism and open up new avenues for sustainable development. DoNER will approve Rs 267.5 crore of the total, with the remaining funds coming from Public-Private Partnership projects, the State government, and the Ministry of Tourism. "These projects mark another major milestone in strengthening Tripura's tourism infrastructure," he stated.

18,000 ILPs at Sairang Railway Station

Aizawl: Superintendent of Police Zosangliana, IPS, stated on December 18 that Aizawl district police granted 18,193 Inner Line Permits (ILPs) at Sairang Railway Station between September 14 and December 17, highlighting increased monitoring of entry into the state. At a news conference, the SP stated that labor workers received 40% of the permits, while vacationers received over 60%. In the same time frame, police evicted 36 beggars from the district and deported three people who had arrived by train without proper ILPs.

Assam CM is accused by Gaurav Gogoi of damaging Zubeen Garg's legacy

Guwahati, Dec 21: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has been under heavy fire from Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, who claims that the chargesheet related to singer Zubeen Garg's death amounts to "character assassination" rather than a quest for justice. Gogoi asserted that the chief minister's "sole purpose" was to harm Garg's public image in a forceful statement on December 19.

Assam's Kanchan Junga was Zubeen da. The MP stated that authorities should "go to any extent, even blackmail the family and supporters of late Zubeen Garg" in order to prevent Himanta Biswa Sarma from damaging Zubeen da's memory. The special investigation team (SIT) filed a complaint against Independent MLA Akhil Gogoi for allegedly disseminating "unverified" documents on social media that pur-



ported to be part of the chargesheet, sparking new controversy around the issue. Such transmission is "illegal" and would "mislead the public and create confusion," according to a senior official. The Sivasagar MLA was accused of sharing documents claiming to reveal details from the chargesheet against seven individuals charged in connection with the singer's death.

During Christmas, there will be special trains between Guwahati and Aizawl Mizoram MP

Aizawl, Dec 21: In order to accommodate the spike in passenger demand during the Christmas season, the Railways would run two special trains between Guwahati and Aizawl, according to Mizoram's Rajya Sabha MP K Vanlalvena.

Vanlalvena stated that because of the heavy traffic during the holiday season, he had asked Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to set up special services on the Guwahati-Aizawl (Sairang) route. He stated that the minister allowed the operation of

two special trains after accepting the proposal. The MP states that the 14-coach special trains will depart Guwahati on December 22 and 24 and return to Aizawl on December 23 and 25. Passengers returning home for Christmas and the New Year will benefit from the enhanced services, he said. By enabling them to travel via Guwahati on the special trains, the arrangement will also benefit Mizoram and Manipur residents residing in Delhi and other major cities who were unable to obtain direct train tickets to Aizawl.



Vanlalvena further noted that Mizoram has emerged as a key transit route for Kuki-Zo people from Manipur, who are travelling to

other parts of the country or returning to their villages after ethnic violence forced many to avoid the Imphal route.

The Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh calls for the prompt completion of transmission lines prior to power developments

Itanagar, Dec 21: Chow-na Mein, the deputy chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh, emphasized that power evacuation infrastructure must be finished in tandem with future generation projects and urged the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) to guarantee the timely laying of transmission lines. Mein, who chaired a review meet-

ing on the comprehensive plan to strengthen the transmission and distribution system in Itanagar, stated that the commissioning of the Lower Subansiri Hydro Electric Project and several other power projects in the works make it imperative that transmission lines be installed ahead of time so that generated electricity can be transmitted prompt-

ly. The Deputy Chief Minister emphasized the wider importance of dependable energy, stating that it is not just a basic need but also a crucial basis for livelihoods, healthcare, education, industrial expansion, and the state's overall economic development. Mein reaffirmed that the state government is still committed to improving power

connectivity, guaranteeing a consistent and high-quality supply of electricity, and promoting inclusive development in Arunachal Pradesh's rural and urban areas. During the meeting, officials reviewed the key milestones achieved under the scheme, including the commissioning of multiple transmission and distribution assets, completion of



priority transmission lines, and resolution of several long-pending infrastructure challenges. The review meeting was attended by Assembly Speaker Tesam Pongte, Deputy Speaker Kardo Nyigyor, ministers, and senior government officials, who discussed strategies to further accelerate power infrastructure development in the state.

Uttar Pradesh anti-terror squad starts pursuing fugitive suspects from Dhubri, Assam

Dhubri, Dec 21: By starting proclamation proceedings against the fugitive accused Sadiq Ali, also known as Sadiq Shaikh, a Dhubri inhabitant, the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has stepped up its efforts against alleged anti-national elements. If he doesn't turn himself in within the allotted period, the move indicates that his properties will soon be attached.

A joint team from the ATS and the Uttar Pradesh Police conducted a focused search operation at Takimari hamlet in the Dhubri district, according to officials, with help from local police. Sadiq Ali, son of Mukta Mandal, who

has been eluding capture since 2022, had his home searched. Authorities issued a proclamation in accordance with Section 82 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) after the operation. The accused's home and other notable locations in the village were marked with notices. Additionally, locals were formally informed about the judicial procedures against the accused by a public statement. This case is related to Case Crime No. 04/2022, which is lodged at the Lucknow ATS Police Station. Sadiq Ali is charged with engaging in actions that are thought to jeopardize national and state security. He



has not been found despite persistent efforts by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the ATS. The court has directed the accused to surrender before the ATS/NIA court or the investigating agency on or

before January 13, 2026. Officials said that failure to comply will trigger proceedings under Section 83 of the CrPC, enabling the attachment and confiscation of all movable and immovable properties belonging to

the accused. Security agencies have appealed to the public to share any information related to Sadiq Ali's whereabouts, as efforts to apprehend the fugitive continue to be stepped up.

Assam government appoints forty-three urban engineers

Guwahati, Dec 21: On December 18, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma delivered appointment letters to 43 Urban Technical Officers in the Housing and Urban Affairs Department, emphasizing the importance of strengthening urban administration in the face of rising urbanization.

Lok Sewa Bhawan in Guwahati hosted the appointment ceremony. With these appointments, the current Assam government has created 1,42,029 positions overall, demonstrating its focus on open and merit-based hiring. Six mechanical engineers, eleven electrical engineers, eight public health engineers, six environmental engineers, and two civil engineers are among the recently hired officials. Speaking to the crowd, Sarma recalled a period when urban local organizations were severely lacking in



technical personnel. He emphasized how capacity issues have hindered efficient urban management by saying, "Earlier, entire urban administrations were being managed with only one or two junior-level engineers." Highlighting Assam's transition from a largely rural state to an increasingly urban-centric one,

the Chief Minister noted that the state earlier had only one municipal corporation, which has now grown to three, along with several newly declared urban areas. This expansion, he said, has brought complex challenges related to solid waste management, drainage, housing, fire safety and water supply.

The whole SHANTI A bill that allows private companies to work in the nuclear industry

New Delhi, Dec 21: The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill was passed by the Parliament on Thursday, opening the door for private businesses to enter India’s atomic energy market. The Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLND Act) of 2010 are also proposed to be repealed under the bill. The Bill’s passage was applauded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who described it as a “transformational moment for our technology landscape.” Till now, only the public sector companies have been allowed to operate nuclear power plants.

However, this Bill proposes to:

- Grant a license to private companies for operating nuclear plants.Remove the existing contentious liability clause for suppliers of fuel and technology.Rationalise the levels of payout by operators in case of accidents.Enables private and joint venture participation
- Private companies can now construct, own, operate or decommission a nuclear power plant or reactor in India. As per the rules, the company will have to obtain a license after safety authorisation on radiation exposure.
- The Bill allows any central government

department, government company, private company, joint venture or any person to undertake the setting up of such facilities after permission.

Aim to boost investment

The SHANTI Bill aims to boost investment in the nuclear sector to help India further its nuclear power capacity by 2027. It was introduced by the Union Minister of State for Atomic Energy, Jitendra Singh.

The Bill proposes to remove a clause from the CLND Act that gave the operators the right to recourse in case of damages caused by the “act of the supplier or his employee”. This includes acts related to the supply of equipment or material with defects or substandard services. Changes have also been proposed in the limits of liability of operators based on the reactor’s output. The earlier 2010 Bill had limited the liability of the operator to ₹1,500 crore. As per the new Bill, liabilities have been set according to the thermal power capacity of the reactors. So the reactor with 3,600 MW will have a liability up to ₹3,000 crore, reactors above 1,500 MW and up to 3,600 MW will have a liability limit of ₹1,500 crore and so on.

Atomic Energy Redressal

The government has also proposed to set up an Atomic Energy Redressal Advisory



Council to handle any grievances of any licensee or operator.

Some areas still under government

While private entities will be allowed to operate nuclear plants, some areas have still been preserved for government entities, including enrichment of nuclear fuel, management of spent fuel and the production of heavy water.

Opposition to the Bill

Opposition members strongly demanded that the Bill be referred to the standing or select committee due to its large impact. They alleged that the government has diluted the liability clause and questioned whether the bill was introduced under any pressure, ANI reported. Speaking on the opposition, Jitendra Singh said that multiple consultations were held before the framing of the Bill.

Madhya Pradesh suspends blood bank staff

Children test HIV positive

Mumbai, Dec 21: Six children receiving treatment for thalassemia tested positive for HIV after suspected contaminated blood transfusions, prompting the Madhya Pradesh government to suspend the head of a blood bank and two laboratory technicians at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Government Hospital in Satna district, according to a senior official. Based on the preliminary report of a committee established on December 16 by the state’s Public Health and Family Welfare Department to investigate the transfusion of contaminated blood in Satna, the action was taken on Thursday. According to the official, lab technicians Ram Bhai Tripathi and Nandlal Pandey as well as blood bank manager Dr. Devendra Patel have been suspended as a result of the investigation. Manoj Shukla, a former civil surgeon at the district hospital, has also received a show-cause notice requiring him to provide a written justification. The official claims that if Shukla’s response is unsatisfactory, he has been threatened with severe disciplinary pun-

ishment. Following blood transfusions at district hospitals in Satna, Jabalpur, and other locations, the six children, ages 12 to 15, were discovered to be HIV positive. All of the youngsters are receiving treatment in accordance with HIV standards, and the instances were discovered between January and May of this year. Officials had previously reported that one of the children’s parents had also been discovered to be afflicted. In a separate occurrence, three individuals were detained on Thursday on suspicion of selling blood outside Satna’s government hospital. According to officials, a decoy customer was used to break the scheme, and inquiries were being conducted to see whether any blood bank employees were involved. People seeking to sell blood outside the hospital were a common source of complaints. Sub-divisional magistrate Rahul Siladia told PTI Videos that a buyer was then sent for verification. “A man offered him a unit of blood for Rs 4,500 and was arrested during the actual transaction,” he said, adding that two

more people were arrested based on his questioning. Police also shot a video of the transaction.A police officer identified the accused as Ranjeet Sahu, Mohammad Kaif and Anil Gupta, and said investigations were on to determine if any hospital blood bank staff had links to the illegal trade. The state government has constituted a six-member inquiry committee to investigate how the children contracted HIV. Tarun Rathi, Commissioner of the Public Health and Medical Education Department, issued the order announcing the probe team and directed it to submit a detailed report within seven days. Satna Collector Satish Kumar S said, “Children suffering from thalassemia were receiving regular blood transfusions. Six of them were found to be HIV positive during routine testing.” Health Minister Rajendra Shukla said he had ordered an investigation into the matter and sought a report, adding that authorities were also examining whether any transfusions took place at hospitals other than government facilities.

GRAP-4 anti-pollution measures in Delhi

Mumbai, Dec 21: Following stringent enforcement of anti-pollution measures under Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP-4) and increased public compliance with Pollution Under Control (PUC) regulations, the Delhi government reported on Thursday that it has seen a noticeable decrease in vehicle movement on city roads. According to an official statement, the administration conducted a thorough monitoring exercise to assess the efficacy of the strict pollution-control measures amid deteriorating air quality in the nation’s capital. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta observed that the government’s actions have produced favorable results on the ground after re-

viewing comments from cabinet members and their ministries. Following orders from the government, officials observed a discernible decrease in traffic on Delhi’s roads as compared to regular days.

Another promising trend was the voluntary acquisition of PUC certificates by many car owners, which the government characterized as a positive indication of growing public awareness. The Delhi government reiterated that it is fully complying with the directions issued by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), under which GRAP-4 remains in force across the capital. As part of the intensified measures, inspection and enforcement

drives were carried out, with strict action taken against violations, the statement said.

A joint report by the Delhi Transport Department and the Delhi Traffic Police stated that 210 enforcement teams were deployed during the special drive, including 126 teams from the traffic police and 84 from the transport department. During the campaign, action was taken against vehicles operating without valid PUC certificates, resulting in 3,746 challans. The government said monitoring and strict enforcement would continue in the coming days to curb vehicular emissions and provide immediate relief to public health.



Delhi High Court revokes Lokpal's approval for the CBI to investigate Mahua Moitra in the cash-for-query case

New Delhi, Dec 21: The Lokpal’s ruling authorizing the CBI to file a chargesheet against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra in the alleged cash-for-query scandal was overturned by the Delhi High Court on Friday. In Moitra’s appeal, a bench of Justices Anil Kshetarpal and Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar issued the following ruling: “The order is set aside.” We have asked the Lokpal to consider granting sanction under Section 20 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act in compliance with the applicable provisions within a month. The claims that Moitra asked questions in the House in return for money and gifts from a businessman are the subject of the cash-for-query fraud. Citing Section 20(7) of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, which mandates that public workers’ opinions be sought before granting sanc-



tion, Moitra’s attorney argued that there was a glaring flaw in the process used by the Lokpal.

The CBI rejected the appeal, claiming that Moitra is only allowed to make remarks in Lokpal proceedings—not even an oral hearing—and has no right to provide documents. Additionally, Moitra has attempted to prevent the CBI from carrying out any actions in support of the sanction

order, such as bringing any charges while the current proceedings are ongoing. Regarding the purported scheme involving Moitra and businessman Darshan Hiranandani, the CBI presented its findings to the Lokpal in July. On March 21, 2024, the agency filed a formal complaint (FIR) against the two under the Prevention of Corruption Act after receiving a referral from the Lokpal. It was alleged that Moitra indulged in corrupt practices, including, but not limited to, taking bribes and other undue advantages from Hiranandani for “compromising her parliamentary privileges and causing national security threats by sharing her Lok Sabha login credentials.” The agency has submitted its findings in the case to the Lokpal, which will decide the further course of action in the case, according to officials.

Sahitya Akdemi cancels the awards ceremony

New Delhi, Dec 21: Cameras were set up, jute bags containing notepads and pens were distributed, and samosas and dhoklas were steaming outside the Rabindra Bhawan conference room as the Sahitya Akademi announced this year’s winners. However, a junior staffer entered the room and informed the waiting videojournalists, “Cancel ho gaya (The event has been cancelled),” in place of Akademi secretary Pallavi Holkar and other authorities. Since Wednesday night, there have been whispers of “pressure” from the Center in the literary halls of the capital. The Sahitya Akademi, an independent literary organization under the Union culture ministry, was unable to attend its own media conference to announce the winners, whose list had been approved by its executive board by 2.30pm. However, no one had anticipated something so spectacular.

The media conference was scheduled to start at 3 p.m., according to the Press Information Bureau. It was just past that time when the Akademi member entered to announce the event’s cancellation. The Akademi has not offered any explanation for the cancellation of the event. Its vice-president, Kumud Sharma, directed this paper to Akademi secretary Holkar, whose office staff said she did not wish to speak. Akademi president Madhav Kaushik disconnected a call from this paper after this reporter had introduced himself.

Govt will establish a Bureau of Port Security to improve vessel and port security

New Delhi, Dec 21: According to officials on Friday, the government will establish a statutory agency called the Bureau of Port Security to strengthen the security infrastructure of ports. This body will guarantee prompt analysis, gathering, and sharing of security-related information about ports and boats. Sarbananda Sonowal, the Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, and Ram Mohan Naidu, the Minister of Civil Aviation, were present at the meeting that Union Home Minister Amit Shah called on Thursday to establish the Bureau of Port Security. Emphasising that there is a need to establish a country-wide robust port security framework, Shah directed that security measures should be implemented in a graded and risk-based manner, taking into account vulnerabilities, trade potential, location, and other relevant parameters.The meeting also noted that lessons learned from the maritime security framework shall be replicated in the aviation security domain, the statement said.The new body, modelled on the lines of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, will be constituted as a statutory body under the new Merchant Shipping Act, 2025, and will work under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, it said.

Supreme Court criticizes the management of the Shani Shingnapur shrine

New Delhi, Dec 21: The Supreme Court expressed grave concerns on Friday regarding the administration of the Shani Shingnapur temple in Maharashtra, stating that judicial intervention was required to safeguard the shrine because the trust had “created so much doubt” about the administration. The Bombay High Court’s December 12 ruling and an Ahilyanagar Collector’s order were both stayed by the Supreme Court while it heard a dispute between the Maharashtra government and the temple management trust. Control over the temple’s finances and administration is at issue in this dispute. The Supreme Court noted, “You have created so much doubt about the management of the temple that we need to protect the temple,” highlighting the urgent necessity for protections in the Maharashtra shrine’s administration. The Maharashtra government informed the court during the hearing that the temple employs over 2,400 people and spends more than Rs 2.5 crore on salaries and other costs each month. According to the authorities, the trust members are being prosecuted before the Charity Commissioner for alleged severe financial mismanagement. The accusations were denied by the trust’s attorney, who described them as politically driven and connected to the impending elections. The Charity Commissioner had already reviewed the accounts, he said, and the temple has been run by the trust for many years. Additionally, the attorney noted that the Collector had assumed control of the accounts in September and had sent letters to the trust on December 12. Surya Kant, Chief



Justice of India, questioned the size of the temple’s operations and noted that the trustees seemed to have strong political ties. He also wondered why the temple needed 2,400 personnel. “Hundreds of crores of rupees are at stake. The CJI noted, “Your term is expiring on December 31 anyway,” adding that the court was not speculating at this point.

The Solicitor General informed the court that the regulations pertaining to the temple trust were drafted and went into force on December 12. He also claimed that there had been significant misconduct and that the government might be required to recover funds. The CJI emphasized the necessity for appropriate management and acknowledged the existence of employee biometric records. The Supreme Court ordered the Commissioner of the Aurangabad division to be appointed as the temple trust’s administrator because the trust committee’s term is scheduled to end on December 31. The administrative committee will also include two sub-di-

visional magistrate officers. Until a new trust committee is established in accordance with the applicable temple trust statute, the administrator will remain in office. Detailed status reports have been requested from the state administration. The trust’s attorney contended that the government was attempting to take executive control of the temple and cautioned that previous administrator appointments had resulted in unpaid salaries and provident fund obligations. In response, the CJI said that bureaucrats were being appointed so that they might at least be held responsible. The court also raised questions over the sequence of events following the High Court’s December 12 order. The CJI noted that the Collector moved swiftly to invite the trust to take charge and questioned why no time was given to the state to approach the Supreme Court. “We may have to look into his conduct also,” the Chief Justice said. The matter has been adjourned and will be listed again in the third week of January.

Congress’s “acute acronym-itis” jab at Prime Minister Modi during the G RAM G Bill dispute

New Delhi, Dec 21: A day after the VB-G RAM G Bill, which aims to replace the 20-year-old MGNREGA, was passed by Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was criticized by the Congress on Friday for having a “case of acute acronym-itis”. “All new A.C.R.O.N.Y.M MANTRALAYA - Administrative Commission for Renaming Old Schemes -- New Yet Meaningless” was the cartoon portrayal that Congress general secretary in charge of communications Jairam Ramesh shared on X. Ramesh said, “The PM is suffering from a case of acute acronym-itis,” in the post that went with the image. His dig came a day after the passage of

two bills in Parliament with catchy acronyms -- Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill and the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill. The VB-G RAM G Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha with a voice vote, hours after the Lok Sabha cleared it on Thursday, amid strong protests by the opposition over the removal of Mahatma Gandhi’s name from the existing rural employment guarantee scheme MGNREGA. ancial burden on states. Several members of the opposition staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha during the passage

The VB-G RAM G Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha with a voice vote, hours after the Lok Sabha cleared it on Thursday, amid strong protests by the opposition

of the Bill after demanding its withdrawal and raising slogans against the government. They also tore pages of the Bill, with Chairman C P Radhakrishnan warning them not to go towards the treasury benches. Several opposition MPs later sat on an overnight dharna outside the Samvidhan Sadan in the Parliament complex against the Bill.



Mizoram will establish a state university in Lunglei



Mizoram shifts state university plan from Aizawl to Lunglei to boost southern education. Officials are finalising details on courses and infrastructure

Aizawl, Dec 21: In contrast to its previous proposal to build the institution in the state capital, Aizawl, the Mizoram administration has opted to establish the proposed state university in Lunglei town. Ministers, lawmakers, and senior officials attended a high-level meeting presided over by Chief Minister Lalthanhunga, where the decision was made.

The government will present a bill to alter the Mizoram State University Act, 2025 in the upcoming Assembly session in order to formally change the university's site.

Vanlalhlana, the minister of higher and technical education, MLA V. Malsawmtlunga, vice-chairman of the Lunglei High Powered Committee, and two other district MLAs attended the meeting.

In order to comply with the National Education Policy 2020, which requires the establishment of a teaching-intensive university to oversee college affiliations within 15 years of the policy's implementation, the Assembly passed the Mizoram State University Bill, 2025 in March.

While introducing the Bill earlier this year, Vanlalhlana had stated that the university would follow a cluster model, bringing multiple colleges and institutions under a single academic framework. At that time, Aizawl had been identified as the initial location. The latest decision shifts that focus to Lunglei, giving the southern region a major higher education institution.

In Assam, the Congress will begin a statewide manifesto outreach campaign

Guwahati, Dec 21: As part of its manifesto consultation process in advance of the next elections, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) will launch a statewide popular outreach yatra on December 20. The "Rajor Podulit Rajior Congress" program seeks to produce a people-driven manifesto by directly involving residents, stakeholders, and party employees in all regions of Assam. In order to reach out to

ssroots communities throughout the state, senior Indian National Congress leaders, MLAs, MPs, and other party officials will take part in the yatra. To assist develop a vision for a "New Assam," the outreach will engage with farmers, laborers, students, small traders, entrepreneurs, women, intellectuals, social



organizations, and local leaders.

The initial focus of the consultation process will be Assamese higher education, with talks centered on enhancing quality, bolstering research and innovation, and encouraging student independence.

According to APCC president Gaurav Gogoi, the organization is looking for public input on matters pertaining to human resource development and higher education.

He pointed out that conversations with students at Assamese colleges and univer-

sities show that substantial advancements in academic quality and creativity are required.

The campaign was formally launched on December 6 in Dibrugarh, marking the start of the manifesto consultation process.

Script choice is constitutional right for Tripura tribals

Pradyot



Agartala, Dec 21: Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma, the founder of the Tipra Motha Party, stated on December 18 that the indigenous people of Tripura have a constitutional right to choose their own script and that no authority can force them to do so. Debbarma reaffirmed the party's demand for the adoption of the Roman script for Kokborok while speaking at a Homchang (Mashal) Rally in Santirbazar, South Tripura. He called the issue crucial to tribal identity and future generations. "Tiprasa are entitled to choose their own script. Nobody has the authority to dictate what we should accept or choose. He stated that it is our constitutional right to choose the script for our language and that outsiders, "especially non-tribals," had no authority to specify which script should be used for exams. According to Debbarma, political motivations were not the driving force behind the protests taking place around the state. This goes beyond politics in terms of terminology. It has to do with our history, culture, identity, and future," he stated. "We should have the right to use our own script if we so choose." Arguments on the appropriateness of other scripts were also dismissed by the Tipra Motha chief. He asserts that no person or organization has the right to choose which script is "good" or "bad" for Kokborok. "We are holding the Homchang Rally throughout the state, demanding only the Roman script," Debbarma declared. In advance of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council elections that are set for next year, he took the opportunity to criticize the Bharatiya Janata Party, accusing its tribal leadership of causing uncertainty. He asserted that although the BJP had resources and organizational power, tribal voters did not truly support it. Everyone is aware that there isn't much support in the tribal areas, even for the BJP's tribal branch. He claimed that Tipra Motha's tribal sentiment remained strong, comparing it to "elephant teeth" that are conspicuous but ineffectual. Debbarma cautioned against political meddling in issues of identity and language. He used the analogy that many people would oppose if someone proposed writing Bengali in Urdu script. He continued, "We don't want anyone else's suggestions when choosing the script for our language." Debbarma concluded by stating that he was not motivated by political appeasement or financial gain. "I am here to defend my people's rights. "I am speaking on behalf of the state's tribal people," he declared.

The Arunachal seminar emphasizes the buckwheat campaign to improve the food security of hill farmers

Itanagar, Dec 21: At a state-level seminar/workshop in Pasighat, experts stated that a significant increase in buckwheat production has emerged as a critical method to improve food and nutritional security for hill farmers in Arunachal Pradesh. The goal of the program, which was run by the College of Horticulture & Forestry (CHF), Pasighat, under Central Agricultural University, Imphal, was to find substitute crops that would increase farm revenues in the state while withstanding shifting climatic circumstances. Buckwheat, sometimes referred to as phapar locally, was identified as a priority crop due to its high nutritional value, low water requirements, and low input costs. The event was attended by around 200 farmers from the districts of East Siang, Upper Siang, Siang, Lower Siang, and Lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh, as well as at-

tendees from portions of Assam's Dhemaji district. The All India Coordinated Research Network (AICRN) on Potential Crops under ICAR-NBPGR, New Delhi, provided assistance for the workshop. The program's hands-on exposure for farmers, which included trips to experimental fields at CHF, Pasighat, and demonstrations of buckwheat growing under oil palm plantations at the College of Agriculture, Pasighat, was a key draw. Diverse cropping systems appropriate for hill agriculture were demonstrated during the workshops. In his speech, CHF Dean Dr. L. Wangchu emphasized the necessity of going beyond rice-centric farming in order to guarantee Arunachal Pradesh's nutritional security and climate resilience. Researchers from ICAR-NBPGR emphasized the health advantages of buckwheat, especially for those with diabetes, and its potential to



help mitigate the effects of climate change. Value addition and improved market linkage might greatly increase farmers' income, according to Dr. S K Yadav, Nodal Officer of AICRN on Potential Crops. He pointed out that buckwheat has become more popular in Arunachal Pradesh in recent years. The area under buckwheat cultivation in Arunachal Pradesh has increased from about 400 hectares to over 5,000 hectares, according to former BJP Kisan Morcha president and state BJP deputy president Dunggoli Libang, indicating greater farmer acceptance.

The Assam Cabinet has approved the World Cup-winning blind cricket player's appointment as a physical instructor

Guwahati, Dec 21: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated that on December 18, the Assam Cabinet resolved to designate Simu Das, a member of the Indian cricket team that won the Women's T20 Blind World Cup, as a physical instructor under the Directorate of Sports and Youth Welfare. Das, a native of the state's Nagaon area, scored 86 runs and took a vital wicket in the final match against Nepal to help India win the Blind Women's T20 World Cup in Colombo. She won Player of the Match for her all-around performance. Das, a B1-category player who was a member of the Indian team that won the first Blind Women's T20 World Cup, received Rs 10 lakh from the state. The gesture is seen as a significant

institutional move toward acknowledging accomplishments in blind cricket, a field that has hitherto gotten little public attention and support. Years of adversity have defined Das's ascent. She was reared in extreme poverty, without secure home, and with additional family duties, such as caring for a sibling with many disabilities. She was born completely blind. Despite these obstacles, she continued her schooling and training through programs offered by the Samarathanam Trust for the Disabled and the Cricket Association for the Blind in India, ultimately securing a spot on the national squad. She has become a well-known figure in India's blind sports movement thanks to her success on the international scene and her



own fortitude. The Assam government's support has been hailed by officials and athletic organizations as a moment that might change the landscape for athletes with disabilities and inspire governments to implement more robust support systems for athletes who have histor-

ically stayed on the periphery of mainstream sport. The ruling, according to blind cricket stakeholders, might establish a precedent for long-term inclusion, better financial channels, and wider recognition for women with impairments competing at elite levels.

Tripura CM announces Rs 25.16 lakh relief for families

Agartala, Dec 21: Ex-gratia aid totaling Rs 25.16 lakh has been awarded by the Tripura government for families impacted by the deadly furnace collapse at a brick kiln in the Dhalai district, which resulted in the deaths of five workers and the critical injuries of three others. The families of the deceased have each been granted Rs 4 lakh by the Dhalai district administration. The State Disaster Response Fund has authorized further financial aid for those with severe and less severe injuries. Subal Deb-nath, Pinku Shil, Anil Goutam, Bidhu Sharma, and Sajal Malakar have been identified as the deceased. Santosh Gupta, Harkish Chouhan, and Harkish Sarag are among the injured; several have been sent to GB Hospital for



further care. According to Chief Minister Manik Saha, the state government would provide prompt relief and provide the impacted families with all assistance available. The district government has promised continued support and is keeping an eye on the issue. The event happened on December 17 at the Aparash-

kar Brick Factory in the Kamalpur subdivision's Nakful neighborhood. After a fire was started during an inauguration ceremony, a recently built furnace collapsed, trapping workers beneath the rubble. Local police, firefighters, and members of the State Disaster Response Force conducted rescue operations.

Along the Assam-Meghalaya border, new Rabha committees assume control

The Rabha bodies have long worked to strengthen harmony among ethnic groups along the border while pursuing social and developmental initiatives.

Shillong, Dec 21: On December 18, three significant Rabha organizations from the Hahim region, which is situated along the Assam-Meghalaya border, established new committees, signifying a renewed push to promote local development and communal cooperation in the delicate border region. At a biannual convention at the Sabyasachi Rabha Coordination Area in Hahim, the Rabha Students' Union, Rabha Women's Council, and Sixth Schedule Demand Committee reorganized their regional organizations. In a symbolic act highlighting cultural identity and solidarity among border dwellers, members of the newly established committees took their oaths in the Rabha language. Previous committees were dissolved and new office bearers were elected to two-year terms at the convention, which was attended by members from Kamrup district and several central and regional Rabha organizations. There were prominent figures in attendance, such as Kamrup District Vice Presidents Montu Rava and Namal Kumar Rabha, as well as Assistant Secretary of the All



Rabha Students' Union Hiteshwar Rabha. Speaking to the crowd, Namal Kumar Rabha stated that Hahim needs more attention from the government and the community because it is a strategically critical and backward location. He continued by saying that the Rabha entities have long pursued social and developmental projects while attempting to improve harmony between ethnic communities along the border. A sapling plantation drive, a tribute to martyrs, and the raising of the flag marked the start of the conference. After elections, the Hahim Regional Rabha Students' Union elected Bishay Rabha as president and Mithun Rabha as general secretary. The Sixth Schedule Demand Committee was led by Prashanta and Basishtha Rabha, while the Women's Council was headed by Anupama and Bonti Rabha.

119 acres of poppies are destroyed by security troops

Imphal, Dec 21: During a significant operation on December 18 in Ukhrul district, Manipur security forces destroyed 119 acres of illegal poppy growing, highlighting the increased crackdown on drug production in the hill regions. Security personnel cleared large poppy farms in the Lamlai Chingphai region, Yaolen Chepu, and LM Block. 24 huts that were discovered at the plantation locations were set on fire as part of the action; officials stated that the buildings were probably used by workers and farmers engaged in illicit activity. Large areas of poppy fields were destroyed in the same sites by Manipur security personnel and the Ukhrul district Forest Department the day before the December 18 operation. Approximately 140 acres of poppy farms were found and destroyed, according to officials on December 17. During the clearance process, 16 temporary huts were set on fire. According to officials, the state's ongoing attempts to stop illicit drug production and dismantle networks connected to the drug trade in Manipur's hill districts are reflected in the series of operations.



BUSINESS

Vedanta is expected to demerge into five public companies by March 2026

Anil Agarwal

New Delhi: The proposed demerger into five independently listed companies is expected to be completed by March 2026, according to Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal on Wednesday, one day after the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) gave its approval. Vedanta Aluminium, Talwandi Sabo Power, Vedanta Steel and Iron, and Malco Energy will function as distinct listed companies after the merger, while Vedanta will house the base metals industry. Agarwal told PTI that the action is essential to enabling each company to reach its maximum growth potential. “Vedanta has enormous potential in all of its operations, including steel, iron ore, power, oil and gas, zinc, silver, and aluminum. Demand is nearly growing, especially in India. He stated, “Demerger is the right thing to do to let each business grow on its own.” Agarwal stated that Vedanta’s net debt of about ₹48,000 crore will be distributed among the demerged firms according to their individual cash flows and balance-sheet strength rather than being divided evenly.

Agarwal reaffirmed that the group’s debt is still manageable in response to worries over leverage. This is one of the lowest amounts of leverage in the world. “We are very comfortable with our position, and debt is a part of business,” he stated, adding that Vedanta would keep improving its balance sheet. According to Agarwal, a holding structure will allow promoters to own about 50% of the company. To oversee day-to-day operations, each organization will have a professional management team and an independent board. There will be CEOs, appropriate boards, and management teams with



full incentives. He said that he might not serve as chair of every demerged company. “Management participation through shareholding schemes will continue,” he stated. Regarding specific companies, Agarwal stated that Vedanta wants to increase zinc production to become one of the biggest producers in the world. In order to meet domestic demand, the corporation has announced plans to raise its silver output from roughly 700 tons to 3,000 tonnes. When zinc is smelted and refined, silver is recovered as a byproduct. According to Agarwal, the business intends to quadruple its capacity in aluminum from 3 million tonnes, with the help of greenfield projects connected to renewable

energy and captive mines. According to Agarwal, Vedanta is aiming to produce 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil and gas in the near future, with a longer-term objective of scaling up to 1 million bpd over the following four to five years. With a suggested capacity of 10–15 million tonnes, the iron ore and steel industry will concentrate on green steel, utilizing access to gas and renewable energy, he continued. This is consistent with the company’s previous ₹1 trillion investment in Rajasthan to treble its production of renewable energy, zinc, lead, silver, and oil and gas. Agarwal also said that aggressive capex will continue post-demerger, alongside regular dividend payouts.

Apple modifies iOS software in response to Japan’s more stringent regulations

New Delhi: As part of larger efforts by the iPhone manufacturer to adjust to rules worldwide, Apple Inc. is modifying its iOS software in Japan to comply with a new local law intended to promote competition. For Japan’s Mobile Software Competition Act, or MSCA, which was passed last year and takes effect this week, the business unveiled a compliance strategy on Wednesday. The operating system’s payment options, alternative app marketplaces, and browser settings are all impacted by the changes. The improvements, which are now accessible in Japan as part of iOS 26.2, were developed in close collaboration with Japanese regulators, according to Apple. In the EU, Apple is subject to comparable regulatory scrutiny. Apple has been obliged to make changes as a result of the region’s Digital Markets Act, which aims to level the playing field for online platforms. Stricter rules may make it more difficult to safeguard customer privacy and safety, according to the Cupertino, California-based corporation. The regulations have also put Apple’s App Store business model, which brings in billions of dollars annually, in jeopardy. The modifications are intended to allow developers in Japan to decide how to handle payments for digital goods and services. Additionally, they will give them greater influence over the distribution of software via other markets. Additionally, the upgrades make it simpler for consumers to select the search engine and browser of their choice. However, the company cautioned that some of these modifications would put Japanese iOS users at risk by making them more vulnerable to fraud, scams, and malware. Apple is using a “notarization” approach, which combines automated checks and human assessment, to evaluate the fundamental operation and security risks of all iOS apps in an effort to lessen potential risks. However, the business stated that other marketplaces may choose to have their own additional policies for



assessment and that this is not as thorough as the entire App Store examination. Japanese developers will now have three choices for managing payments: they can either redirect users to a website to finish the transaction, use an alternative payment service provider within their app, or continue to rely on Apple’s in-app purchases. The company is also introducing new business terms with different commission rates and fees depending on how developers choose to distribute their apps and process payments. Apple said some of the changes could expose children to more risks, but it worked with regulators on guardrails, including restricting links to external websites for users under 13. An Apple spokesperson said the company doesn’t have plans to bring these changes to other countries because it believes its existing system provides superior user safety and developer opportunities. The spokesperson also said the company believes Japan is taking a better approach than the EU, stating that the DMA has forced Apple to make changes that create a more confusing experience and introduce greater risks. For instance, mandates aimed at making technology compatible could expose sensitive user data, like Wi-Fi history or notifications, Apple said.

100% FDI in insurance is approved by Parliament to increase coverage by 2047

New Delhi: A law to increase foreign direct investment in the insurance industry to 100% was passed by the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. The bill’s declared goal is to provide insurance coverage to everyone by 2047. In response to a discussion on the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated that increased foreign direct investment (FDI) would draw more companies into the market and assist lower the cost of insurance plans for customers. “Monopoly doesn’t give us that advantage, and therefore, the more the competition, the better the rates,” she stated before the House. The government’s emphasis on bolstering public



sector insurance firms was also emphasized by the finance minister. “Another priority which our government has given is to strengthen the public sector insurance companies...since 2014, we have been doing a lot of things to improve their financial health,” she stated.

The Insurance Act of 1938, the Life Insurance Corporation Act of 1956, and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act of 1999 are all proposed

to be amended under the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha Bill, 2025. The law aims to increase the insurance industry’s FDI cap from the current 74% to 100%. Additionally, the measure permits a non-insurance company to merge with an insurance company. The Union Cabinet approved it on Friday. The act seeks to improve policyholder protection and hasten the expansion and development of the insurance industry, according to the

declaration of purposes and reasons. To protect policyholders’ interests, it calls for the creation of a Policyholders’ Education and Protection Fund. Additionally, the proposed revisions aim to improve regulatory monitoring of the industry, increase openness in regulation-making, and facilitate business transactions for insurance companies, intermediaries, and other stakeholders. With respect to the tenure of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority leadership, the bill stipulates a term of five years for the Chairperson and other whole-time members or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. Currently, the upper age limit is 62 years for whole-time members and 65 years for the Chairperson.

Reducing debt to GDP will be a primary priority starting in the upcoming fiscal year

Nirmala Sitharaman

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated on Wednesday that reducing India’s debt to GDP ratio will be the government’s top focus starting in the upcoming fiscal year and urged the states to follow suit. The FM emphasized the importance of fiscal management in handling the country’s finances while speaking at an event in New Delhi. “To ensure that fiscal management is transparent to everyone and satisfies the highest standards of accountability, the central government has set explicit goals for transparency in budget-making. Because of this, the debt-to-GDP ratio has decreased since it exceeded 60% during the post-Covid era. It is currently on a downward trajectory, according to Sitharaman.

After COVID, India’s debt-to-GDP skyrocketed to 61.4% before progressively declining to 57.1% by 2023–2024. This year, the government anticipates that it will drop to 56.1%. Sitharaman also urged states to prioritize fiscal management accountability and transparency, just as the federal government has consistently lowered its debt levels. “You will be borrowing to service the loans, not borrowing for developmental expenditures, unless the debt-to-GSDP is better managed and kept within the FRBM limits and the stock of debt that has been accumulating



over the years with high interest rates that many states are unable to service, unless even those are brought down.”

That’s a bad financial move,” Sitharaman remarked. Bengal is frequently mentioned as one among the states with significant debt, even though the FM did not name any states. However, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee stated on Thursday that the state’s debt is limited by FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management). “Those who claim that the state is incurring debt, are they unaware that Bengal has a FRBM system?” Banerjee remarked. Suvendu Adhikari, the leader of the opposition in the Ben-

gal Assembly, stated earlier on Wednesday that the establishment of huge companies is the only way to improve the state because Bengal’s internal debt has reached unbelievable levels. Sitharaman said global trade is increasingly “getting weaponised” through tariffs and other measures, and India will have to negotiate its way carefully. She said that the overall strength of the economy will give the country an added advantage going forward. “India can be lectured saying you (India) are very inward-looking, you are a tariff king and so on. But tariff has been weaponised,” the FM said, adding India’s intention was never to weaponise tariffs.

By March 2026, the \$24 billion worth of shares will be released from the anchor lock-in

New Delhi: According to a research by Nuvama Institutional Equities, shares worth approximately \$24 billion from 108 recently listed firms would be available for trade between December 18, 2025, and March 30, 2026, which might increase selling pressure in the secondary market. The planned expiration of anchor investor lock-in periods is the cause of the overhang. The main board businesses whose lock-in periods are about to end include Meesho, Anand Rathii Share & Stock Brokers, Tata Capital, LG Electronics India, Physicswallah, Lenskart Solutions, Canara HSBC Life Insurance, Rubicon Research, and Corona Remedies. Market investors keep a careful eye on anchor lock-in expirations because they can affect post-IPO stock performance. For a predetermined amount of time, usually 30, 90, or 180 days after listing, anchor investors—typically institutional investors like mutual funds, foreign portfolio investors, and insurance companies—must retain shares. These investors are allowed to sell their assets on the open market when the lock-in expires. The article states that one-month lock-in releases start on December 18. Five million shares, or two percent of the outstanding equity, will be released for Fujiyama Power Systems. On December 19, Capillary Technologies will unlock three million shares; on December 24, Excelsoft Tech will unlock six million shares, or five percent; and on December 26, Sudeep Pharma will unlock two million shares, or two percent. On January 7, Aequus and Meesho will each unlock 17 million shares, or 2% of the total, and 110 million shares, or 2% of the total. On the same day, 9 million shares, or 4%, will be released by Vidya Wires. On January 12, Corona Remedies will release 0.9 million shares, or 2%, and Wakefit Innovations will issue 15 million shares, or 5%. On January 14, Park Medi World will unlock 9 million



shares, or 2%, and Nephrocare Health Services will unlock an additional 3 million shares, or 3%. Three-month lock-in expiries also commence on December 18, beginning with Euro Pratik Sales, which will unlock 3 million shares, or 3 per cent. VMS TMT and Ivalue Infosolutions are scheduled to release 1 million shares, or 3 per cent, and 3 million shares, or 5 per cent, respectively, on December 22. Saatvik Green Energy and GK Energy will unlock 3 million shares, or 2 per cent, and 5 million shares, or 2 per cent, on December 23. Other notable unlocks include Ganesh Consumer Products, which will release 2 million shares, or 5 per cent, and Atlanta Electricals, which will unlock 1 million shares, or 2 per cent, on December 24. December 26 is expected to be particularly active, with Solarworld Energy Solutions unlocking 3 million shares, or 4 per cent, Sessaasai Technologies 3 million shares, or 2 per cent, Jaro Institute of Technology 0.8 million shares, or 3 per cent, and Anand Rathii Share and Stock Brokers 3 million shares, or 4 per cent. The unlocks extend into 2026, with key releases including WeWork India unlocking 10 million shares, or 8 per cent, on January 6. Tata Capital will unlock 71 million shares, or 2 per cent, on January 7, followed by

LG Electronics India with 15 million shares, or 2 per cent, on January 8. Lenskart Solutions will release 41 million shares, or 2 per cent, on February 4, Physicswallah 72 million shares, or 3 per cent, on February 12, and Meesho 110 million shares, or 2 per cent, on March 9. Six-month lock-in releases begin on December 19, with Oswal Pumps unlocking 7 million shares, or 6 per cent. On December 26, Arisinfra Solutions will release 36 million shares, representing 44 per cent of its outstanding equity. This will be followed by Ellenbarrie Industrial Gases, which will unlock 23 million shares, or 17 per cent, on December 30, and Kalpataru with 111 million shares, or 54 per cent, on December 31. Early January 2026 will see large unlocks from All Time Plastics with 4 million shares, or 6 per cent, on January 1, HDB Financial Services with 481 million shares, or 58 per cent, on January 2, and Sambhv Steel Tubes with 142 million shares, or 48 per cent. Globe Civil Projects will unlock 30 million shares, or 51 per cent, and Brigade Hotel Ventures 14 million shares, or 4 per cent, on January 5. The trend continues through March, with Urban Company scheduled to unlock 941 million shares, or 66 per cent, on March 17. Euro Pratik Sales will follow with 63 million shares, or 62 per cent, on March 23, GK Energy with 131 million shares, or 65 per cent, on March 24, and Atlanta Electricals with 52 million shares, or 68 per cent, on March 30. While the aggregate value of shares coming out of lock-in is substantial, the report notes that not all shares are expected to be sold immediately. “The value pertains to the total lock-up opening shares, but it’s important to note that not all of these shares will come for sale, as a sizable portion of these shares is also held by the Promoter & Group,” said the report.

Sebi modifies broker standards, caps brokerage, & updates mutual fund expenditure regulations

New Delhi: A comprehensive overhaul of mutual fund regulations, including a revised framework for cost ratios and a cap on brokerage fees to improve transparency, was approved by markets regulator Sebi. A comprehensive revamp of stockbroker laws was also approved by the regulator’s board, which replaced the three-decade-old system with a contemporary handbook intended to streamline compliance and harmonize supervisory norms with modern market activities. A proposal to remove all statutory levies from mutual fund cost ratio restrictions, including stamp duty, the Securities Transaction Tax (STT), the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and the Commodity Transaction Tax (CTT), was approved by Sebi during its board meeting. According to Sebi chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey, these fees—along with brokerage, exchange, and regulatory fees—would now fall outside the bounds, and the updated structure will be known as the base expense ratio. At the moment, other mandatory expenses are included, but only GST on management fees is permitted over the total expense ratio (TER). According to the agency, eliminating statutory charges would guarantee that investors would be directly affected by any future modifications to these taxes. The extra five basis points (bps) that asset management firms were permitted to charge for exit loads across schemes were also eliminated by Sebi. This additional fee, which was initially implemented in 2012 at a rate of 20 basis points to counteract the impact of crediting exit loads back to schemes and then lowered to 5 basis points in 2018, was only temporary and has since been removed in order to cut expenses for unitholders. Sebi changed brokerage limits to 6 bps from 12 bps for cash market transactions and to 2 bps from 5 bps for derivatives in order to guarantee that costs are charged equitably and



only once. Additional decisions include streamlining eligibility requirements for fund sponsors, reducing the number of required trustee meetings for asset management firms, doing away with newspaper ads for scheme modifications in favor of online disclosures, and eliminating redundant reporting. Since distinct frameworks already exist, redundant chapters on infrastructure debt funds and real estate mutual funds were removed. According to Sebi, these modifications cut the number of pages and words in the mutual fund regulations by 44% and 54%, respectively. Since its founding in 1963, the sector has managed assets worth more than ₹80 lakh crore. Separately, Sebi authorized the Sebi (Stock Brokers) Regulations, 2025 to replace the three-decade-old Sebi (Stock Brokers) Regulations, 1992. The revised regulations, which are divided into eleven chapters, streamline reporting, eliminate outdated clauses, and simplify wording. Definitions have been changed, joint inspections are now permitted, computerized bookkeeping is permitted, and the standards used to identify qualified stock brokers have been rationalized. There are now only 29 pages instead of 59. The board also amended ICDR rules to ease IPO lock-in challenges, allowed incentives in public debt issues, streamlined LODR timelines and relaxed norms for credit rating agencies.

Villains in vogue

Bollywood adversaries reflect society, from Mogambo to Kali

New Delhi: The days of the audience being frightened by characters like Mogambo and Gabbar’s ominous chuckle are long gone. Bollywood movie villains have changed throughout time. Now all that’s needed is their sardonic smile, which reflects their evil intentions. Bollywood villains, such as Jageera from “China Gate,” who uttered the famous line “Mere mann ko bhaya main kutta kaat ke khaya,” are no longer one-dimensional. That made it clear that he was completely wicked. However, these figures now have layers. It will all be evident if you compare Jageera to Kali in Vijay Sethupathi’s “Jawan.” Bollywood’s legendary heroes have always been in the spotlight, but the way its adversaries have changed over time is just as fascinating. The days of simple, mustache-twisting villains who were only interested in wreaking havoc are long gone. Negative characters in modern Bollywood have developed into sophisticated, multifaceted characters that provide nuance and complexity to the stories. Film enthusiasts have long been captivated by villains. Viewers are drawn in by their larger-than-life personas, swagger, and darker side. Shakaal (Kulbhushan Kharbanda), who hurled people to feed his ravenous crocodiles, Gabbar (Amjad Khan), who forced Basanti (Hema Malini) to dance on glass fragments, and the most recent Kali (Vijay Sethupathi) from “Jawan” are just a few examples of villains that have effectively enthralled viewers.

When Hindi cinema first started out, villains were usually depicted as one-dimensional, completely malevolent individuals. They were frequently despotic rulers, dishonest politicians, or money-hungry criminals. Because of their flashy outfits and extravagant behaviors, these villains were frequently easy to spot. Who doesn’t recall Gabbar’s “Mogambo khush hua” from “Mr. India” or “Kitne aadmi the” from “Sholay”? But did you know that the fantastic writing team Salim-Javed produced the majority of these well-known antagonists from the 1970s and 1980s? Hindi cinema has produced some of the most iconic villains of all time. Writer Javed Akhtar, who created characters like Mogambo and Gabbar along with Salim Khan, explained how the socio-political history of India influenced the antagonists over the years: “For a very long time, I think the social-political history of India could be written and can be written if you look at the villains of Hindi commercial films. Time has changed and so have the villains. Like the protagonist who is the personification of contemporary morality, virtue and aspirations. The same way, the villain is exactly the opposite of that,” Javed Akhtar told IndiaToday.In. Initially, the villains in Hindi films were mostly the zamindars or the thakurs (Remember Sukhilala (played by Kahaiyalal) in ‘Mother India’?). Speaking about the changing faces of villains, Javed Akhtar added, “There was a time when the villain was the zamindar or the thakur. That was the time when the feudal era was taking its last breath. And then, as industrialisation and urbanisation came, so then the villain was the mill owner, or the Sethji or the big corporates. Rich people were bad people, poor people were good people.” The way villains were portrayed evolved along with the Hindi cinema industry. As a result, ethically dubious individuals known as anti-heroes began to appear. Amitabh Bachchan’s legendary roles in “Deewar” and “Don” subverted the traditional hero-villain dichotomy, inspiring audience empathy as they set out on difficult journeys. The villains, the slumlords, eventually turned into the heroes as urbanization became more complex. Without being constrained by the law or societal conventions, these slumlords became heroes and vigilantes. According to Javed Akhtar, “He was law in himself.” Terrorism afflicted India in the 1990s, and it was depicted in its movies as well. Pakistanis and terrorist organizations were portrayed as villains when terrorism increased. The seasoned author-poet continues, “So, the villains kept on changing.” Is the current Hindi film industry lacking in villains? In Javed Akhtar’s opinion. He tells IndiaToday that he believes there isn’t a suitable villain in Hindi cinema right now.Why? “Now, we are going through a strange situation. We don’t have permanent villains. Actually, we are devoid of them because, at the moment, society is not clear about its morality. During Nehruvian times, life was simple. Rich people were bad people. Now, rich people are not bad people because we want to become rich. Now, we are deprived of villains.”

The way antagonists were portrayed changed significantly in the 1990s. Filmmakers began exploring villains’ psyches in greater detail to make them more realistic.



Audiences were captivated by Shah Rukh Khan’s portrayals of an underworld criminal in “Don,” a stalker in “Anjaam,” and an infatuated lover in “Darr.” As everyone knows by now, Shah Rukh Khan is unbeatable when he portrays the villain. Everyone is praising his anti-hero performance in “Jawan.” It makes sense why the movie’s trailer cautioned viewers, saying, “When I become a villain, no hero stands a chance.” Ranveer Singh’s portrayal of Alauddin Khilji in ‘Padmaavat’ left everyone in awe. The actor in an earlier interview spoke about feeling liberated while playing the character with no moral compass. “As an actor, you have a lot more options when you are a nasty person. In Bajirao vs. Khilji, I portrayed a ruler in Bajirao Mastani who was so noble and dignified that he had to behave in a particular manner. He was limited in what he could do. His words, ideas, and deeds were all within certain bounds, but with Khilji, those bounds were considerably wider. Because of the character’s nature, you have a lot more leeway to make decisions during the performance,” Ranveer Singh remarked. Saurabh Sachdeva, who was recently seen as Kareena’s estranged husband in ‘Jaane Jaan’ and Haji Maqbool in ‘Bambai Meri Jaan’, likes to play multi-dimensional characters and feels a good script is all one needs. “Playing antagonists is challenging and I enjoy that challenge as an actor. I don’t want to play a one-dimensional character. I want to do multi-dimensional characters, which, if they are written well, something happens in your body, in the actor’s body. It’s the writing, which does (the magic) a lot of time. People think that an actor can put life into the script. I believe he can. I have done that for a few characters, but a lot of time I’m searching for a good script, which moves me or inspires me,” Saurabh Sachdeva tells. Bollywood has made significant progress in redefining its adversaries in recent years. Villains with terrible backstories and human frailties have been featured in movies like ‘Haider,’ ‘Badlapur,’ and “Kaminey.” These characters arouse empathy and occasionally even question the audience’s moral compass. The villains who most closely resemble real-life people are the most terrifying and terrifying. They are not animated or overly dramatic characters. They are genuinely frightening since you can readily picture someone in the real world looking like them. Writer Dhiraj Mishra, who has penned the story of the upcoming film, Sarojini, shared how in the past few years, writers coming from smalltowns have made villains more relatable. “Films now have many villains. One is not enough. One of the biggest examples of this is ‘Gangs of Wasseypur’. Manoj Bajpayee might have been the lead actor, but even he was portrayed with negative shades. Negativity often attracts viewers and, now with the emergence of OTT, it



has given more avenues to writers to play up their characters. So, now they are more sinister and lethal,” says Dhiraj Mishra. Is there a recipe or method for making the ideal villain? We attempted to ask the man who created several of these well-known villains the question.”If you take kids to a zoo and tell them there’s a man-eating tiger on one side and lovely birds, peacocks, deer, and impala on the other. Where do you suppose the kids will go? According to Javed Akhtar, “They would go see the tiger kyunki jo fascination hai ki phir kahaan dekhne ko milega, a man-eating tiger.” “Why do we appreciate these beasts? All of us, whether children or grown-ups, have so many fantasies. There is so much angst, anger. We want to do what we feel like and be totally free of everything. But we are not, we are bound by morality, by peer pressure, we are bound by log kya kahenge. We are bound by the fear of punishments of different kinds. We admire these characters for being totally free of any bondage. His freedom and lack of conscience, aapko surprise bhi kar-ta hei, darata bhi hai, aur admire bhi karata hai,” shared Javed Akhtar. The renowned writer also shared a unique quality of Hindi film villains. “I have noticed that they are perhaps the only one in this universe who own their villainy. Koi aadmi doesn’t wear his wickedness on his sleeve. The worst kind of people also want to believe that they are good people. [But Indian villains] are so proud of their wickedness that they show off their wickedness. Koi kabhi agar Hindi picture mein aap dekho, (the villain says) ‘Ise toh aisi jagah le jake marunga jahaan paani nahi milega.’ He is so proud that he is a bad man. He is the only person in this universe who is proud that he is a bad man.” ‘Jawan’s’ Kali, played by Vijay Sethupathi, had nothing redeemable about him. And, perhaps that is what makes him the badass villain. However, the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer was also loved by the viewers because Vikram Rathore wasn’t a pure black or white character. So, to an extent, he was anti-establishment, which made him the best example of an anti-hero. While we loved to hate Kali, there was just love for Vikram. But both of them are equally fascinating. The evolution of villains in Bollywood has been nothing short of remarkable. From one-dimensional antagonists to multi-dimensional, emotionally charged characters, Bollywood has come a long way in crafting compelling villains. The storytelling has been enhanced by this development, and viewers now value the gray areas in movies. We can only anticipate more fascinating and complex villains that subvert our preconceptions and keep us interested in Indian cinema as Bollywood develops. The bad guys aren’t always clear-cut, much like life itself. Additionally, 50 Shades of Grey is a hit among viewers.

Raj Kapoor movies that are still relevant in India



New Delhi: Raj Kapoor was an institution as well as an actor and director. With his distinctive tramp persona and socially concerned narratives, Kapoor’s films encapsulated the aspirations, challenges, and paradoxes of an entire generation in India. Crucially, practically all of his movies are still relevant in India today. His films are still relevant decades later because of their unique trinity of entertainment, emotion, and social commentary. RK’s collection of work continues to inspire filmmakers and enchant audiences, ranging from romance and tragedy to social criticism and coming-of-age stories. In honor of the Showman’s 101st birthday, we examine some of his classic movies that every movie buff should see, even though it is hard to capture his brilliance in a few movies. If you’ve already seen them, you can always go back and see why they still resonate with us.

Awaara (1951)

Awaara, a global smash that made Bollywood famous, is about the traditional underdog—a young man torn between society, fate, and his own moral compass. Kapoor is renowned for his depiction of Raj, the endearing tramp.Beyond memorable jail scenes and songs like Awaara Hoon and Ghar Aaya Mera Parde-si, the film endures because it explores societal inequity and the age-old nature vs nurture controversy. Audiences throughout the Middle East, China, and the Soviet Union fell in love with Raj Kapoor because of its global themes.

Shree 420 (1955)

Even now, the tale of Raj overcoming the corruption and temptations of the great metropolis seems pertinent. Kapoor criticized wealth and moral compromise while celebrating resiliency in the iconic Mera Joota Hai Japanese. In contemporary India, where rural-to-urban migration and the allure of rapid achievement are commonplace, the movie’s examination of innocence colliding with desire strikes a chord.

Joker Mera Naam (1970)

The story of the film centers on Raju, a clown whose laughter conceals inner grief. It is regarded as a daring, semi-autobiographical experiment and Raj Kapoor’s most intimate endeavor. The film presents a multi-layered reflection on the cost of pleasure and the loneliness of public life while examining love, loss, and societal indifference. Because of its emotional nuance and aspirational narrative, Mera Naam Joker is now praised as a masterpiece.

Chhalia (1960)

Chhalia is a story of love, trust, and resiliency set against the backdrop of post-Partition India. Raj Kapoor portrays a guy whose bravery and loyalty are put to the test by both personal betrayal and the political unrest of the time. The film’s portrayal of interpersonal connections feels ageless, showcasing Kapoor’s talent for fusing simple storytelling with social relevance.

Sangam (1964)

Sangam was a physically stunning and emotionally compelling love triangle featuring friendship, duty, and grief. Together with iconic songs like Har Dil Jo Pyaar Karega, Mere Man Ki Ganga, and Main Kya Karoon Ram, Kapoor’s emotionally packed love triangle with Vyjayanthimala and Rajendra Kumar won over the public and established a benchmark for romantic dramas in Bollywood. In contemporary accounts of complicated relationships, its themes of fidelity in friendship versus love continue to resonate.

Bobby (1973)

Raj Kapoor brought teenage love to mainstream Bollywood with the film, while Bobby made Rishi Kapoor a leading figure in Bollywood opposite Dimple Kapadia. The movie, which focused on the relationship between a wealthy boy and a poor girl, served as a model for many young love stories.

Even decades later, Bobby is still relevant because it tackles issues of socioeconomic disparity, generational conflict, and teenage revolt in addition to its love tale. The charm was enhanced by Kapoor Jr.’s vigor, style, and music.

Prem Rog (1982)

One of the movies where Raj Kapoor’s socially sensitive nature is most evident is Prem Rog. In the film, which stars Rishi Kapoor and Padmini Kolhapure, he tackles the issue of widow remarriage—a subject that is rarely covered in mainstream cinema—while fusing a love tale with societal criticism.The film explores societal taboos, responsibility, and individual happiness through passionate performances and delicate direction, crafting a story that feels timeless in discussions about gender and social change.

Sundaram, Satyam Shivam (1978)

In this contentious but thought-provoking drama, Raj Kapoor examined the conflict between inner integrity and outward beauty. The film, which starred Zeenat Aman and Shashi Kapoor, challenged viewers by addressing racism, social judgment, and the shallowness of appearances while fusing romance, music, and spectacle. It has lasting relevance due to its multi-layered story. Raj Kapoor’s films, from Awaara’s tramp to Prem Rog’s social conscience, were never merely narratives; rather, they were explorations, emotions, and visions of India.Every movie has a timeless emotional truth, whether it’s a social drama, romance, or musical. Not only did Kapoor create movies, but he also created experiences that reverberate across generations, reminding India of the enduring nature of his legacy.

Why did 2025’s patriotic movies fall short of expectations?

New Delhi: Bollywood cinema has long relied on war dramas and patriotic movies to evoke strong feelings, unite viewers, and typically become box office successes. However, the genre surprisingly faltered in a year full of attempts to recreate that magic. Movies meant to inspire pride and excitement instead elicited indifferent reactions, revealing a level of audience tiredness that the film industry had not anticipated. Sky Force, Saare Jahan Se Acha, Sarzameen, War 2, and, most recently, 120 Bahadur are among the genre’s unsuccessful releases this year. All of these movies failed to make an impression, and what previously looked to be a tried-and-true formula—national pride, high-stakes missions, and soaring background scores—now seems burdened by overuse of formula, poor storytelling, and repetition. When you consider that the one movie that sought to rethink the patriotic formula with audacious, unorthodox strokes is quickly becoming a blockbuster, the fact becomes even more apparent. When Ranveer Singh’s Dhurandhar hit theaters, it

completely transformed the conversation around non-performer movies in the category. Instead of shouting patriotism, the Aditya Dhar-directed film breathes it firmly and quietly, reminding us that the genre is still alive but urgently needs to be reinvented. Border tensions, valiant last stands, boisterous patriotism, and heartfelt farewells have all appeared in the majority of recent war movies that have failed. The audience has been yearning for originality and emotional truths across genres, particularly since the epidemic. In order to make what we see on screen come to life, screenwriting is crucial. Writer Bhavesh Mandalia doesn’t hold back when evaluating the current condition of storytelling, offering a brutally honest perspective on why nationalistic dramas have been floundering. In an interview with IndiaToday, in, Bhavesh—who has been connected with a number of films, including Oh My God (2012) and Angrezi Medium (2020)—shared his thoughts on the diminishing tendencies.”It’s just poor writing. There is no difference between

the patriotic genre and romance or any other genre. Movies are failing because mediocrity has taken control, not because of the genre. Any other justification is merely a means of concealing someone’s inability. He contends that in order to solve the puzzle, the industry desperately needs talented authors and vision.”We have no right to complain if we can’t keep someone interested in a theater for two hours. This is entirely the creators’ problem, not the studio’s or the audience’s. There are still not enough genuinely talented writers, artists, or directors in our 140 crore-person country. The plain fact is that,” he continued. Strong dialogue and star power have always been the two main motivators of patriotic movies, aside from excellent scripting. Recent successes such as Pathaan (2023), Jawan (2023), Uri: The Surgical Strike (2019), and Sam Bahadur (2023) demonstrate that the filmmakers knew just how to attract large audiences to theaters. They were skilled at combining charisma, scale, and passion to keep viewers interested.



According to trade analyst Rohit Jiswal, the art of storytelling—particularly the suspense, emotion, and adrenaline that typically characterize the genre—is the key to revitalizing war and patriotic movies, not just size or star power. He emphasizes that audiences today seek freshness, accuracy, and moments that genuinely captivate them as he considers why only Dhurandhar was able to click this year while waving the Tricol-



or feeling. “Strong dialogue and a firm grasp of the story are essential for any military or patriotic film to succeed. For instance, in the famous telephone scene in Raazi (2019), where Alia Bhatt coils the wire, the whole audience held their breath until the very end. That’s the kind of suspense and thrill that moviegoers seek. A movie won’t connect if it can’t evoke that emotion, he says Indiatoday, in. “Dhurandhar succeeded because it

generated that same thrill and anticipation among viewers. I genuinely believe that Border 2 (2025) and Salman Khan’s upcoming Battle of Galwan (2026) also have the potential to work. Galwan, especially, because it relies on hand-to-hand combat sequences, no weapons, and Salman still looks incredible in close-combat sequences. Bollywood now needs to bring something fresh to war dramas, patriotic films, and the spy universe films,” he added. While Dhurandhar didn’t have the usual ingredients of the genre – no massive battlefield sequences, no chest-thumping dialogues, no formulaic heroism – it still touched the hearts of many and succeeded at the box office. Jaiswal echoed similar sentiments and credited the casting, writing, the director’s vision, the narration, and the way the entire story has been mounted for its successful run. However, he ended by giving a shout-out to Akshaye Khanna, who has practically become a brand unto himself when it comes to adding another layer of impact to a film’s popularity.

Winter-Ready Broccoli Spinach Soup, A Nutritious and Healthy Way to Beat the Chill



Broccoli Spinach Soup brings together two vegetables that have long histories in global cooking, broccoli from the Mediterranean region and spinach from ancient Persia. Both travelled widely through trade and farming, eventually becoming part of everyday meals across Europe and Asia. Their adaptability in soups made them ideal ingredients for winter recipes that focus on nourishment and ease. Broccoli is known for being one of the high-protein vegetables, offering more protein than many leafy greens. Studies highlight

the nutrients in broccoli, including Vitamin C, folate, antioxidants, and fibre, all of which support immunity and digestion during colder months. Research shows that spinach contributes iron and plant-based compounds that help maintain energy levels. Together, these ingredients create a dish that aligns well with the benefits of broccoli soup, giving the bowl a strong nutritional profile without the need for heavy ingredients. The calories in broccoli soup also remain moderate, making it suitable for people who prefer lighter

winter options. Different regions prepare similar soups with local twists. Mediterranean kitchens often use olive oil and garlic, while Asian versions may include ginger or coconut milk. Indian households adapt broccoli soup recipes to include mild spices that suit family meals and pair comfortably with everyday staples. This flexibility keeps the recipe relevant, whether served as a starter or a complete light meal. Broccoli Spinach Soup works as a perfect winter dish that blends tradition, nutrition, and accessibility, making it an easy addition to seasonal cooking for anyone looking to stay nourished through simple ingredients. A Delicious and Warm Bowl Of Broccoli Spinach Soup For Winters Broccoli Spinach Soup combines two vegetables with long histories: broccoli from the Mediterranean region and spinach from ancient

Persia. Both ingredients are valued for nutrients that support winter wellness. Broccoli provides notable plant-based protein, while spinach adds iron and fibre, creating a balanced bowl that fits easily into everyday meals. Instructions Heat oil in a pot and sauté onions until soft. Add garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Add broccoli florets and sauté lightly for 2 minutes. Pour in broth or water and bring to a simmer. Add spinach leaves and cook until they wilt. Blend the mixture to your preferred texture. Pour back into the pot and add milk, pepper, and salt. Simmer for 2–3 minutes on low heat. Add lemon juice before serving. Serve warm and garnish with herbs if desired.

The world meets Marwar

The Sayaji Udaipur resort’s gastronomic hub is Taraksh, which means “starry-eyed” in Sanskrit and is situated against the backdrop of the Aravalli range. The eatery honors the rich handicraft heritage of Rajasthan. With more than 20 years of experience, our Executive Chef Rajendra Singh creates dishes that satisfy both conventional and daring palates by combining regional Rajasthani ingredients with flavors from around the world. Food: The appetizers are truly amazing. A must-try is the Keema Kaleji Potli Samosa, which combines earthy mutton liver and spiced mutton mince in a crisp, golden shell. Thai Kai Pani Poori masterfully blends Thai flavors with the allure of Indian street food for individuals who want strong flavors.



The Ker Sangri Cappuccino, a deft presentation that turns this Rajasthani specialty into a sophisticated soup, is arguably the most intriguing option. The Rajasthani Murg Mathania ka Shorba strikes a balance between Mathania chili and tender chicken. Safed Maas (white mutton) in a smooth yogurt gravy is perfect decadence, while Maas ka Sula, slow-cooked with dry kaachri, radiates an enticing smokiness. Gulab Jamun ki subzi is particularly noteworthy for its contrast of sweetness and savouriness. Desserts include the tri-colored dessert dome, which combines carrot, lauki, and moong halwas with crunchy nuts, and the cold rabdi cannelloni, which offers a creamy contrast of textures.

How to Prepare Chana Paneer Samosas with High Protein

Samosas, a beloved snack characterized by their crisp, golden crust and flavorful filling, often evoke feelings of guilt due to their calorie-dense and deep-fried nature. However, the high-protein chana paneer samosa offers a healthier alternative, allowing snack lovers to indulge without sacrificing health. This version retains the delightful taste and quality of the traditional samosa while being packed with protein, making it an ideal option for guilt-free snacking that fits seamlessly into a balanced diet. Additionally, it is easy to prepare at home, ensuring that one can enjoy fresh samosas whenever cravings arise. The recipe for this nutritious variant was shared by the Instagram account @chiefoodieofficer. Chana paneer samosa is an inventive variation of the traditional samosa, combining protein-dense chickpeas with soft, creamy paneer to form a filling that is both robust and flavorful. The dish is enhanced by a blend of spices such as ajwain, cumin, and chili, which infuse it with a rich burst of taste. The outer layer of the samosa is crispy, contributing to its appeal as an irresistible snack.



It serves as an excellent option for tea time or as an appetizer at parties, making it a versatile and enjoyable treat. Chana paneer samosas can be a part of a weight loss diet when prepared with mindfulness and attention to nutritional balance. To make them healthier, use whole wheat rotis for the wrappers and ensure the filling is balanced by avoiding excessive fat. Practicing portion control is essential; enjoying one or two samosas occasionally can be incorporated into a healthy eating plan without compromising dietary goals. Chana paneer samosas are a delightful snack that can be complemented with an array of accompaniments. Fresh mint chutney and tangy tamarind chutney are excellent choices for dipping, enhancing the

flavors of the samosas. Alternatively, a yoghurt dip provides a refreshing and lighter pairing. To create a complete snack platter, consider adding a side of salad or roasted nuts to offer additional textures and flavors. A hot cup of tea or coffee serves as an ideal beverage, rounding out the snacking experience with warmth and comfort. To make chana paneer samosas, mix boiled chana, mashed paneer, garlic, capsicum, onions, coriander, and spices in a bowl. After mashing, add lemon juice. Cut rotis into halves, form cones, and fill them with the mixture, sealing edges with water. Preheat the air fryer and cook the samosas at 180°C for 10-12 minutes, flipping after 5 minutes until golden brown. Enjoy your delicious samosas!

Bread Rasmalai Recipe, A Quick Homemade Winter Dessert You Can Prepare in Minutes

Bread rasmalai is a creative twist to the classic Bengali rasmalai. It originated as a quicker way to enjoy this East Indian sweet treat that’s steeped in history. The original rasmalai recipes involve chenna dumplings soaking in thickened milk, a technique that has been around for ages in the kitchens of Bengal and Odisha. Bread rasmalai at home is a faster way to make winter desserts, and surprisingly, bread was a good substitute for chenna. The slices would absorb all the flavours just the same. This adaptation soon gained popularity because it allowed households to prepare rasmalai at home in minutes, especially during festivals and family gatherings. Using everyday bread as the base works very well; the soft slices soak up all that rich milk beautifully. Research shows that bread already provides carbohydrates, so the dessert becomes lighter than the traditional version, which uses paneer-based discs. The milk reduction still offers calcium and warmth, two elements that make desserts in winter feel more nourishing and satisfying. The addition of saffron, cardamom, or even some nuts will just add to the aroma and give some

extra nutrients without making it feel too heavy. There are also several ways to make this dessert lighter without losing flavour. Using low-fat milk instead of full-cream milk reduces overall calories, though it needs a longer simmer to reach the desired thickness. Zero-calorie sweeteners like stevia or monk fruit sweetener can replace refined sugar for those monitoring sugar intake. Jaggery can also be a good alternative as it contains potassium, iron, magnesium, and several B vitamins. According to a study, choosing whole wheat bread instead of white bread adds more fibre and keeps the dessert more filling. Keeping portions small and garnishing with nuts provides healthy fats without excessive calories. Since the recipe involves soaking the bread rather than deep frying, the dessert naturally avoids unnecessary oil, making it easier to include in a balanced diet. Different places have their own take on bread rasmalai. Some people like to cut their bread into round shapes to make it look like the real deal, while others lightly toast the slices so they don’t get soggy. And then there’s the variation where breadcrumbs get added to the milk to make



it thick. This is one of the main reasons bread rasmalai has gained popularity. Bread rasmalai’s appeal lies in how effortlessly it fits into modern kitchens while still reflecting the charm of traditional Indian sweets. If you want to use sugar, white bread, and full-cream milk in this recipe instead, this bread rasmalai will lean more towards the high-calorie side. However, moderate portions are generally fine for most people unless there is any existing health concern. Its origins, simplicity, and warmth make it an inviting option for anyone exploring winter desserts with minimal effort. How To Make Bread Rasmalai At Home For A Quick Dessert Bread rasmalai is a quick ver-

sion of the traditional Bengali sweet, inspired by the original rasmalai that dates back to Eastern India’s dairy-rich regions. This shortcut dessert uses bread slices to absorb thickened milk, allowing households to prepare rasmalai at home in minutes while still enjoying a lighter winter dessert. **Ingredients (Serves 4)** 8 slices of whole wheat bread 1 litre low-fat milk (2% fat) 2-3 tbsp stevia, monk fruit sweetener, or jaggery ½ tsp cardamom powder 8-10 saffron strands 1 tbsp finely ground oats or 1 tbsp cornstarch 1 tsp chopped almonds 1 tbsp chopped pistachios **Instructions**

Heat low-fat milk and bring it to a gentle boil. Simmer on low flame until it thickens slightly (low-fat milk takes longer). Add sweetener or jaggery, cardamom, and saffron; mix well. If you prefer a thicker consistency, add ground oats or cornstarch slurry and stir. Trim the bread edges and cut each slice into round shapes. Allow the milk mixture to cool until warm, not hot. Arrange the bread rounds in a shallow dish and pour the warm milk mixture over them. Let them soak for 10–12 minutes until they absorb the milk. Garnish lightly with almonds and pistachios. Refrigerate for 1 hour before serving.

What Actually Happens to Your Body When You Stop the Keto Diet?

Regardless of the reasons you stop the ketogenic diet, there will be consequences to reintroducing carbs. Maybe you’ve decided you’re anti-diet, or perhaps you just want to enjoy meals without counting every macro. The key to transitioning off the low-carb, high-fat keto diet is to do it slowly. Reintroduce carbs to one meal a day gradually. By transitioning in a slow and steady way, you might avoid uncomfortable side effects and reap benefits like these: **Better cholesterol levels** — The absence of fiber-rich fruits and the abundance of meats high in saturated fat may have spiked your blood cholesterol. Slowly decrease fat and increase antioxidant-rich carbs by way of dairy, whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Try adding about 10 to 15 grams of carbs per day to the same meal for the first seven days. For example, if you have been consuming only 20 grams of total carbs each day, try adding 10 grams more of carbs to dinner each night for a week. Seven days later you’ll be up to 90 grams a day, and you may even sleep better, because eating carbs at night usually leads to more restful sleep. Stay at this carb level for a few days and see how you feel before introducing more. **More muscle** — Proteins are the building blocks of muscle. Researchers have found that it



generally takes 20 to 30 grams of protein consumed in one meal to turn on muscle synthesis. Usually, around 65 to 110 grams of protein are allowed on an 1,800-calorie keto diet. But you may not have gotten that, as most keto dieters focus mainly on fat. Going off keto may lead to gains in muscle mass. And that’s especially good news if you’re over 30 years; as we age, muscle synthesis begins to decrease. Less overall muscle mass means we burn fewer calories at rest and can eventually lose strength and mobility. To help the keto transition, gradually replace the higher-fat proteins you’ve been consuming with lean proteins. **Better energy** — Claims of keto “turbo-charged energy” may have proven true for your short workouts, but for longer, more intense workouts,

muscles need carbs. Without carbohydrates to build up glycogen stores, or muscle fuel, muscles will run out of gas. And when you don’t have the energy to work out, muscle loss can occur. This is especially true since carbs are necessary to renew and repair muscles. Ditching keto means you can enjoy having energy during workouts, especially if you fuel up with some of the best workout recovery snacks, like chocolate milk, fruit smoothies with protein powder and banana-egg pancakes. **More anti-inflammatory foods** — One of the biggest benefits of going keto is the focus on eating lots of low-carb vegetables to help fill your plate. So hopefully you’ve gotten into a daily habit of eating cucumbers, red peppers, cabbage, cauliflower and other

veggies. When you stop keto, you can eat a whole rainbow of veggies like antioxidant-rich sweet potatoes, white potatoes, carrots and squash. Eating more vegetables and fruits can reduce inflammatory markers in the body, and reducing inflammation is key for reducing disease risk. So it’s a big deal to again be able to eat mangoes, oranges, grapes, bananas, cherries and other fruits that weren’t allowed on keto. **Better gut health** — More higher-carb, anti-inflammatory foods, like beans, lentils, whole grains and fruits, also means more fiber. The Dietary Guidelines recommend consuming whole grains daily, and beans and legumes should be eaten twice a week. To avoid constipation, introduce these foods slowly as part of the gradual increase in carbs. **Weight stability** — Due to the slashing of calories and the lack of hunger that comes from a high-fat diet, a keto diet can end up being very low in calories. A very low-calorie diet equals weight loss — sometimes in a short amount of time. But when weight comes off quickly, it can go back on quickly. Realize that some water weight will naturally come back on. And to help maintain healthy weight loss, seek the advice of a local registered dietitian.

Easy Chicken Dinners You’ll Make on Repeat

Chicken is often a go-to protein, mostly because it’s easy to cook and is considered a lean protein. Though chicken has a reputation for being bland, that couldn’t be further from the proof. Whether you prefer juicy chicken thighs or tender chicken breasts, there are so many easy ways to dress the meat up and turn it into a winning meal. **Instant Pot Lemon Frozen Chicken with Orzo** Once you unlock the secret of cooking frozen chicken in an Instant Pot®, the possibilities for variations become endless. This creamy lemon chicken with orzo is worthy of a dinner with friends, though it is so easy, you’ll make it a regular on your weeknight rotation. Make sure you follow the directions for a 10-minute natural release; a quick release left us with dry and stringy meat. **Sheet Pan Chicken Shawarma** This shortcut version of chicken shawarma skips the long marinating and roasting time and relies instead on quick cooking sliced thighs and a shower of the spices that go into the classic version—think cumin, cardamom and turmeric. Served with a warm pita, greens, tomato and a tangy yogurt sauce, it makes a substantial meal. We left out fries to keep the recipe on one sheet pan, but they are always a welcome addition! **Chicken Katsu** With a light, crispy exterior and moist interior, Japanese katsu is comfort food at its best. Traditionally made with pork, it’s great with chicken,



too. The panko-coated fried cutlets are typically accompanied by finely sliced cabbage and tangy, sweet and salty katsu sauce. However, they are also served over rice (katsu don), with curry (katsu curry), and in a sandwich (katsu sando). For the crunchiest katsu, don’t be tempted to substitute regular breadcrumbs for the classic panko. And make sure to maintain the oil temperature as the cutlets cook.

Coronation Chicken A salad fit for a queen! This recipe was inspired by the original, which was made for Queen Elizabeth’s coronation luncheon in 1953. Studded with dried apricots and toasted almonds, the salad is finished with a curry cream sauce. It’s sweet, crunchy, savory and has a hint of spice — and perfect to serve over lettuce or between bread for a satisfying sandwich.

Rare gene mutation behind repeated neurological disorders in children

A rare USP18 gene mutation has been linked by Indian researchers to children’s recurring neurological degeneration. The uncommon USP18 gene mutation provides important information on a neurological condition that was previously only found in 11 individuals worldwide and has now been published for the first time in India. The research team from the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, working with Ramjas College, the University of Delhi, and Redcliffe Labs, claims that pseudo-TORCH syndrome type 2 is an extremely complex, uncommon inherited disorder that impacts a child’s brain development and function. Without any real illness, children with this disease frequently have severe neurological symptoms that mimic congenital infections. In order to prevent excessive inflammation, the USP18 gene typically aids in controlling the body’s immunological response. The body’s defensive mechanism becomes overactive and starts to damage the brain when this gene is malfunctioning. According to the study, which was published in Clinical Dysmorphology, it presents a novel genetic variant to medical literature and provides important information to the few known instances worldwide. The researchers findings came from the case of an 11-year-old girl who began experiencing symptoms from infancy, including repeated episodes of febrile encephalopathy - fever-linked unconsciousness, seizures, delayed development, and a small head size. Over the years, her scans also showed increasing calcium deposits in different parts of the brain. With only 11 cases reported worldwide, this study adds a meaningful contribution to global medical



knowledge. To understand the underlying cause of these recurring neurological problems, advanced genetic testing was recommended. Through a focused DNA test called exome sequencing with mitochondrial genome sequencing, the team was able to identify a previously unknown change in the USP18 gene, offering clarity after years of uncertainty. According to Aditya Kandoi, Founder and CEO, Redcliffe Labs, “We believe the future of diagnostics lies in uncovering answers that were once thought impossible.” “This breakthrough is more than a scientific milestone; it demonstrates how advanced genomics, when paired with deep clinical insight, can fundamentally change a child’s trajectory,” he said. “Discovering a novel USP18 variant is not just an academic achievement; it reflects our commitment to pushing the boundaries of precision medicine in India,” he added. “Complex neurological conditions often leave families navigating uncertainty for years, and breakthroughs like this help bring clarity where it matters most. I am proud of our team and our collaborators for setting a new benchmark in rare disease diagnostics. This is the kind of work that strengthens India’s leadership in genomic

innovation and moves us closer to a future where no medical mystery remains unsolved.” Dr Himani Pandey, Lab Head, Genomics, Redcliffe Labs, said, “We remain committed to expanding our specialized diagnostic capabilities to address some of the most challenging medical conditions seen in clinical practice.” “This case is also the first documented case of USP18-related disease presenting with recurrent febrile encephalopathy. The successful diagnosis reflects the depth of expertise our team brings through advanced tests such as exome sequencing. These capabilities enable us to solve complex and often long-standing medical mysteries,” he added. This study adds valuable information to the small number of known cases worldwide and introduces a new genetic variant to medical literature. By confirming the diagnosis and understanding the child’s long-term illness pattern, the research helps guide future care for similar patients and supports families with clearer answers. The findings highlight the importance of early genetic testing in children with unexplained neurological symptoms and open the door for more targeted approaches to care in the future.

Brazil’s lagoon-filled desert you can hike barefoot

I was at least 20 steps behind my group – and another 30 behind our guide – when he suddenly stopped, checked his watch and tilted his face toward the sky, as if taking cues from the Sun. “We must be lost,” I thought. Smooth, pale slopes rose and fell in every direction, with glistening teal pools woven between them. It was a landscape with no obvious beginning or end. Then, as if reassured, our guide carried on, following a trail only he could see. My three friends and I were a few hours into a three-day trek across Lençóis Maranhenses National Park, a humbling expanse of sand in north-eastern Brazil, and I had already lost all sense of direction. I walked in silence, listening to the wind, the rippling water, the sand crunching beneath my feet. With each step, I sank a few centimetres, forcing my foot to work twice as hard. I kept falling behind, switching from flip-flops to water shoes and finally bare feet as the sand shifted from soft powder to a rock-hard surface baking in the heat. A friend back home had done a similar trek; “You’ll feel bones you never knew existed in your feet,” they’d warned. I was starting to believe them.

A living, shifting landscape

Bordered by lush vegetation on one side and the Atlantic Ocean on the other, Lençóis Maranhenses is one of Brazil’s most unusual ecosystems. Strong coastal winds push sand inland, creating a desert-like landscape that spans 1,500 sq km (579 sq miles), with dunes rising up to 30m (98ft). But Lençóis is no desert. During the wet season (January to June), so much rain falls that water settles in natural basins between the dunes. A compact layer of impermeable sediment keeps the rainwater from draining, forming the hundreds of freshwater lagoons that travellers like me come to swim, wade and float in. Our first day on the dunes began just after sunrise. Our guide, Carlos Otávio Régio – known to everyone as Tav – set a steady pace from the start. We quickly reached our first descent, and I awkwardly slid down the sand using my feet as makeshift skis, trying my best not to be the first one to fall. From below, the dunes took on a different scale – towering ridges and shadowed curves that looked impossible to climb. We passed lagoons so big they stretched on like rivers – and crossed several of them, sometimes holding our packs over our heads in waist-deep water. I barrelled forward, unable to control my momentum, and crashed in with a loud splash. It’s these ephemeral pools that make Lençóis like nowhere else on Earth. It’s also what helped earn the park Unesco World Heritage status in 2024. With that recognition came a new global spotlight, said Cristiane Figueiredo, head of the national park. The most recent numbers prove her point: in 2024, Lençóis received a record 552,000 visitors. By September this year, that number had already surpassed 580,000.

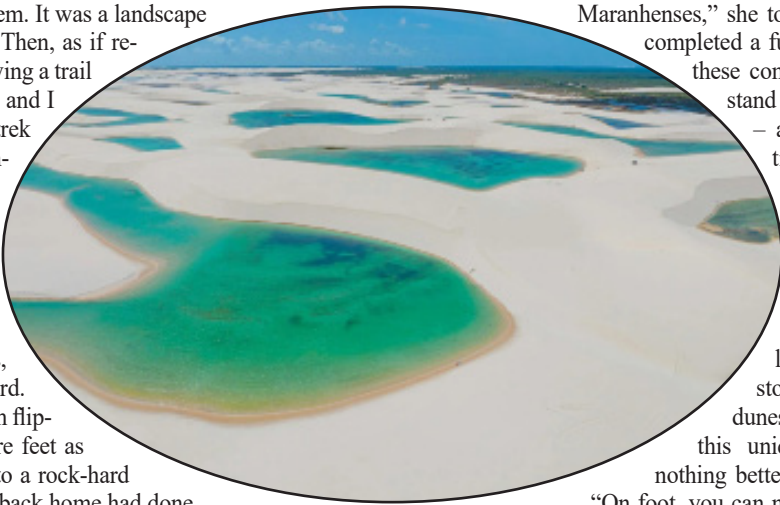
A fragile boom

The park is now one of Brazil’s most sought-after destinations among international travellers, ranking fourth in 2024 behind only Sugarloaf Mountain, Christ the Redeemer and Iguazu Falls. The boom has brought

new pressures, including infrastructure strain, illegal vehicle access and a surge in luxury real-estate speculation around the park’s edges. Protecting Lençóis – and the people who live inside it – falls to Figueiredo. “We have more than 1,000 families living inside Lençóis Maranhenses,” she told me. Her team recently completed a full census and mapping of these communities to better understand what each village needs – and what they can realistically accommodate as visitor numbers rise. She has been visiting villages directly, discussing how they can participate on their own terms and helping establish standards for locally run lodging and rest stops scattered across the dunes. “To truly get to know this unique environment, there’s nothing better than walking,” she said. “On foot, you can notice the small things: the shifting sand, the footprints of birds and animals, the tracks they leave behind.”

Across the dunes, barefoot

For me, the decision to walk across Lençóis barefoot wasn’t just about the physical challenge of facing this wild terrain. It was about coming into contact with this quieter, lesser-known side of the park – the untouched lagoons included. Our trek began in Lagoa Bonita, a high-dune region near Barreirinhas on the park’s western side. From there, we would cross 36km (22 miles) of sand, including two overnight stays in local villages, to finish in Atins, a well-known coastal town that serves as a base for day trippers. On that initial day, our first sight of the small community of Mucambo finally appeared as a pocket of green against the sand. Trees. We had arrived. Our shelter was simple: colourful hammocks strung beneath a thatched roof, a cold-water shower and just enough electricity to charge our phones. But my eyes went straight to the communal table set with steaming platters of rice, beans and grilled fish. After walking 15km (9 miles) over sand, the sight of lunch felt like salvation. “She doesn’t bite!” the girl’s mother promised. She handed my friend a small bottle of milk so he could feed it, and we all laughed as the tiny animal wailed for more from her arms. It was an intimate experience, one that’s hard to imagine happening if this village were crowded with other hikers. Tav told me that compared to a year ago, visitor numbers felt exponentially higher this past season from June to September: During his busiest weeks, he said, he’d end one trek and start a new one on the same day. When Tav first began guiding treks across the park, only one route existed. Now, new paths – like the route we were taking – help spread visitors and infrastructure funding more evenly among the families who live here. Figueiredo says this redistribution is exactly what they’re working to strengthen. New registration points for trekkers will help track how many people walk each route and how many each village can handle.



The 20 best places to travel in 2026



We love Dubrovnik – but so does everyone else. Yet, many visitors to Croatia may not know that nearby Montenegro is also home to beautiful seaside settlements, plus new hiking trails that connect mountain communities. Across the water from always-trendy Buenos Aires, Montevideo offers similar world-class tango, steaks and architecture, and is one of South America’s greenest cities. And while Rome may be eternal, Algeria’s got the ancient ruins without the crowds. In this year’s guide to the best places to travel, we’re highlighting destinations that offer incredible experiences while using tourism to support local communities, protect the environment and preserve their unique cultural heritage. To compile our list, we tapped BBC staff, our trusted journalists and some of the world’s leading sustainable travel authorities to identify places that are enthusiastically welcoming visitors – and where your trip can have a positive impact.

Abu Dhabi

A sense of anticipation is hanging in the desert air. After years of development, the city’s Saadiyat Cultural District – a project first signalled by the opening of Louvre Abu Dhabi in 2017 – is finally entering its defining phase. The world’s largest digital art museum, TeamLab Phenomena, recently opened, followed by the landmark Zayed National Museum, where visitors can see what the collated dreams of the nation looked like before it struck rich with oil. Pearl diving wasn’t invented in the Emirates, but it has a huge story to tell, as does the influence of Islam, the spread of Arabic and the vision of the country’s founding father: the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Equally new amid the museum scrum is Natural History Museum Abu Dhabi, which rises above the Arabian Gulf as a succession of giant sugar cubes and is inspired by the region’s geology. And then there’s the much-talked-about, much-delayed, largest-ever Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. Expect the cavernous modern art gallery in late 2026 or even beyond that. (Just don’t mention the projected US\$1bn/£751m cost.) Beyond culture, Abu Dhabi is doubling down on theme park tourism. Yas Island’s vast entertainment zone is expanding, with Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi adding

a Harry Potter extension and Yas Waterworld building an additional mega-zone of slides and rides. Plans are also progressing for the Middle East’s first Disneyland, set to break ground on Yas in the coming years. It’s all an ambitious experiment that’s a long way from the yards and sand forts that once defined the city. – Mike MacEacheran

Algeria

Home to grand Roman ruins, surreal desertscapes and historic cities with a mesmerising mash-up of architectural styles, Algeria’s rich tourism draws have long been kept at arm’s length by the nation’s famously complicated visa system. But the “sleeping beauty” of African tourism is finally waking up. Algeria has been putting in the legwork to reach its goal of boosting international visitor numbers to 12 million per year by 2030. Recent developments include the introduction of a visa-on-arrival pol-



icy for travellers on organised tours, the launch of new airline Air Algérie subsidiary Domestic Airlines in August 2025, and a government commitment to step up the protection and preservation of its cultural heritage, including training and support for the nation’s 460,000 handicrafts artisans. New tours launched by a number of major operators are also making it easier to visit in 2026. Most visitors begin in the seaside capital of Algiers, a former Phoenician outpost layered with the influences of its successive rulers. Preserving the relics of three millennia of occupation, Unesco World Heritage-listed Constantine is another urban highlight. Nearby are the sprawling, well-preserved Roman ruins at Timgad as well as those of Djémila, both with zero crowds to contend with. And the rolling dunes of the Algerian Sahara stretch for hundreds of miles beyond, with the oasis city of Djanet serving as a hub for desert exploration. – Sarah Reid

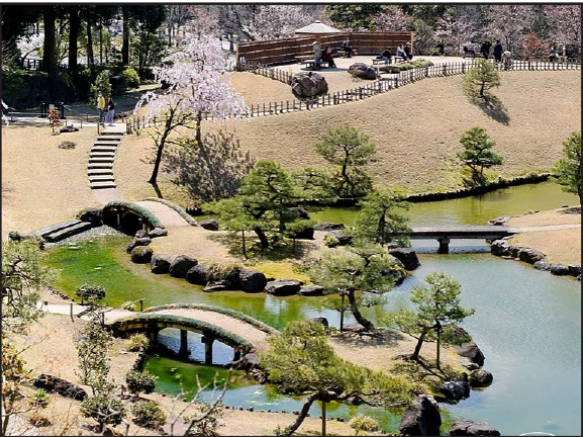
Colchagua Valley, Chile

Two hours south of Santiago, Chile’s Colchagua Valley stretches from the snow-dusted Andes along the Argentine border to the Pacific, following the corridor carved by the Tinguiririca River. While many travellers merely touch down in Santiago en route

to Patagonia or the Atacama, heading south from the capital on a multi-day road trip reveals historic haciendas, scenic hikes and the heartland of Chile’s skyrocketing international wine scene. Long before Vik – the nearby luxury vineyard-hotel in Cachapoal – was named the best winery in the world for 2025, established Colchagua estates like Viu Manent, Los Vascos, Casa Silva and MontGras were drawing visitors for leisurely tastings. The Colchagua’s culinary culture takes centre stage at places like Fuegos de Apalta, Francis Mallmann’s airy, sunny temple to fire-roasted dishes in the midst of the Montes Winery’s vineyards. Travellers can sleep among the vines, too. Clos Apalta, the esteemed Lapostolle winemaking family’s architecturally striking property, features 10 modern villas that protrude from a mountainside and seem to float over heritage Carménère, Cabernet and Syrah vine-covered slopes. Wine aside, there’s plenty to see and do in Chile’s cowboy heartland, from rodeos to stargazing (including at the Cerro Chaman Observatory). Villages such as Santa Cruz and Lolol are home to lively markets and Spanish colonial-era adobe manor houses.

Cook Islands

Cook Islanders like to be visited – they’re the extroverts of the South Pacific, after all. Yet, compared to other destinations in Oceania like Fiji, tourist numbers are low so you feel like you’re a welcome visitor in their world, not a tourist in a resort. Rarotonga, the largest and most populous island, is just 67 sq km, but everything great about the South Pacific is packed into it: triangular peaks reminiscent of Tahiti, a wild hinterland ringed by a blue-water lagoon and a proud Polynesian culture. Beyond Rarotonga – aside from honeymoon favourite Aitutaki – are 13 islands you can experience almost entirely for yourselves. A new wave of barefoot luxury stays



is transforming the islands and 2026 will see a major step up in cultural and environmental preservation. Custodians of Marae Moana – one of the world’s largest marine parks – are strengthening protections for its most significant sites. In Aitutaki, three motu (islets) in its pristine triangular lagoon now

have special status. The government has also delayed deep-sea mining research until at least 2032. On land, Rarotonga’s sacred Maungaroa Valley – currently on Unesco’s Tentative List – teams with rivers and tropical rainforests that have never been developed. And it’s never been easier to reach the Pacific’s most perfect little paradise. Hawaiian Airlines upgraded its Honolulu-Rarotonga route in June 2025 with more convenient daytime departures and new US connections via Alaska Airlines. Jetstar will launch the first direct Brisbane-Rarotonga flights in May 2026. – Craig Tansley

Costa Rica

Travellers who make it to this pint-sized Central American nation will find a rare convergence of wilderness and wellness. Rainforest spills onto empty beaches, macaws wheel over turquoise coves and the Pacific pounds a coastline that holds 2.5% of the world’s known terrestrial species within a single peninsula. You’ll wake to the sound of howler monkeys, paddle through mangrove estuaries alive with bioluminescence or ride world-class breaks and practice guided breath work, meditation or yoga before hiking into the depths of Corcovado National Park. Direct flights from capital San José to nearby Puerto Jiménez make this remote corner easier to reach, just as conservation milestones are gathering pace. In 2026, local NGOs and national partners plan to expand protected areas on both land and sea – strengthening jaguar corridors in the rainforest and boosting protections for migratory sharks offshore. Community-run surf schools, holistic retreats and eco-lodges are leaning into this moment, offering a blend of adventure, wellness and regenerative travel. Sustainability-forward Lamangata Surf Resort powers itself with solar energy and recycles wastewater, while Blue Osa Yoga Retreat runs a Save the Sea Turtles programme in partnership with nonprofit Osa Conservation.

Hebrides, Scotland

Scattered along Scotland’s wild Atlantic coast, the Hebridean islands have long lured travellers with their heart-quickenings sacred sites, castaway beaches and tight-knit communities. And this year, many have much more to brag about. At the northern tip of the Outer Hebrides, Lewis is unveiling a long-awaited visitor centre for the Calanais Standing Stones, the mystical cruciform-shaped stone circle that predates Stonehenge. For the first time, Historic Environment Scotland will also introduce a visitor fee, helping safeguard 5,000 years of Neolithic history. Far to the south, landing at Barra Airport’s unusual tidal beach runway still feels like stepping back in time. The island of chalky bays and medieval Kisimul Castle is gaining its first whisky distillery, putting the tiny village of Borge on the global spirits map. Whisky is already in the DNA of Islay in the Southern Hebrides, and demand for heavily peated single-malt Scotch continues to reshape the island. In whisky terms, it’s the last square on the Monopoly board – and 2026 will see the arrival of two new distilleries, taking the island’s total to 14.

India's confidence is greatly boosted by the Squash World Cup victory

Chennai: The squad and the spectators at the Express Avenue Mall here erupted in celebration as teenage sensation Anahat Singh scored the winning point against Hong Kong in the World Cup final on Sunday. The timing could not have been more ideal, even though the victory itself was momentous. With both the Asian Games (in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan) and the Commonwealth Games (in Glasgow, Scotland) scheduled for next year, it provides a huge boost of confidence in the run-up to a pivotal 2026. Given that squash is a component of both multi-game competitions, India will bet on themselves to do well and advance this time. India has previously won bronze in both singles and doubles competitions. Cyrus Poncha, a former national coach and current secretary general of the Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI), believed that the WC victory was a positive step toward their larger objectives.

“Wins like in WC are simply small indicators of where we are and how we aspire to advance going into the Asian Games, the Commonwealth Games (next year), and the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. Poncha stated, “I think all four of these players are heading in the right direction if we have to look at just one year.”A few PSA tours are planned in the United States of America, and



the next season is scheduled to start in January of next year. Joshna Chinappa, a seasoned player and former number 10, will need to win this World Cup in order to compete for India at the Asian Games. Joshna hasn't participated in many international tournaments. She participated in two PSA competitions (in India) and advanced to the finals, where she was defeated 3-2 by Anahat. It indicates that Joshna is still up there. She needs to be astute in her handling of the situation. The Asian Games are her goal. In this sense, she will be mentally overwhelmed by overcoming Hong Kong in the final, he said. With Asian rivals like Japan, Malaysia and finalists Hong Kong taking part in this World Cup, Senthilkumar felt that this would help them know their opponents better.

Bengaluru's hosting of the IPL 2026 opening is uncertain due to the stampede

League from March 26 to May 31

Mumbai: The 19th Indian Premier League will take place from March 26 to May 31, but it's still unclear if Royal Challengers Bengaluru, the reigning champions, will be able to host a game at their home stadium after a fatal stampede stopped high-stakes cricket at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. Since the local team, RCB, won the IPL 2025 title, the tournament opening should take place at Chinnaswamy Stadium in accordance with established criteria. But until the BCCI reveals the complete schedule, the matter is unlikely to be resolved. In June of this year, the RCB's trophy celebrations brought thousands of people to the streets, overloading the state machinery at short notice, resulting in chaos and a stampede that killed eleven people. Even if the Karnataka government has given the stadium conditional authorization, it still needs to adhere to the safety and security requirements in light of the fatalities. The franchise came under



heavy fire for pushing people to attend the street festivities without first getting the necessary approvals from the relevant authorities. Venkatesh Prasad, the newly elected president of the Karnataka State Cricket Association, told reporters in Mysuru, “The IPL opening match traditionally takes place at the home ground of the team that won the trophy in the previous season.” However, the rush that occurred on June 4 during RCB's IPL championship celebrations created some uncertainty. “So, I've held discussions with the BCCI about hosting the opening match in Bengaluru, and they are also discussing the issue,” he added. After the stampede, Bengaluru also lost the Women's World Cup matches scheduled earlier this year owing to security and administrative concerns. The mini-auction for IPL 2026 will be held in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday, with three-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders entering the process with the biggest purse.

Harmanpreet Kaur anticipates an increase in the value of women's contracts following the World Cup victory

New Delhi: India captain Harmanpreet Kaur feels the BCCI men's and women's central contracts will now be closer in value after her team's historic Women's ODI World Cup 2025 victory, but she never really cared about the huge discrepancy because it was “driven by market forces.” In 2022, the BCCI brought women's match fees up to par with men's, however the figures are not comparable when it comes to central contracts. However, the captain concurs with Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet's teammate, who has long maintained that market forces determine the salary structure.

The top-tier male cricket players get Rs 7 crore a year, while the female players receive Rs 50 lakh. “The value of the central contracts will now shift. I feel that way. After 2017 (when India advanced to the final), several things changed. Prior to that, our central contract was about Rs 15 lakh,” the India skipper stated in an exclusive interview at the PTI headquarters, where she talked about her experience and the development of Indian women's cricket. Harmanpreet recognized that men's cricket generates the most of the cash, but she said that change is already underway following the women's ODI World Cup victory earlier this month. It increased to Rs 50 lakh following the 2017 World Cup. We were unable to demonstrate our worth after it, particularly in ICC events. Because ICC events are ultimately the primary objective. “I'm confident there will be a lot of improvements after winning this trophy. The first captain of an Indian women's team to win a World Cup continued, “And we will see financially also.” Prior to this, men's cricket was the only source of income. We were appreciative that the BCCI included us and helped women's cricket when it most needed it. According to Harmanpreet, she has always known that only exceptional results would drive the market to increase the compensation of female



cricket players. We have always understood that we must contribute in order to reach that stage. We can now discuss equal compensation and recognition,” she stated. We have to reach that conclusion because we are aware of how much the men's cricket has improved over time. For the nation, they have won consecutive trophies.

“There must be a reason if their market value is greater than ours,” she stated. According to Harmanpreet, the market worth of female cricket players has already increased following their decisive victory against South Africa in the final on November 2 in Navi Mumbai. “Post November 2, the market value of women's cricket has gone up because of the trophy. If we had not won that trophy, we would still be stuck there. “If we want to change, we have to come to that point that we win the same number of trophies for the country. Then people will au-

tomatically start giving us the same value as men get,” said the India skipper. Harmanpreet is expected to captain the side in the 2026 T20 World Cup in the UK but will the 36-year-old be around when the next ODI World Cup takes time in four years' time? “See, winning the World Cup with the best team and supporters and in your home ground surely is a dream but yes it's not over yet. There's another trophy that awaits and we want to celebrate and move on to the next phase and work towards the next goal,” she said. When asked about the way forward for the team and whether it needed a bigger pool of fast bowlers to consistently dominate the game, Harmanpreet struck a confident tone. “We do have a team of fast bowlers and as we've seen how Kranti Goud and Shree Charani (spinner) did for our side. These youngsters gave us some great moments to celebrate. As a captain I never felt

for once that I had to do hard work on them . “They believed in themselves and delivered whenever they had to. Apart from that India is developing a huge pool of players and bowlers who in time will showcase their talent,” the captain added. Harmanpreet lauded ICC Chairman Jay Shah's contribution in the growth of Indian women's cricket during his tenure as BCCI secretary. Shah was credited with introducing pay parity in match fee and the introduction of the Women's Premier League. “... Jay Shah has been the biggest contributor. He has been the biggest strength for our team, he supported us even when we hadn't won any ICC trophy,” she said. “We really wanted to do it for him. He gave us everything we needed, be it pay parity or any support. He couldn't express much on the ground when we won; he just said, ‘I am very happy’, and that was all we needed,” she said.

Hardik Pandya: The all-around player whose vitality liberates India

Mumbai: Hardik Pandya is known for being incredibly self-assured and playing for the general public. The explosive all-rounder reached 99 wickets and 100 sixes in Twenty20 Internationals while helping India defeat South Africa by 101 runs in Cuttack. A clear reality is conveyed by these figures. India would be able to bat deep without sacrificing bowling if Hardik is healthy and mature.

Hardik's unrestrained batting smashes limitations, yet his presence alone provides the captain with a seamer who can bowl at any point during the innings. Hardik was used following the PowerPlay since India used two front-line pacers in the first Twenty20 International: Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh. He was successful as well, taking David Miller off his first delivery.

He has also been used in the first six overs and in the death overs consistently. Hardik offers this kind of luxury. Hardik has bowled in the opening six overs of 17 Twenty20 Internationals since the 2024 T20 World Cup. Your top all-rounder produced respectable results with an economy of 7.42 while taking five wickets in 168 balls.

Since July 2024, he has had eight matches, 84 balls, and two wickets at 8.14 runs per



over. Since the 2024 T20 spectacular, only Arshdeep (nine scalps) has taken more wickets in the last overs than Hardik (eight).

After giving out 78 balls in ten games, Hardik's economy rate for the phase is 9.53 rpo.

Hardik is the main character when he wields the bat, and he is equally good at playing the support role with the ball in hand. “Life has thrown a lot of lemons at me, I've always thought I'll make a lemonade,” Hardik told.

Siraj's beginnings: Overcoming hardship with grace & compassion

New Delhi: In addition to delivering thunderbolts on the field, Mohammed Siraj, affectionately known as “Miyan,” motivates future cricket players with his goals. In Mehdiapatnam, a neighborhood in Hyderabad's southwest, where Siraj spent his formative years, life continues as usual despite his extraordinarily quick ascent to prominence as one of Team India's pace spearheads. While street merchants and meat vendors rush to open their stores for the day, the sound of the Namaz reverberates in the background. After scoring a wicket on an adjacent pitch, a young fast bowler replicates Siraj's Siu celebration, which was inspired by Cristiano Ronaldo. Siraj's initial coach, Mohammed Mahboob Ahmed, remembers his time with the young cricket player. “Our child, Bacha hai apna Siraj, used to bowl in a thrilling manner. We are all pleased of his accomplishments, and what a star he has grown into. I still treasure the recollections of that lovely day when I first met him. Mahboob says, “I am thrilled to be a little part of his path. The Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA)-affiliated Charminar Cricket Club, which is around 12 kilometers from Charminar's famous minarets, used to mostly host tennis ball games before switching to leather ball competitions. Siraj's talent with the tennis ball first attracted everyone's attention as well. Siraj was initially observed playing on the streets by my buddy Mohammed Kaleem, a vegetable vendor.

To meet Siraj, I headed to the Vijay Anand Garden. I welcomed him into my club after seeing him bowl. In 2014, Siraj's maiden game with the leather ball saw him take five wickets against Balaji Cricket Club. He effectively used his height to take 15 wickets in the next two games, according to Mahboob. Siraj's brother, Mohammed Ismail, became a software engineer, while his father, Mohammed Ghaus, drove autorickshaws. Making a good living was difficult for the Siraj family, particularly when young Siraj was still attempting to make a name for himself in the cutthroat Hyderabad cricket scene. Education was not Siraj's priority; his heart was set on the game. However, his early career was marred by disciplinary issues. Skipping practice sessions and inconsistent behaviour during coaching camps led to his temporary exclusion from a camp conducted by the HCA. “No one knows this, but I intervened and requested the presi-

dent and secretary to give Siraj a final chance. I met his family and convinced them to allow Siraj to play the game professionally,” Mahboob says. This incident prompted a transformation

in Siraj. He became more committed, attending coaching sessions regularly. His newfound dedication paid off as he consistently took wickets, impressing the selectors in every match. “Siraj has always played the game with utmost dedication and became very disciplined as he played in various leagues organised by the HCA.

Gradually, he started impressing the selectors and was picked for the Hyderabad U-23 side in 2015. The fact that the matches were played in seamer-friendly conditions also helped.” A chance encounter with former India bowling coach Bharat Arun opened doors to the Hyderabad senior team for Siraj. “Back then, I was the bowling coach of Royal Challengers Bangalore and we were in Hyderabad for an away game against Sunrisers, and during a nets session, he caught my attention,” Arun tells. Siraj made his Ranji Trophy debut against Services in Delhi in 2015. Though he had an ordinary debut, claiming a solitary wicket, he improved by leaps and bounds after Arun joined as the team's head coach the next season. “Siraj's strength was his consistent length and if you look at most of his wickets, they are either LBW or bowled or caught-behind - so, the length that he hits is very important and also those lengths allow him to move the ball consistently,” Arun says. In the 2016-17 Ranji Trophy season, Siraj picked 41 wickets, which eventually earned him a spot in India's T20I side. On November 4, 2017, Siraj made his debut for India in a T20I against New Zealand in Rajkot. Arun believes that with a quick-arm action, Siraj has evolved over a period of time. But life hasn't been easy for the 29-year-old. Between 2013 and 2014, Siraj faced financial hardships. A teary-eyed Mahboob recalls how he supported the young bowler. There were days when Siraj relied on friends for rides to reach the grounds in time for matches, but Mahboob tried his best to ease the young cricketer's financial burdens. Siraj's journeys to the Gymkhana ground, the Uppal stadium, and the NFC cricket ground in Secunderabad covered approximately 30 kilometres roundtrip. After every match, the duo would savour a good biryani before heading home. Mahboob still cherishes their unique bond and, of course, their shared love for biryani. They were regulars at the Taiba Bakery and Cafe in the Masab Tank area,



dent and secretary to give Siraj a final chance. I met his family and convinced them to allow Siraj to play the game professionally,” Mahboob says. This incident prompted a transformation

where Siraj lived during his formative years. The fast bowler also enjoyed visiting the Fiza Hotel and Cafe Bahar with his friends, where they would often eat biryani.