

In Brief

fake currency near India-Bangladesh border in Assam's Dhubri

Guwahati: In a joint operation, Dharmasala Police and the Border Security Force (BSF) arrested Abdul Matabeb, a youth from Rowarkuti village, for possessing counterfeit Indian currency worth Rs 79,000 along the India-Bangladesh border in Assam's Dhubri district. Following a tip-off, Matabeb was intercepted near the international border, and the counterfeit notes were recovered. Authorities suspect the notes are linked to a cross-border counterfeit currency racket. Matabeb is currently interrogated at Dhubri Sadar Police Station, with investigations ongoing to trace the origins of the fake currency and potential connections to a larger network.

PREPAK cadre arrested in Imphal

Imphal: Security forces arrested Ksh. Laiba Meitei, a 40-year-old member of the banned People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), during an operation in Imphal West. Meitei, accused of extorting schools, businesses, and government employees, was apprehended based on credible intelligence. Authorities seized his mobile phone for potentially critical information about the group's operations. This arrest represents a significant advance in law enforcement's efforts to combat extortion and insurgency in Manipur, with further investigations ongoing to understand Meitei's connections within the organization.

Destroy illegal poppy plantations in Kangpokpi

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Burglars Strike During Raax Festival in Sipajhar

Sipajhar: A burglary incident in Sipajhar's Batабари area has alarmed residents after thieves broke into three homes on Tuesday evening, targeting the residences of Gagan Sharma, Pranab Sharma, and Hitesh Sharma while the families were attending the Raax Mahotsav at Dighirpar. Among the victims was actress Sandhani Dutta of Kohinoor Theatre, who had been staying at Pranab Sharma's house during the event. The burglars stole cash, gold ornaments, and personal belongings, leading to heightened distress as this marks the third burglary attempt in the area in a short span. CCTV footage from one residence captured the face of a suspect, aiding police investigations, which have begun with the response of the Patharighat Police Station. Local residents voiced their fears over safety, requesting increased police patrolling and stringent actions against the culprits. Authorities have pledged that an intensive search operation is in progress to ensure justice is served.

VPP predicts the NPP's demise ahead of the 2028 elections and promises to take control

Shillong, Nov 13: As the 2028 Assembly elections approach, the Voice of the People Party (VPP) is intensifying its critique of the ruling National People's Party (NPP), predicting its decline due to alleged internal discord. VPP spokesperson Dr. Batskhem Myrboh contends that the NPP's rapid growth, driven by an influx of legislators, will ultimately lead to its downfall, characterizing the party as a collection of individuals with conflicting ambitions rather than a cohesive political entity.

Myrboh warned that the NPP suffers from a lack of discipline and is dominated by self-serving leaders focused on power and resource control, rather than genuine public service. He predicts instability within the NPP, asserting that a party driven by personal desire cannot sustain itself. Myrboh dismissed rumors



about the VPP's waning popularity, claiming that the "battle for 2028" has favored his party. He alleged that NPP opponents are employing social media tactics to spread misinformation regarding VPP's status, but he remains confident in the party's grassroots support, particularly in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. Myrboh emphasized the

VPP's commitment to clean politics and gaining public trust rather than courting defectors or incumbent MLAs. With the political environment shifting and grassroots momentum growing, the lead-up to the 2028 elections is expected to be highly contentious, with the potential for the NPP's power to diminish significantly.

The Epidemic Act is enforced in Mizoram district

Six seals in the village die from gastroenteritis

Aizawl, Nov 13: The district administration in Lawngtlai, Mizoram, has activated the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897 due to the recent fatalities of six individuals believed to be caused by gastroenteritis in Kakichhuah village, situated near the Indo-Myanmar border.

This decision comes in response to the rising health concerns following these deaths reported over the last ten days, as confirmed by officials on Wednesday. Lawngtlai district deputy commissioner Donny Lalruatsanga has issued an order for the temporary closure of the entry point between Salachhuah in Myanmar and Kakichhuah village, following consultations with the district Chief Medical Officer.

The Kakichhuah village has been designated as a containment area for one week, during which all movement of individuals in and out of the village is prohibited, with exceptions made for medical



teams, election duty officials, and personnel engaged in emergency tasks. This measure is part of the district's response to health and safety considerations.

According to a report from the medical team that visited the village on Tuesday, 27 individuals have reportedly fallen ill, exhibiting symptoms consistent with suspected gastroenteritis. In response to the outbreak, samples from the affected patients, as well as water samples collected from the village's tradition-

al water source, have been dispatched to the Zoram Medical College & Hospital (ZMC&H) in Falkawn, located near Aizawl, for comprehensive laboratory testing, as stated by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO).

Leaders of the Young Lai Association, a notable NGO in the Lawngtlai district, reported on an outbreak characterized by dysentery, vomiting, and high fever, which first came to attention following the death of an elderly man named Lawmla on No-

vember 4.

The situation has since escalated, with a total of four fatalities confirmed in Lawngtlai district and one additional death in Lungdar village of the adjacent Siaha district, according to statements made by the NGO's volunteers. Health department officials reported that a medical team, headed by Dr. C. Lalzampuii, conducted a visit to Kakichhuah on Tuesday. During this visit, the team collected samples from both local patients and the village's spring water

source, which is thought to be the primary source of drinking water for the village.

Dr. Lalmuanawma Jongte, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of Lawngtlai district, announced that samples related to the recent health outbreak will be dispatched to Aizawl for laboratory analysis to determine the underlying cause. The situation has become critical, as a 14-year-old boy named Chawlihaw succumbed to the illness on Wednesday morning, bringing the total death toll in the Kakichhuah area to six.

All reported victims exhibited severe symptoms including diarrhoea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and fever, and they died shortly after the onset of these symptoms, highlighting the urgency and severity of the outbreak. Kakichhuah, a remote village in Mizoram, is situated approximately 142 kilometers from Lawngtlai town at the southernmost point of the state, adjacent to the Myanmar border. This

Lawngtlai district deputy commissioner ordered the temporary closure of the entry point between Salachhuah in Myanmar and Kakichhuah after consulting with the district CMO on Wednesday.

village comprises about 130 households, primarily inhabited by the Khumi community, which consists of refugees originally from Myanmar's southern Chin and Rakhine states.

Tragically, all individuals who have died due to recent events belong to this community, as confirmed by officials. In response to these incidents, the Mizoram government has issued an official statement indicating that health officials from both the Lawngtlai and Siaha districts are actively engaged in maintaining close surveillance. Ongoing investigations and testing are being conducted to identify the source of the suspected outbreak affecting the village.

The Kuki students' body requests that the governor of Manipur immediately reinstate two ZEOs in accordance with an order from the High Court

• They stress that non-compliance with the court order undermines judicial authority and public trust in governance.

Imphal, Nov 13: The Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO) General Headquarters has formally requested that the Governor of Manipur reinstate two Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs)—Jangkohao Hakkip and Lhingtingng Singnit—who oversee ZEO Churachandpur and ZEO Kangpokpi, respectively.

This appeal follows specific directives from the Manipur High Court issued on May 19 and 20, 2025. The request was articulated in a representation co-signed by Dr. Seiboi Touthang, General Secretary, and T. Haokip,

Education Secretary of the KSO. The organization has expressed serious concerns regarding what it deems a significant administrative impropriety and a blatant disregard for the rule of law, emphasizing that the High Court had clearly mandated the revocation of suspension orders from January 12, 2024, which have not yet been acted upon by the relevant authorities.

The KSO indicated that the High Court has unequivocally annulled the suspension orders against two officers, mandating their reinstatement. This reinstatement is to take effect following a 90-day period from the initial date of suspension, as per established service rules. "The continued non-compliance



with the Court's order not only undermines the sanctity of judicial authority but also erodes public trust in administrative governance," the representation stated. The organisation appealed to the Governor's office to ensure the im-

mediate issuance of posting orders, allowing the two ZEOs to resume their duties in Churachandpur and Kangpokpi without further delay.

Reiterating its commitment to justice and transparent governance,

the KSO emphasised that adherence to the High Court's directives would help "re-establish administrative discipline and reaffirm the rule of law — the cornerstone of a just and efficient system of governance."

Distributes MMUA Seed Fund Cheques to Women Entrepreneurs in Gohpur



Guwahati, Nov 13: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma distributed seed fund cheques under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA) to women in Gohpur, part of the government's initiative to promote women's economic empowerment. The scheme provides Rs.10,000 to help women start micro and small enterprises, alongside financial and skill development support, aiming to enable 40 lakh women to achieve an annual income of Rs.1 lakh. Chief Minister Sarma emphasized the initiative's role in empowering women and contributing to societal growth. Over 36,000 women received cheques, with many expressing gratitude for the opportunity to start small businesses and achieve financial stability.

Digboi Refinery showcases five years of modernization and CSR successes

Digboi, Nov 13: During a media interaction on Monday at the Digboi Golden Jubilee Complex, the Digboi Refinery of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL) highlighted its community development initiatives, operational excellence, and safety measures.

Executive Director Rahul Prashant emphasized the refinery's dedication to refining lives alongside petroleum, noting a consistent 100% utilization of its CSR budget for five years, with a focus on healthcare, education, skill development,

environmental sustainability, and rural uplift in Tinsukia and neighboring areas. The CSR budget increased from Rs 817.6 lakh in FY 2020-21 to Rs 2,259.48 lakh in FY 2024-25.

The refinery's operational performance demonstrated high efficiency, with crude throughput exceeding targets consistently from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25. Notable improvements were seen in distillate yield and energy efficiency, while operational discipline was highlighted by maintaining fuel loss figures below targets.

The ongoing DR 1.0 Expansion Project, approved in June 2022 at a cost of Rs 768.4 crore, aims to increase processing capacity from 0.65 to 1 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA), currently at 42% progress and projected for completion by March 2026.

The refinery also showcased its fire protection infrastructure, comprised of nine specialized fire vehicles for emergency readiness. National recognitions included the AV Ogle Award, Director's Trophy (Runner-Up), Green Champion Award, and a

The Digboi Refinery of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL) highlighted advancements in community development, operational excellence, and safety infrastructure during a recent media interaction.

Certificate of Appreciation, affirming IOCL's achievements in innovation and environmental stewardship.

The session concluded with a Q&A addressing expansion benefits, environmental actions, CSR efforts, safety readiness, and future plans.

'Educated' but 'Radicalised': Assam Minister Pijush Hazarika warns against emerging threats

Guwahati, Nov 13: Assam Minister Pijush Hazarika on Thursday cautioned people of the state to stay alert against what he described as a growing trend of radicalisation among some educated individuals. Speaking on the issue, Hazarika said that education alone does not ensure good values, and that knowledge without responsibility can turn dangerous when used to spread hate or support extremist ideas.

The Minister said, "The most dangerous mind is not the uneducated one. It is the educated one that chooses hate. No qualification can justify terror. This is not brilliance, it's betrayal. And unfortunately, a few people act like agents of Pakistan and support this kind of mindset." He was reacting to reports about some highly educated individuals allegedly being linked to radical ideologies and terror-related activities.

Referring to recent developments connected to the November 10 Red Fort blast in Delhi, he mentioned names of people like Dr Shaheen Shahid from Lucknow, a former professor at GSVM Medical College, and Dr Ahmed Mohiyiddin and Dr Ahmed Mohammad Salved from Hyderabad, who had completed medical degrees from China. Reports also named Dr Umar Mahd from Pulwama, who served as a professor

at Al-Falah University. The minister said that these examples show how even educated professionals can sometimes misuse their knowledge and fall into extremist traps. He added that Assam, which has made strong progress in education and professional development, should remain cautious while continuing to open opportunities for all communities. Hazarika said that while Assam's educational in-



stitutions, including its medical colleges, have been producing talented professionals, there is also a need for awareness and vigilance. "As Assam progresses and opens doors for people of all communities in medical and professional fields, it must stay alert," he said.

Ammonium Nitrate suspected in Car found in Faridabad after Delhi Blast

Faridabad, Nov 13: According to persons with knowledge of the situation, a preliminary examination of the red Ford EcoSport vehicle belonging to Dr. Umar Un-Nabi, the main suspect in the explosion near Delhi's Red Fort on Monday, which was discovered outside a home close to Khandawali village in Faridabad, revealed possible signs of ammonium nitrate.

The Delhi-registered vehicle (DL10 CK 0458) was located on Wednesday following an intelligence report from the Jammu and Kashmir Police, which has been tracking down vehicles purportedly used by the terror group that was busted and connected to the explosion. After racing to Khandawali, a National Security Guard (NSG) bomb disposal team secured a 50-meter radius around the vehicle. A wider perimeter of 200 meters was sealed by the Haryana Police. Officials said the NSG team scanned the vehicle to ensure it did not contain any hidden explosive materials. "Preliminary inspection indicates that traces of ammonium nitrate may be present in the car. Samples have been collected for laboratory testing," said a police official. "We suspect that the same explosive compound was transported in

different vehicles to multiple locations." The Delhi blast followed the recovery of nearly 2,900 kilograms of ammonium nitrate, detonators, timers, and assault rifles.

Faridabad Police spokesperson Yashpal Singh said the vehicle was found parked near the premises of one Farrukh Khan, an autorickshaw and JCB driver. "The car has been seized and handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for detailed forensic examination," Singh said. Khan was detained for questioning. "He is a poor man. His connection with Dr Umar or any terror activity has not yet been established," a second officer said.Khandawali residents expressed disbelief over the developments. "Farrukh is a simple man who barely earns enough for his family. It is impossible to believe he had any link with terrorists," said Mohammad Mubin, a neighbour. Another villager, Shakir Husain, added, "He does not even own a car. Shockingly, such a vehicle was found outside his house." Officials described the recovery as "a critical breakthrough" in tracking the movements of the accused and uncovering the wider network operating across Haryana, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir.

Another Suspect held in Delhi Blast Case, arrest made at Al Falah University

New Delhi, Nov 13: A man from Al Falah University in Faridabad has been detained by the police in connection with the Delhi Red Fort explosion.On Thursday, it was announced that the individual, named as Zamil, had been arrested. He is the recruiter, according to the authorities.The man who parked the Red Ford EcoSport in the Khandawali village of Faridabad earlier in the day was also detained by the police. Faheem, a relative of Dr. Umar Nabi, the main suspect in the Delhi blast, has been identified as the guy. A bomb disposal crew had arrived for an assessment, and the police had also blocked off locations

within 200 meters of the vehicle. Fahim has been handed over to the Delhi police.Earlier, Delhi Police had sounded an alert across all police stations, police outposts, and border checkpoints to trace the red Ford EcoSport.The alert was issued after an investigation revealed that the suspects had procured three cars -- a white Hyundai i20, a red EcoSport and a Maruti Suzuki Brezza -- to carry vehicle-borne IEDs. On Monday, authorities busted a "white collar terror module" with links to terrorist outfits Jaish-e-Mohammed and Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind and spanned across Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. They

seized 2,900 kilograms of explosive substances and arrested eight people, including three doctors linked to Al Falah University in Faridabad.Hours later, a high-intensity blast ripped through a slow-moving car in the heavily crowded Red Ford metro station area, killing at least 10 people and injuring several others. A DNA test on Thursday confirmed that Dr Umar was behind the wheel of the exploded car. Police teams visited the Al-Falah University and the residence of Dr Muzammil Ganaie, one of the prime suspects arrested in the case, on Wednesday. They questioned several doctors and students at the university.

SC Calls for better security after CJI Shoe Row

New Delhi, Nov 13: The Supreme Court has emphasized the need for preventive measures to avoid incidents like the recent attempt by a 71-year-old lawyer to throw a shoe at Chief Justice Bhushan R. Gavai. A bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi is asking the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) and the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association (SCAORA) to propose methods to enhance safety and decorum within the Supreme Court complex.

The Court expressed the intent to consider these suggestions before issuing any directions. Additionally, it will hear inputs from Attorney General R Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to identify practical preventive measures.

Previously, the bench expressed hesitation in pursuing contempt proceedings against the lawyer, Rakesh Kishore, because Chief Justice Gavai opted to "forgive and forget" the incident. Even though the act was con-

sidered contemptuous, Justice Kant noted that drawing more attention to the behavior could inadvertently elevate its significance. SCBA president Vikas Singh cautioned that the incident undermines the dignity of the institution, highlighting the negative public discourse it generated. Solicitor General Mehta warned that prolonging the controversy could amplify its visibility, advising the court to focus on preventive rather than punitive actions to maintain courtroom discipline.

The incident on October 6, which temporarily disrupted proceedings, saw Kishore rush toward the dais and attempt to remove his shoe but was quickly restrained. While universally condemned, Chief Justice Gavai later labeled it as a "forgotten chapter." The current bench appears committed to solidifying courtroom discipline through proactive measures instead of punitive responses, indicating a shift towards enhancing security and order in judicial environments.

ED Attaches Chaitanya Baghel's Assets

New Delhi, Nov 13: The Enforcement Directorate has provisionally attached assets worth ₹61.20 crore belonging to Chaitanya Baghel, son of former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, as part of an investigation into a liquor scam in the state. This includes 364 residential and agricultural plots valued at ₹59.96 crore and movable assets totaling ₹1.24 crore. The investigation follows an FIR filed by the ACB/EOW in Raipur, exposing significant losses to the state's finances, with over ₹2500 crore in proceeds of crime linked to the scam. The ED investigation under the PMLA has identified Chaitanya Baghel as the leader of a liquor syndicate, asserting that his position as the chief minister's son allowed him to control illicit funds.

Khawaja Asif Claims Pakistan Ready for Two-Front War

Agency: In yet another controversial statement, Pakistan's defense minister Khawaja Asif said that Islamabad is "fully prepared" for a two-front conflict with the Taliban authority in Afghanistan on the western frontier and India on the eastern.

Days after a suicide bombing in Islamabad claimed 12 lives, Asif made his remarks. The bombing was attributed by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Tensions between Pakistan and the Taliban government in Afghanistan have increased once more as a result of the incident. Islamabad has accused Kabul of providing sanctuary to the TTP, a claim that Afghanistan refutes. Earlier also, without naming specific adversaries, Asif has indicated that Pakistan was "in a state of war" and warned citizens not to treat the violence as a remote issue. "We are in a state of war. Anyone

who thinks that the Pakistan Army is fighting this war in the Afghan-Pakistan border region and the remote areas of Balochistan should take today's suicide attack at the Islamabad district courts as a wake-up call: this is a war for all of Pakistan, in which the Pakistan Army is giving daily sacrifices and making the people feel secure," he posted on social media platform X.

Meanwhile, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif alleged that "Indian-sponsored terrorist proxies" were behind the Islamabad bombing.

India "unequivocally" rejected the allegations, describing them as "baseless and unfounded" remarks from an "obviously delirious" Pakistani leadership. "It is a predictable tactic," ministry of external affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, dismissing the accusations as politically motivated.

Exit Poll Takeaways for NDA vs INDIA Battle

Patna, Nov 13: Although exit polls suggest that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will easily win the Bihar assembly elections (the results will be declared on Friday), the situation has been anything but straightforward.

The Opposition loudly protested the polls, which took place in the context of a special intense review, or SIR, of electoral rolls.

The two mainstream parties, the NDA and the Grand Alliance (also known as Mahagathbandhan), were compelled to modify their election rhetoric in order to emphasize welfare and development above caste when Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj entered the race. Ahead of the polls, the indifferent health of Nitish Kumar, whose Janata Dal (United) has pretty much decided which grouping will rule the state for the past two decades — Kumar, not surprisingly, has been chief minister for much of this period — was expected to be an issue, but the

GA has not been able to make it a significant one, and voters do not really seem to care. Another victory for the NDA in Bihar will consolidate the ruling alliance's hold in the Hindi belt, a region where the INDIA bloc and the Congress are at its weakest position. If the NDA retains power in Bihar, the ruling alliance would have its government in nine states and UTs in north India. The Opposition runs the government in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Jharkhand in the northern belt.While Nitish Kumar is likely to be the chief minister if the NDA wins, most analysts believe that at some point in the next five years, the BJP will push for its own chief minister. Bihar is the only state in the belt where the BJP has never had a chief minister. It has retained the deputy chief minister's position for more than 14 years starting with Sushil Modi in 2005. In the current dispensation, both deputy chief ministers, Samrat



Choudhary and Vijay Sinha, are from the BJP.

For now though, Kumar, despite concerns over his health, has retained his popularity. Ground reports indicate that a large section of the NDA's voters, particularly the extremely backward classes and women trust Kumar. The fact that the NDA is united in 2025 — in 2020, the JD(U)'s strike rate was dented badly by Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) — could result in a strong showing by the JD(U).

Centre clears revised royalty rates for four critical minerals

Agency: In an effort to boost domestic production, lessen reliance on imports, and draw in new investment for the mining industry, the Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, authorized increased royalty rates for four essential minerals on Wednesday: graphite, zirconium, rubidium, and caesium."The nation needs to alter the royalty structure for a few essential minerals. At a news conference following the cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Union Minister of IT, Railway, and I&B Ashwini Vaishnaw stated, "These materials were subject to a very high royalty, so that has been reduced to increase their production." Under the revised structure, the royalty for graphite will now be calculated on an ad valorem basis instead of per tonne basis, meaning it will be charged as a percentage of the average sale price instead of a fixed amount per tonne. For graphite containing 80% or more fixed carbon, the royalty will be 2% of the average sale price, while lower-grade graphite will attract 4%. The royalty rate for zirconium has been fixed at 1%, and 2% for rubidium and caesium each. The Cabinet has approved amendments to the Second Schedule of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, to bring in these changes."All of these elements are used a lot in the country, especially in the electric vehicle industry, electronics manufacturing industry, and strategic sectors. The upcoming auction of four mineral blocks in India is expected to increase participation, according to Vaishnaw. This initiative will provide clarity to companies interested in bidding for critical minerals. In September 2025, the government issued notices for the sixth tranche of auctions, which includes various mineral blocks. Currently, India imports over 60% of its graphite requirements and has nine active graphite mines. Additionally, there are 27 blocks available for auction and many more under review or investigation. The Cabinet's decision, according to the government, will also increase domestic production and reduce reliance on imports of important minerals related to the four rationalized elements, such as niobium, lithium, tungsten, and rare earth elements.

NDA Tipped to Win Bihar as Exit Polls Roll In; Tejashwi Unconvinced

Patna, Nov 13: The majority of pollsters predict that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will win the Bihar election results 2025, which are scheduled to be announced on Friday. RJD and Jan Suraj opposition leaders have criticized the exit polls while NDA leaders applaud the forecast. Speaking to the ANI news agency, Union minister Nityanand Rai claimed that the Bihar people have given the NDA administration their "seal of approval." He further asserted that the NDA would secure even more seats than anticipated. The majority of pollsters have forecast that the ruling NDA alliance will win the exit polls. The NDA would receive between 121 and 141 seats in the 243-member Bihar Assembly, according to the Axis My India forecast. 122 seats are the majority mark. The pollster predicted that the Mahagathbandhan would put up a strong fight and bag between 98 to 118 seats. It further showed that Tejashwi Yadav was the top choice for the chief minister's position in Bihar. However, while Axis My India predicted a narrow win for the NDA, others pollsters, including People's Pulse poll survey, have projected a comfortable victory for the BJP and JDU-led alli-



ance. According to Today's Chanakya, NDA will be seeing a bumper victory, securing 148-172 seats, with the Mahagathbandhan projected to win 65-89 seats. The other parties, including the Jan Suraj, are likely to get 3-9 seats, according to the pollster.

People's Insight survey has also predicted 133-148 seats for the NDA, and 87-102 seats for the Mahagathbandhan. It has given 0-2 seats to Jan Suraj, and 3-6 seats for independent candidates. According to the JVC pollster, NDA is likely to get 135-150 seats, and the Mahagathbandhan 88-103 seats. The RJD leader said that on the day of the second phase polling, "people stood in long queues during voting", alleging

that some had stayed there till 6 or 7 pm.

"People patiently waited to cast their votes. And while voting was still going on, exit polls started coming out," Tejashwi said, while addressing a press conference. Meanwhile, Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venu-gopal, citing the example of the Haryana Assembly elections, asked people to "wait for real results." Congress MP Digvijaya Singh further alleged "manipulated voter list"and EVMs if the NDA wins by more than 140 seats. "When I visited there, it was an equal fight... If the NDA wins by more than 140 seats, it will be due to a manipulated voter list and a manipulated EVM."

Cabinet Hikes Relief for Dharali, Other Disaster-Hit Areas

Dehradun, Nov 13: On Wednesday, the Uttarakhand Cabinet increased the relief amount for disaster victims in Dharali and other areas. Families of those deceased will receive Rs. 5 lakh, up from Rs. 4 lakh, and the relief for damaged pucca houses has also risen to Rs. 5 lakh, while kutcha houses will receive Rs. 1 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund, in addition to disaster fund allocations. Recent heavy rains have led to floods and landslides, causing significant damage and loss of life.

For commercial buildings impacted, relief will be assessed individually. The Cabinet approved the 'Devbhoomi Family Scheme', aimed at creating a detailed database of families in Uttarakhand to assign unique family identification numbers that help them access government benefits and track eligible schemes.

Additionally, a Cabinet Committee was formed to address the implementation of the Uttarakhand High Court's directives regarding the regularization of daily wage and contract employees, alongside evaluating minimum wages and dearness allowances for employees of the Uttarakhand Ex-Servicemen Welfare Corporation.

A subcommittee was established to finalize these issues within two months. The Cabinet also approved amendments to the UPNL Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association to enhance overseas employment opportunities for ex-servicemen, their families, and youth in the state.

New Delhi, Nov 13: The second-highest ranking Indian diplomat in Dhaka was called by Bangladesh's foreign ministry on Wednesday to express disapproval of former premier Sheikh Hasina's recent dealings with Indian media and to demand that her access to journalists be cut off. The announcement was made five days after Hasina, who has been living in self-exile in India since her administration was overthrown in August 2024 as a result of weeks of student-led protests, spoke with many Indian media sources, including Hindustan Times. Since he departed Bangladesh, this was her first encounter with Indian media. Bangladesh's foreign ministry summoned India's deputy high commissioner Pawan Badhe to formally convey Dhaka's "serious concern over the Indian govern-

Hasina Interview Sparks Row

Bangladesh Summons Indian Diplomat After Hasina Interview, Criticises Media

ment allowing...Hasina to interact with the mainstream Indian media", state-run BSS news agency reported.

The foreign ministry said "harbouring such a notorious fugitive currently under trial for committing crimes against humanity" and "granting her a platform to spew hatred" are unhelpful to fostering a constructive bilateral relationship. BSS quoted a diplomatic source as saying.

Badhe was also asked to convey Bangladesh's request to "immediately discontinue Hasina's access to media", the report said.

There was no immediate reaction to the development from Indian officials. People familiar with the matter said the Indian side had made it clear that India's media is independent and not controlled by the government.



The development raised eyebrows in New Delhi as Hasina recently gave interviews to British and French media outlets but the diplomats of those countries haven't been summoned by the foreign ministry in Dhaka. Comments by Shafiqul Alam, the spokesperson for interim government chief Muhammad Yunus, describing those who interviewed Hasina as "Indian bootlicking" journalists have also not gone down

well in New Delhi.

The Press Club of India on Tuesday described the remarks by Alam, a former journalist, as "especially reprehensible" and sought an apology. "To describe professionals from responsible media outlets pursuing a genuine news story as 'bootlicking' journalists is certainly not expected from a person in a responsible position," the Press Club said in a statement. India-Bangladesh relations have cratered since the caretaker administration led by Yunus assumed office in August last year. The Indian side has repeatedly criticised the interim government for failing to prevent the oppression of Bangladesh's minorities, including Hindus. Dhaka has sought the extradition of Hasina though New Delhi is yet to act on the request.

Residents of Sivasagar protest the terror attack in Delhi by lighting candles

Sivasagar, Nov 13: In response to the terrorist attack in New Delhi, hundreds of members from the Muslim community conducted a protest in Sivasagar, organized by the Ujoni Axom Muslim Kalyan Parishad (UAMKP). The demonstration, held at Dolmukh Chariali near Dr. Bhupen Hazarika’s statue, featured a candle-

light vigil and a moment of silence for the victims. UAMKP’s president, Monirul Islam Bora, condemned the attack and highlighted the long-term violence propagated by terrorist organizations like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and ISIS, which are allegedly supported by Pakistan. Bora ex-

pressed concern over potential sleeper cells in Assam, linked to terrorism from Bangladesh, and called on the Indian Government to take decisive action against those responsible for such attacks. He advocated for a zero-tolerance approach to terrorism and insisted on robust measures to protect national

security. Various groups participated in the vigil, demonstrating unity and a commitment to peace and humanity.

• Hundreds from the Muslim community protested in historic Sivasagar in strong condemnation of the barbaric terrorist attack that occurred in New Delhi on Monday.

Seizes Heroin

Silchar, Nov 13: In a significant operation against illegal drug trafficking, the Assam Rifles and Cachar Police seized heroin valued at approximately ₹4.65 crore from the Jhujang Pahar area in Cachar district. Following a tip-off, the forces intercepted a consignment concealed in 50 soap cases near the Assam-Manipur border, known for drug smuggling. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested several individuals related to this case, including Chaitanya Baghel, currently in judicial custody. The statement also noted ongoing asset attachments worth ₹61.20 crore, building on previous property attachments totaling around ₹215 crore.

Ajay Tamta raise Manipur's Infrastructure uplift
Imphal, Nov 13: Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways, Ajay Tamta, met with Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla to review road infrastructure projects by the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (NHIDCL). The meeting in Imphal emphasized the government’s commitment to enhancing accessibility and promoting economic growth in Manipur through accelerated road development. Minister Tamta also inspected projects in tribal districts like Pherzawl and Churachandpur, assessing healthcare and rural road improvements. This initiative aligns with the Union government’s broader strategy to enhance infrastructure and welfare in Northeastern states, focusing on creating sustainable development that benefits local populations and regional stability.

The Assamese government has started a project to translate Jari and Zikir into seven tribal languages

Guwahati, Nov 13: In a cultural initiative, the Assam government plans to translate Assamese Zikir and Jari into seven tribal languages—Karbi, Dimas, Deuri, Bodo, Mising, Tiwa, and Rabha—to enhance cultural harmony and preserve linguistic diversity. A five-day translation workshop, organized by the Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language, Art and Culture (ABILAC), starts November 13, under the Justice (Retd) Biplob Sarma Committee’s guidance. The project, coordinated by Dr. Abu Bakkar Siddique from Gauhati University, aims for completion by February 2026, with submissions to the Higher Education Department by March. Panchayat Minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass emphasized the significance of language in



culture and the unifying power of translation. The workshop was postponed following the death of cultural icon Zubeen Garg. Zikir and Jari, traditional poetic and musical forms, embody spiritual devotion and cultural identity in Assam.

As Congress prepares a calculated return to power in Garo Hills, TMC MDCs are expected to change sides

Shillong, Nov 13: With the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) elections approaching next year, the Congress party in Meghalaya is making a notable resurgence. The party has received more than 67 applications for 29 available seats, indicating a significant increase in interest as it aims to regain its influence in the Garo Hills area. This renewed enthusiasm from potential candidates highlights the Congress’s strategic efforts to re-establish itself politically in the region. Amidst a resurgence of political activity, Debora C. Marak, the Working President

of the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress, indicated that a significant number of Members of the District Council (MDCs) from the Trinamool Congress (TMC) may soon switch allegiance to the Congress party prior to the upcoming elections. Marak disclosed that while the Congress currently holds 29 seats in the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC), they have received more than 60 applications from individuals seeking Congress tickets for the upcoming electoral contest. This influx of applications underscores a rekindled confidence in the Congress ideology

among both longstanding members and potential crossover candidates. Marak, maintaining a measured yet suggestive tone, revealed that the Congress is preparing for the District Council elections in Garo Hills, emphasizing the importance of keeping certain political matters confidential. When asked about reports regarding TMC MDCs potentially switching their allegiance, she indicated that there may soon be outreach to them, adding that those who join from other political parties are welcomed unconditionally, as there are no stipulations attached to their accession.

Culling operation underway in African Swine Fever hit areas

Tinsukia, Nov 13: Following the outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in Gobindpur, Tinsukia district, the Animal Husbandry Department initiated a three-day culling operation in the infected zone. This operation follows the National Action Plan for ASF containment. Additionally, all shops selling pork-related items in specified areas will be closed for seven days, with a prohibition on the movement of pigs and pork products during this period.



As the Awami League declares a lockdown over the Sheikh Hasina trial, Bangladesh closes

Guwahati, Nov 13: Bangladesh is experiencing significant unrest as the banned Awami League, led by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has called for a nationwide lockdown in protest against her trial in Dhaka. This special tribunal is anticipated to reveal the date for Hasina’s verdict regarding charges of crimes against humanity related to her violent response during the student-led protests that led to her ousting last year. Since her removal in August 2024, Hasina has been residing in exile in India, while an interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus has promised to ensure justice and conduct free elections by February next year. The broad societal impact of this unrest is evident, with schools



Protests by supporters of the former Prime Minister have disrupted schools and transport nationwide, while tribunals are set to establish a date for the verdict in a case concerning crimes against humanity.

and universities shifting to online classrooms and the postponement of exams. Public transport has nearly ceased, and significant police and military presence has been deployed in key cities including

Dhaka, Chittagong, and Sylhet. Reports of sporadic violence have emerged, including bomb explosions near Dhaka University and arson attacks on a train and city bus.

The tribunal also involves former officials, including the former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and ex-police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, both currently in India. The chief prosecutor is seeking the death penalty for Hasina, declaring her the “mastermind” of the atrocities. Meanwhile, the Bangladeshi Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed discontent towards India for airing interviews with Hasina, where she accused the Yunus government of supporting Islamist groups and undermining democracy. As the situation develops, the interim government has called for public calm, with Yunus expected to make a national address outlining measures to maintain order amidst rising tensions.

The center is dedicated to presenting Tripura’s spiritual and cultural legacy around the world Jyotiraditya Scindia

Agartala, Nov 13: The Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region, Jyotiraditya Scindia, emphasized the Centre’s commitment to unlocking the potential of Tripura and showcasing its cultural and spiritual heritage on a global stage during a review meeting on the development of the Matabari Tourism Circuit on November 12. Scindia urged officials to adopt global best practices and learn from successful tourism models in places like Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Kevadia in Gujarat, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision to transform every state into a global tourism destination. The government aims to establish Tripura as a vibrant hub for cultural, spiritual, and eco-tourism, with detailed presentations discussing ini-



tiatives that are set to reshape the state’s tourism landscape. Key topics included enhancing international connectivity through Agartala airport, redesigning renowned tourist attractions such as Neer Mahal, Tepania, Jampui Pura, and Udaipur, and developing the Dumbur islands through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model to attract private investments and foster sustainable growth. Moreover, Scindia highlighted the importance of integrat-

ing civic conservation with architectural development and capacity-building across seven major verticals. This integration involves training local tourist guides and allied services to bolster employment and skill development within Tripura’s tourism ecosystem. The review meeting was also attended by Tripura’s Chief Minister, Manik Saha, along with senior officials from both the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and the state government.

At Bharat Parv 2025, Governor Parnaik demands a collaboration between Gujarat and Arunachal

Itanagar, Nov 13: The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt. General KT Parnaik, emphasized the need for a partnership between Arunachal Pradesh and Gujarat during Bharat Parv 2025, celebrating Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s 150th birth anniversary. He highlighted the cultural ties between the two states, particularly through mythology, and praised the contributions of the Gujarati community in Arunachal Pradesh. The Governor noted Arunachal’s developmental progress in road construction and its tourism potential, while also recognizing Gujarat’s successful cooperative development models. He called for enhanced cooperation and invited Gujarat’s officials to visit Arunachal Pradesh to foster unity and growth.



Without BJP, ‘Miyas’ will take the whole Assam: CM

Guwahati, Nov 13: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that “if BJP is not there, Miyas will start from Dispur and take the whole Assam.” He also called Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi “the biggest supporter of Miyas” and warned that “those who curse BJP will themselves repent.” The Chief Minister made these remarks while addressing reporters in one of his sharp political statements in recent times. Addressing the media after distributing cheques to members of self-help

groups under the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan in Gohpur, Sarma launched a strong attack on Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi and his family, alleging that they were “working like agents of Pakistan’s ISI.” The Chief Minister claimed that Gogoi and his family have a “soft corner” for Pakistan and avoid speaking strongly against terrorism. Toward the end of the day, he issues a mild statement which means that in the meantime, he takes permission from Pakistan,” he said.

Two Lakhimpur Men Stroll to Honor Zubeen Garg

Biswanath, Nov 13: In a poignant tribute to the late singer Zubeen Garg, Benudhar Saikia and Mahendra Gogoi from Lakhimpur have embarked on a meaningful foot journey that commenced on November 9. This expedition, marked by genuine devotion, reflects their intent not only to honor Garg—who resonated with generations—but also to seek justice in his memory. After days of walking, the duo arrived at Biswanath Chariali, receiving a warm welcome from local youths affiliated with the Rangman Sangha. These supporters provided food, shelter, and encouragement, bolstering the men’s spirits as they prepared to continue towards Sonapur, Garg’s final resting place. Benudhar Saikia recounted his cherished memories of performing alongside Zubeen Garg during an event organized by Navodaya Sangha, illustrating the profound impact the artist had on his life and career. Saikia shared, “Zubeen Da used to tell me, ‘Tikhori, you’ll be playing dhol with me,’” which fueled his passion for music and solidified his identity as ‘Benu.’ Mahendra Gogoi, filled with hope, stated their aspiration to reach their destination within three days, contingent on no unforeseen obstacles. Both men articulated that their pilgrimage served as a heartfelt homage, emphasizing that Zubeen was an integral part of the Assamese cultural identity. Saikia expressed the collective sentiment by stating, “He was more than a singer to us; he was a part of every Assamese heart,” while also calling for justice and peace for his soul. The public reaction to their journey illustrates the significance of such personal dedication in a modern context. Many locals, as well as social media users, have praised their commitment, recognizing it as an exemplary display of love for a cultural icon. Members of the Rangman Sangha articulated their solidarity, stressed the importance of Zubeen Garg as a symbol of Assam’s pride, and echoed the demand for justice. As the duo progresses towards Sonapur, their journey transcends individual tribute, emerging as a collective voice for a grieving state united in remembrance and longing for justice for one of its luminaries.

Tea Workers’ Widespread Protest in Jorhat



Jorhat, Nov 13: On Wednesday, a significant protest in Jorhat saw hundreds of tea garden laborers demonstrating for wage increases, land pattas, and the resolution of long-standing welfare commitments. The march commenced at the Cinamara Tea Estate and culminated in a major sit-in outside the Jorhat District Commissioner’s Office. Protesters voiced their demands for justice, equal pay, and land rights, accusing the administration of neglecting the tea community’s needs for an extended period. Union leaders highlighted that the current daily wage does not meet basic living expenses due to rising prices. They pointed out that many workers have not re-

ceived legal titles to their ancestral lands despite repeated assurances from the state government. One union representative emphasized that the protest transcends financial issues, stating, “It is not only about money, but dignity and security for our people.” The Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) has formally presented a memorandum to district authorities advocating for essential demands such as substantial wage adjustments, land pattas distribution, and enhanced healthcare and educational services for tea workers’ families. Protesters warned that if their requests continue to be ignored, they would escalate their movement across Assam’s tea gardens in the near future.

Barpeta Road Witnesses a Huge Protest Contractual Workers at P&RD Demand Equitable Treatment

Barpeta, Nov 13: In a demonstration of solidarity, a significant protest took place at the Gaurdhan Development Block office in Barpeta Road, organized by the All Assam Panchayat and Rural Development (P&RD) Contractual Employees Association. This protest aimed to address the government’s persistent neglect of their demands, attracting hundreds of contractual employees who gathered with placards and chants advocating for their long-standing requests. The protest commenced as a three-day strike involving staff across various branches of the Panchayat and Rural Development Department.

During the rally, the employees presented five key demands: 1) an increase in remuneration, 2) job security until the age of 60, 3) equal pay for equal work, 4) access to medical facilities, and 5) the extension of benefits provided to contractual employees in other government departments. Many employees voiced their frustration to reporters over the government’s lack of action despite repeated appeals, noting the hardships of working under contractual conditions without stability or welfare benefits. One protester emphasized their continuous contributions to rural development without adequate recognition. The association has signaled that



should their demands remain unmet following the strike, they will initiate an indefinite statewide protest. The employees have urged the state government to engage in discussions and implement measures

that promote fairness and dignity for all contractual workers within the P&RD department.

BUSINESS

Johnson's Baby reinvents brand with sustainable packaging and 'It's Pure Love' campaign to capture new-age parents

Aizawl: Johnson's Baby, the world's No.1 baby care brand, has unveiled a refreshed identity with upgraded skin-science-based formulations, sustainable packaging, and a new campaign titled "It's Pure Love" featuring Bollywood stars Anil and Sonam Kapoor. The move aims to strengthen the brand's emotional and market connect with modern, eco-conscious parents.

The upgraded product line introduces 100% doctor-tested gentle formulations enriched with natural ingredients like Aloe Vera, Vitamin B5, milk protein, and turmeric. With enhanced moisturization lasting up to 72 hours and triple protection



against germs, dryness, and irritation, the new range reinforces Johnson's leadership in baby skincare.

Packaging has also evolved with 50% post-consumer recycled plastic and the introduction of 'The Iconic

Drop' mascot, symbolizing love and protection.

Conceptualized by FCB Group India, the "It's Pure Love" campaign celebrates everyday moments of bonding between mothers and babies, while also emphasizing the brand's sustainability vision.

In Aizawl, retailers report strong customer loyalty toward Johnson's Baby, with growing awareness around safe and eco-friendly baby products.

The brand's upgraded formulations and sustainable packaging are expected to boost sales momentum among young parents in Mizoram's urban centers.

Tata AIA unveils AI-powered underwriting engine to transform life insurance experience

Aizawl: Tata AIA Life Insurance Company Ltd. (Tata AIA), one of India's leading life insurers, has launched its cutting-edge Underwriting Rule Engine (URE), a digital innovation aimed at making life insurance faster, simpler, and more transparent for consumers.

The URE leverages machine learning, generative AI, and big data analytics to automate the traditionally manual underwriting process. It analyses applicants' medical and lifestyle data in real time, generat-

ing instant risk assessments and approvals without human intervention. This advancement enables policies that previously took weeks to process to be issued within hours.

Key benefits of URE include faster approvals, minimal paperwork, fewer medical tests, and greater transparency through real-time updates. Sanjay Arora, Chief of Operations at Tata AIA, said the initiative reinforces the company's commitment to consumer-centric innovation and operational excellence,

setting new benchmarks in the insurance industry.

Aizawl is witnessing growing consumer interest in digital insurance services, with tech-driven processes like Tata AIA's URE expected to boost trust and accessibility among urban professionals and small business owners seeking seamless policy issuance.

Tata AIA also reported an impressive claim settlement ratio of 99.41% in FY 2024-25 and ranked #1 in four out of five persistency cohorts, reaffirming its industry leadership.

SEBI plans IPO rule changes, lock-in tweak



Mumbai: Locking up pre-IPO pledged shares and substituting a simplified document summary for the abbreviated prospectus are two long-standing issues that the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) suggested a solution to on Thursday.

The regulator has suggested revising the Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements (ICDR) Regulations, 2018 to implement these changes in a consultation document.

Pre-issue shareholding, excluding promoters, must be locked in for six months following the IPO in accordance with existing ICDR regulations. Depositories, however, are unable to establish lock-in when shares are pledged, which presents issuers with last-min-

ute compliance challenges, particularly in businesses with a large number of untraceable shareholders. In order to remedy this, Sebi has suggested permitting depositories to designate such pledged shares as "non-transferable" for the duration of the lock-in term, subject to issuer directives. In order to guarantee that the shares automatically stay under the necessary lock-in in the pledgee's or pledger's account following pledge invocation or release, issuers would also need to modify their Articles of Association. The proposed framework has been approved by NBFCs that lend against unlisted shares, according to the regulator. Additionally, the market regulator has suggested

substituting a standardized "offer document summary" for the mandatory abbreviated prospectus, which is now required to accompany every IPO filing. The summary would be posted separately on the websites of Sebi, stock exchanges, the issuer, and lead managers in addition to the draft offer document. Focused, retail-friendly disclosures, such as descriptions of businesses and industries, important risks, financial highlights, top litigation, and promoter information, would be included. The action was taken in response to worries that large offer documents discourage regular investors from doing thorough reviews, forcing many to depend instead on unreliable social media or grey-market indicators.

Government withdraws quality rule on polyester yarn, industry hails step

New Delhi: Following consultation with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers has revoked fourteen quality control orders (QCOs), including those pertaining to polyester fiber and polyester yarn, with immediate effect in the public interest, according to government announcements. Since the majority of the commodities are utilized as inputs in the textile value chain, the change will benefit the textile industry. The rescinding of QCOs on polyester fiber and polyester yarn was applauded by the Confeder-

ation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI), which stated that "this pro-growth measure will hugely benefit" the nation's textile and garment industry. Terephthalic acid, ethylene glycol, polyester spun grey and white yarn, polyester industrial yarn, polyester staple fibers (PSF), polyester continuous filament fully drawn yarn, polyester partially oriented yarn, polyethylene material for molding and extrusion, acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS), polypropylene materials for molding and extrusion, polyvinyl chloride homopolymers, ethylene vinyl acetate co-

polymers, polyurethanes, polycarbonate.

According to a statement by CITI chairman Ashwin Chandran, "the rescinding of the Quality Control Orders (QCOs) on Polyester Fibre and Polyester Yarn comes as a great relief, as it has been a long-awaited demand of all the user industries."

The majority of man-made fiber (MMF) products are made of polyester fiber and polyester yarn, thus the government's action will help the MMF market in India expand, he continued.

According to Chandran, the elimination of these

QCOs will increase the cost competitiveness of Indian clothing and textile products by facilitating the acquisition of raw materials at costs that are competitive globally.

"The rescinding of these QCOs will act as a huge confidence-booster for the textile and apparel sector when combined with the Export Package announced on November 12," he stated. A ₹45,060 crore package, which includes a ₹25,060 crore Export Promotion Mission (EPM) announced in the Union budget, was approved by the Union Cabinet on Wednesday. Its

goal is to provide small and medium-sized businesses with liquidity and assist exporters in overcoming global obstacles like high US tariffs.

While MMF leads the worldwide textile and apparel market, cotton is the dominant crop in India, according to Chandran. He continued, "It would be beneficial if authorities could also consider providing similar relief on the QCO front for viscose fiber and other cellulosic raw materials, given the government's unwavering commitment to the growth of the textile and apparel sector."

super.money, banks roll out 4.7 lakh RuPay credit cards

Mumbai: super.money, a fintech platform, announced on Tuesday that it has worked with three banks to permit the issuance of more than 470,000 RuPay credit cards in the last year. This is a major milestone in the company's efforts to increase access to digital credit.

Over 1.8 million RuPay credit cards have been connected to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) using the platform, according to the Bengaluru-based company. In cooperation with Axis Bank, Utkarsh Small Finance Bank, and Kotak811, super.money offers secured RuPay credit cards and intends to grow its banking alliances. The average transaction value reveals a change in consumer behavior from expensive purchases to small, frequent purchases. This illustrates how credit is being used increasingly regularly for smaller



transactions and at neighborhood businesses, the company stated in a statement.

Super.money is the fifth-largest UPI app by transaction volume, according to data from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). It handled 256.34 million transactions totaling Rs 9,852.44 crore in September. "We are offering 'first-time credit cards' to lakhs of Indians, particularly across underserved segments, through our partnerships with issuer banks and meaningful use of the RuPay network," stated Prakash Sikaria, CEO of super.money.

Stock markets stay flat amid highly session

Mumbai: The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 138.36 points, or 0.16 per cent, to 84,328.15 in the morning trade. The broader NSE Nifty slipped 38.50 points or 0.15 per cent, to 25,837.30. Among the Sensex firms, Tata Motors' commercial vehicles business, Eternal, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Kotak Mahindra Bank, HDFC Bank, ITC, Tata Consultancy Services, Bharat Electronics Ltd were the laggards. On the other hand, Asian Paints, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, Trent, Larsen & Toubro and State Bank of India were the gainers. The market needs more triggers to take it to new record highs. With the outcome of the Bihar polls largely discounted by the market, there are no political triggers that can push the market significantly higher. The reverse might happen if the actual poll results turn out to be different from the exit polls," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Ltd, said. "In the near-term market is likely to consolidate and then respond to triggers when they happen. Positive triggers happening simultaneously can lead to short-covering pushing the market sharply up. But sustained uptrend would be challenging given the FII selling and elevated valuations," he added.

Is gold heading for \$5,000 in early 2026 Rising prices spark talk of a massive bull run ahead

Mumbai: Gold continued its blistering upward momentum on Thursday (November 13), igniting debate among global investors about whether the precious metal could be headed toward the long-discussed \$5,000 per ounce mark. Both domestic and international markets reflected strong appetite for safe-haven assets as expectations of US interest rate cuts, central bank accumulation, and geopolitical risks kept bullion demand elevated. In India, gold prices hit Rs 1.27 lakh per 10 grams, climbing Rs 2,290 in just a day. Globally, spot gold rose 0.4% to \$4,214.52/oz, while US December futures edged up to \$4,218.20/oz, the highest since October 21. Historical charts show that gold has experienced three major bull supercycles—in the 1970s following the end of the gold standard, in the early 2000s after coordinated central bank gold-sale agreements, and during the post-2008 crisis years. Each delivered gains ranging from 500% to over 1,800%. Jain pointed out that the current cycle has seen only about 150% growth, suggesting significant headroom if global macro conditions align. One of the strongest structural drivers, he notes, is the sharp rise in gold accumulation by global central banks. Since 2022, central bank buying has jumped from 300 tonnes annually to almost 1,000 tonnes, even as global mine supply remains capped at roughly 3,000 tonnes per year. This sudden demand surge—led by China, Turkey, Russia, and India—has tightened the market significantly. De-dollarisation Growing

Gold prices are climbing rapidly, reigniting global speculation about a fresh multi-year bull run. With momentum building, analysts are asking the big question: could gold touch \$5,000 sooner than expected

concerns about the "weaponisation" of US Treasury holdings after sanctions on Russia have pushed nations to diversify away from the dollar. Countries from Germany to China have sharply reduced US Treasury holdings while increasing gold reserves. India's gold reserves have also jumped from 566 tonnes in 2017 to 880 tonnes in 2025, reflecting this strategic shift. Analysts attribute the surge to a combination of macro forces. "Gold is extending its winning streak driven by a weaker dollar, expectations of Federal Reserve rate cuts, and persistent central bank accumulation," said Jigar Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities. He believes the short-term consolidation phase is healthy, but the broader trend still points upward, with the yellow metal potentially testing \$4,300/oz by year-end if real yields stay muted. The bigger question, however, is whether gold's current rally is merely a strong cyclical upswing—or the beginning of a massive structural bull market that could push prices toward \$5,000 within the next couple of years. Market strategist Alok Jain, Founder of Weekend Investing, said that the magnitude and pattern of the recent rally sug-



gest something bigger is underway. "We went from \$3,300 to \$4,400—almost a 33% move in just a couple of months," he said, noting that gold typically delivers 8–9% annual returns in USD terms. Such an outsized move, he added, resembles previous phases of "lumpy" gold rallies that often precede multi-year upside cycles. Gold's brief correction from \$4,400 to \$3,900 did not alter the long-term picture, Jain said. The metal has already bounced back to around \$4,100, retracing barely 10%—a pattern consistent with earlier bull markets. Silver is exhibiting similar behaviour, swinging from \$38 to \$54, correcting, and rising again toward its highs. Investors remain

divided on timing. While the US Fed struck a hawkish tone recently, markets still expect rate cuts starting December. A sustained decline in the dollar index—something US President Trump has openly favoured—could turbocharge bullion prices further. Will gold hit \$5,000?

Experts say the trajectory depends on the next macro trigger: a Fed pivot, dollar weakness, geopolitical flare-ups, or continued central bank buying. But the underlying consensus is clear—the structural bull case for gold remains intact.

For now, investors are watching closely. If global liquidity cycles align, the long-awaited \$5,000 mark may arrive sooner than expected.

KPIT Technologies' Q2 net profit dips 17 pc to Rs 169 crore, revenue up

Mumbai: KPIT Technologies on Monday reported a 17 per cent year-on-year (YoY) decline in its consolidated net profit for the second quarter of this fiscal (Q2 FY26)

at Rs 169.08 crore. The company, which offers software development and integrated services for the automotive and mobility industries, had posted a net profit of Rs 203.7 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago (Q2 FY25). Its net profit slipped over 28 per cent sequentially as well, from Rs 171.89 crore in the first quarter of FY26. The decline YoY to Rs 1,358 crore from Rs 1,235.9 crore

Revenue from operations, however, went up to Rs 1,587.7 crore, marking around 8 per cent growth YoY from Rs 1,471.4 crore and a 3.1 per cent increase quarter-on-quarter (QoQ) from Rs 1,538.7 crore. This increment was driven by robust demand from European markets, despite there was a slight decline in its American business. Revenue from the UK and Europe rose 13.6 per cent sequentially to Rs 828.3 crore, offsetting a dip in the Americas, where revenue fell to Rs 442.4 crore from Rs 456.9 crore in the previous quarter. The company's operating performance improved, with EBITDA margin expanding to 21.1 per cent and EBIT margin at 16.4 per cent during the quarter. According to its exchange filing, the company has also secured a new total contract value of over 1,940 crore, which includes a significant multi-year partnership with a leading European automotive manufacturer to drive software-defined vehicle (SDV) transformation.



Dhanush gifts fans unreleased Tere Ishk Mein Tamil song

Mumbai: Dhanush was recently seen attending audio song launch event of Tere Ishk Mein. AR Rahman, Kriti Sanon and Aanand L Rai were also present. The actor surprised all his fans with live performance of unreleased Tamil version of upcoming song. The film is all set to release on November 28.

Taking to his Instagram handle, Dhanush shared the video in which he is seen singing the unreleased Tamil version of the song from the film. In no time, it went viral. One of the fans wrote, “Dhanush is growing his funk.. and vintage D is back.” Another wrote, “Apdiye loop la paadineey Iru aiyaaaaaaa.” He also shared photos with AR Rahman.

The director posted the photo on his Instagram Stories, giving fans a glimpse of the film’s shoot days in Delhi’s chilly winter. In the picture, Dhanush can be seen wrapped in a cozy shawl, wearing earmuffs to beat the cold. Flashing his signature bright smile while posing for the camera, he radiates warmth and positivity. The candid moment perfectly captures the actor’s dedication to his art. Along with the picture, Aanand L Rai wrote, “Dilli ki sardi mein, hum tere ishk mein.” Dhanush was last seen in Idli Kadai. The film featured Dhanush and Nithya Menen in lead roles, with Arun Vijay playing the antagonist. Industry sources suggest that the face-off between the two actors will be a major highlight. Shalini Pandey also plays a significant role in the project. While Kriti Sanon is currently busy with the shoot of Cocktail 2. The film also features Shahid Kapoor and Rashmika Mandanna.



Yami Gautam: Haq’s overwhelming fan love is deeply emotional

Mumbai: There are only a few films that don’t scream for your attention, shout out their message, or rely on sensationalism and yet manage to resonate with you deeply. Yami Gautam and Emraan Hashmi’s Haq is one of them. Ever since its release, the actress has been receiving an emotional outpouring from fans, especially women admirers, like never before.

For the first time, Yami Gautam took on a role that challenges perceptions about her on-screen image. Despite that, her honest portrayal of the character has ignited a whirlwind of emotions among women. Many have told her how relatable her character felt, while others were teary-eyed as they shared how much strength they drew after watching her in the film. Haq is inspired by the historic Shah Bano case, in which a Muslim woman fought a legal battle for maintenance from her husband. Now, the actress has opened up about stepping into this never-before-tried



character and receiving recognition that feels long overdue. She also spoke about exploration in acting and films, and how she chooses projects.

In an interview with Hindustan Times, when asked what validation means to her, she shared, “I think everyone has their own interpretation of validation. For me, true validation is when your audience accepts you. When they watch a film and write something, be it a comment or when they tell an artiste something, that purity reflects in their eyes and words. You can feel how much they mean the compliment. It’s very heartening and overwhelming for me as an artist.” It’s

a double celebration for the couple as her husband, filmmaker Aditya Dhar, is also receiving praise for his latest production, Baramulla. She smiled and said, “We are very happy.”

She added, “Aditya’s had his own journey, which has been full of challenges, but staying true to yourself, ethical and honest, that’s a rarity, and I really respect him for that. Of course, I love him; he’s my husband. But with love, that respect is equally important. As a wife, as an artiste, as someone who’s part of the same industry, I respect him. He’s taken the harder way, done what he believes is right, and what gives him peaceful sleep.”

Common Past, Awkward Present: Twinkle Khanna’s Ex-File Stuns Kajol

Mumbai: Did you know that Twinkle Khanna and Kajol have a common ex-boyfriend? Twinkle Khanna made this revelation during a recent episode of Two Much with Twinkle and Kajol. After Twinkle made this reveal, Kajol was left blushing, and then she asked Twinkle not to name the man. Twinkle and Kajol drop the bombshell while playing This or That.

When asked, “Best friends shouldn’t date each other’s exes”, Twinkle agreed and said,

“My friends are more important to me than any man. Voh toh kahi pe bhi mil jayega (That can be found anywhere).” Looking at Kajol, she continued, “We have

an ex in common, but we can’t say.” To which Kajol nervously replied, “Shut up, I beg you.” This left everyone in splits. The romance chatter continued as Kriti Sanon, who was a guest on the show, spilt about her current crush and confessed she’s a total hopeless romantic at heart, “Whoever it is, is not from the industry, so that’s great. I love romance. I love the idea of being in love. I also love love stories, jo bahaut kam ban rahi hai aaj kal (I also love love stories, which are being made very rarely these days).”

Kriti Sanon has lately been in the news for her rumoured dating life. The actress is said to be in a relationship with NRI millionaire heir Kabir Bahia, with whom she previously jettied off for her birthday vacation. Born in November 1999, Kabir Bahia is said to be a UK-based businessman who did his schooling at a boarding school in England. Hailing from an affluent family, he is also the founder of Worldwide Aviation and Tourism Limited. He is the son of Kuljinder Bahria, the owner of Southall



Travel, a UK-based travel agency. Kuljinder and his family’s net worth was £427 million, stated an HT report, quoting the 2019 Sunday Times Rich List. Besides being a successful businessman, Kabir Bahia also appears to have close ties to the cricket industry.

He is often spotted hanging out with leading Indian cricketers and attending various events and weddings with them. From partying with former India captain MS Dhoni and his wife Sakshi Dhoni during the New Year 2024 celebrations to attending Hardik Pandya and Natasa Stankovic’s Udaipur wedding in 2023, he is quite a known face in the celebrity circle.

Miranda & Andy: Fashion’s Most Iconic Duo Reunites in Stylish Prada 2 Teaser

Agency: The first teaser of The Devil Wears Prada 2 is finally here, and it brings back Miranda Priestly and Andrea ‘Andy’ Sachs after almost two decades. This opens with a close-up of a woman’s red stilettos clicking confidently across the floor as people step aside, making way for her. The visuals cut between racks of couture, bustling dressing rooms and models getting ready.

The camera returns to the mystery woman entering a lift, only for it to be revealed that she is Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep), the editor-in-chief of Runway magazine. Just as the elevator doors are about to shut, Andy Sachs (Anne Hathaway) enters. With a smirk on her face, Miranda says, “Took you long enough,” to which Andy, who was once her assistant, slides on her sunglasses and smiles. Sharing the teaser, 20th Century Studios wrote, “A sequel? For spring? Ground-breaking. Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway, Emily Blunt, and Stanley Tucci return in The Devil Wears Prada 2, in theatres May 1, 2026. Watch the teaser trailer now.”

Fans were ecstatic to see Miranda and Andy not just reunite but seemingly stand as equals this time. One netizen remarked,



“Oh my goodness! She let Andy ride in the elevator with her?” “SUMMER 2026 IS FOR THE GIRLS!” added another fan. Over the last couple of months, the looks of the main characters from the film have been revealed. Meryl, Anne, Emily Blunt and Stanley Tucci were also seen shooting on the streets of New York. The story this time is expected to explore Miranda’s career in a changing media

landscape, especially as traditional print magazines struggle to survive. Tension rises when she crosses paths with Emily Blunt’s character, now a high-powered executive at a luxury brand Miranda needs for advertising. While fans are eager to see how Andy Sachs fits into this updated storyline, her role remains under wraps, especially since she left Runway in the original film’s ending.

Priyanka Chopra Joins Forces with Mahesh Babu & Rajamouli: See Her First Look as ‘Mandakini’

Hyderabad: Priyanka Chopra’s first look in Globetrotter has been released, and it certainly lives up to the excitement around her return to Indian cinema. SS Rajamouli recently shared the much-awaited first look of Priyanka from his film Globetrotter. It quickly went viral on social media with her fans showering praise and love on the same.

SS Rajamouli shared the look on X and wrote, “The woman who redefined Indian Cinema on the global stage. Welcome back, Desi Girl! @priyankachopra Can’t wait for the world to witness your myriad shades of MANDAKINI. #Globetrotter.” The poster features Priyanka dressed in a vibrant yellow saree, holding a gun, seemingly confronting her enemies. Her brave action look is likely to bring back memories among fans of the impactful roles she



has played throughout her career, both in India and Hollywood. Earlier, Prithi-viraj Sukumaran’s look as the villain Kumbha was revealed. In the first look poster for Kumbha, Prithi-viraj Sukumar is shown in a striking new look, seated in an automated wheelchair. The actor had shared the poster on X, writing, “Presenting KUMBHA.. The most complex mind I

have ever played... Ready for you @urstrulymahesh It’s game on @priyankachopra. Thank you @ss-rajamouli sir for crafting a world that constantly tests my limits...” Globe Trotter, also alternatively known as SSMB29, is SS Rajamouli’s next big film after the huge success of RRR, which starred Ram Charan and Jr NTR. The official title of the film has not yet been an-

nounced by the team.

Mahesh Babu is reportedly cast as a “tough explorer” in this massive, high-budget project. With an estimated budget of \$116 million, SSMB29 is being recognized as one of India’s most “grand and ambitious” films to date. The production started in Hyderabad earlier this year, followed by extensive filming in Odisha and various locations across Africa. According to The Citizen, the film’s synopsis is as follows: “Inspired by Indiana Jones and African adventure classics, the film follows a rugged explorer who sets out on a high-stakes mission through uncharted terrain, battling nature, mystery, and a powerful enemy to uncover a long-lost secret that could change the world. Think ancient legends, wild landscapes, and edge-of-your-seat thrills.”

Vicky Kaushal Credits Sunil Grover for Introducing Him to Wife Katrina Kaif

Mumbai: Vicky Kaushal recently appeared on Two Much with Twinkle and Kajol and opened up about how he first met his wife, Katrina Kaif. Vicky said he met Katrina at an award show, and Sunil Grover introduced them backstage. They later met again at an award show, and as part of the gag, Vicky proposed to Katrina on stage. Vicky Kaushal also said that Katrina will always be a big-

ger star than him.

Vicky Kaushal said, “The first time I met her was at an award show, which I was hosting, and she was a guest there. I performed ‘Chikni Chameli’ with her on stage, and in fact, I met her first on this stage only, and then we went backstage with Sunil Grover. This was the time when Sunil Grover and Katrina had worked together in Bharat, and they were friends

with each other.” Recalling how Sunil Grover introduced him to Katrina, he said, “So three of us are standing together, and I was there, and he (Sunil Grover) introduced me to her. During the first five minutes of meeting Katrina, she taught me how to host the show and what was left of the show was that I just had to go on the stage and say good night to everyone. I had hosted the entire show by



then; it was all done.” He added, “First time I said

‘Hi, Katrina’ and she said ‘Hi, Vicky’ and she started

telling me that you should not care about the audience... I have gotten a full-blown tutorial about how to host an award show, which I had already finished.” He said, “During the second award show, I had asked Katrina, ‘Why don’t you get married to a nice guy like Vicky?’ We weren’t dating at that time.” Vicky Kaushal shared, “The truth is that that was a gag on stage in that show and that no

matter which heroine shows up, I had to ask this question to them. So during that night of the show, I didn’t just ask Katrina, I had asked many actresses that same question, but it was just the clip of me and Katrina that went viral.” Katrina and Vicky eventually began dating and then got married on December 9, 2021. On November 7, 2025, the couple welcomed their first child, a baby boy.

Aditya Suhas Jambhale on Filming Baramulla: ‘I Constantly Felt a Strange Presence’

Mumbai: Director Aditya Suhas Jambhale’s film Baramulla, starring Manav Kaul and Bhasha Sumbli, among others, has sparked conversation among audiences since its release. While the two-time National Award-winning filmmaker is elated with the overwhelming response, he also recalls a chilling experience while shooting the horror-action thriller in Kashmir.

Aditya shared, “The response to the trailer gave me a lot of hope. It begins as an investigative thriller but then suddenly introduces horror and supernatural elements, a fresh approach for the audience. Their excitement kept growing with this new blend of genres. I’m happy and satisfied with the reactions pouring in; people have really appreciated this unique combination.” He continued, “I’ve always wanted to make a genre-bending film. While we’ve done well with horror-comedies, I feel that when it comes to serious horror, we’re still struggling as an industry and haven’t had many strong examples in recent years. My aim was to blend horror in a way that also appeals to mass audiences, and that’s exactly what we’ve



achieved with Baramulla. Viewers loved the slow burn in the first half, the buildup in the second, and the emotional impact of the climax. I wanted the audience to leave the theatre feeling deeply moved, and I believe we succeeded in that.”

Talking about the eerie moments during the shoot, Aditya revealed he constantly felt an eerie presence during the shooting, as if someone was watching them. He added, “There were several truly scary moments in the script, so we needed the perfect location while scouting in Kashmir. The idea was to avoid the typical haunted-house setting. Eventually, we found a hospital that was only about ten percent operational. When I first vis-

ited it with my team, I was immediately convinced it was the right place. Later, we discovered it had once been a leprosy hospital. The caretaker told us that the place had witnessed a lot of death, misery, and tragedy. Before shooting, we sanitized the entire location and re-designed it to look like the protagonist’s house, as required by the script. We shot there for 13 days, and once we began the night shifts, I constantly felt a strange presence — as if someone was watching us. The hospital was located near Nagin Lake, so we often heard eerie sounds carried by the wind.” The director continued that some of the crew members also avoided the regular washrooms and preferred using the vanity vans. He added, “After a few days, I noticed that the crew members only moved around in groups because they were too scared to go out alone in the dark. Some even avoided the regular washrooms and preferred using the vanity vans. It was quite an unsettling experience. To cope with the tension, people on set would often crack jokes just to distract themselves from the fear.”

Director Teja advises Janhvi Kapoor: Focus fully on Tollywood

Mumbai: Noted director Ashok Teja, who recently helmed the supernatural thriller Odela 2 starring Tamannaah, has urged Bollywood actress Janhvi Kapoor to focus on her promising career in Tollywood.

“She has some of the best offers with superstars like Jr NTR in Devara and Ram Charan In Peddi. She should stick to Tollywood to rise to the top,” says Teja. During a recent event, Janhvi expressed her gratitude and excitement, even addressing the audience in Telugu. The actress said, “Nenu eeraju naa idols tho ee stage meeda unnamaduku naku chala anandam ga undi. Ee cinema lo bhagamayye avakasam dorikinanduku naa adrutham ga bhavisthunnani.” (“I’m very happy to be on this stage today with my idols. I feel it’s my good fortune to have gotten the opportunity to be part of this film.”) She added, “Meeku бага nachuthundani anukuntunnu. Ee cinema tho meeku oka unique oka different experience evvatani chala hard work chesam.” (“I believe you’ll really like it. We’ve worked very hard to give you a unique and different experience with this movie.”) Ashok Teja praised her dedication, noting, “She seems to be learning Telugu quite fast. Perhaps she has realized that her true potential lies in Telugu cinema — after all, her



late mother, the legendary Sridevi, was the uncrowned queen of Tollywood from the 1970s to the 1990s. Her lineage will help her connect with Telugu audiences who always encourage genuine talent.” The director also remarked that Janhvi’s Bollywood stint has been underwhelming so far. “Her last film, Parama Sundari, didn’t really set the box office on fire. She has done Hindi movies like Milli and Good Luck Jerry, but they didn’t meet commercial expectations,” he said. With reports suggesting that Janhvi is earning around Rs 4 crore per film in Telugu, Teja believes her future lies firmly in the South. “Her charm and popularity in Tollywood are fresh. She’s being paid better than in Bollywood, working with big stars, and connecting well with audiences. If she continues here, she can reach the top much faster than others since only blockbusters decide rankings,” he concludes.

Mridul Tiwari evicted mid-week, Bigg Boss



Mumbai: Bigg Boss 19 picked up pace this week, and viewers barely had time to recover from the double eviction before another twist hit the house. A surprise mid-week vote, carried out right inside the Bigg Boss living room, ended YouTuber Mridul Tiwari’s run on the show. With the finale only weeks away, the makers are clearly speeding things up — and this elimination landed like a proper jolt for fans and contestants.

As the episode rolled out, the house saw a rare sight: a group of live audience members stepping in for a high-stakes captaincy task. Contestants had to pitch themselves, after which a secret ballot decided the two top contenders. Gaurav Khanna and Sheebaz Badesha secured the most votes, earning their place as captaincy hopefuls. Mridul, however, finished at the bottom and was immediately asked to exit.

TRAVEL

Places in Kashmir to experience snowfall this winter



Gulmarg
Known as the “Meadow of Flowers,” Gulmarg transforms into a winter wonderland as the season shifts. Famous for its ski resorts and being one of the best places to experience snowfall in Kashmir, Gulmarg offers visitors a snowy retreat with breathtaking views of the surrounding snow-capped peaks. Whether you’re into skiing, snowboarding, or simply enjoying the serene beauty of snow-covered meadows, Gulmarg promises an unforgettable experience.

Sonamarg
Often referred to as “The Meadow of Gold,” Sonamarg is another breathtaking location to witness the magic of snowfall in Kashmir. Nestled amidst towering peaks, this beautiful valley receives heavy snowfall during the winter months, making it an ideal location for snow

lovers. Snow-capped meadows, frozen rivers, and the peaceful surroundings of Sonamarg offer a perfect winter escape for adventure enthusiasts and nature lovers alike.

Gurez
Gurez Valley is one of the most hidden gems of Kashmir, making it a perfect spot to experience snowfall without the throngs of tourists. Located in the northeastern part of Kashmir, Gurez is known for its stunning, unspoiled beauty. Surrounded by snow-covered mountains and alpine meadows, Gurez remains untouched by mass tourism, allowing visitors to enjoy a pristine and serene winter experience with snowfall painting the landscape in white.

Kupwara
Located in the northern part of Kashmir, Kupwara

is often less crowded than other tourist hotspots, making it an ideal destination for those seeking a peaceful snowfall experience. Surrounded by dense forests and mountain ranges, the region sees heavy snowfall during winter, blanketing the valleys and creating a picturesque landscape. The charm of Kupwara lies in its pristine environment, making it perfect for a tranquil winter getaway.

Pulwama
Pulwama, a district in Jammu and Kashmir, often experiences snowfall during the winter months, typically from December to February. The region, known for its scenic beauty and landscapes, gets covered in snow, offering a picturesque view. Pulwama’s snowfall attracts tourists and nature lovers, making it an ideal destination for winter sports and photography. The snowfall can be heavy in some areas, especially in higher altitudes like the famous hill stations of Pahalgam and the surrounding areas.

Pahalgam
Pahalgam, known for its lush meadows and the starting point for the Amarnath Yatra, is a popular destination year-round. During the winter, it turns into a snowy haven with its snow-covered mountains, frozen rivers, and scenic views of the valley. Pahalgam’s charm lies in its peaceful atmosphere, offering plenty of opportunities for winter trekking and scenic walks under a blanket of snow.

Baramulla
Situated close to popular destinations like Gulmarg and Pahalgam, Baramulla offers its own unique winter experience with snowfall in the surrounding areas. The region’s scenic beauty, combined with the charm of snow-covered landscapes, makes it a lovely destination for snow lovers. Baramulla’s proximity to other famous spots in Kashmir means you can enjoy the tranquility of this area while being close to bustling tourist destinations. Snowfall here enhances the already breathtaking views of mountains and valleys, making it an ideal place to witness Kashmir’s winter wonderland.

The ‘Whistling Village’ Of Meghalaya Where Every Name Is A Song



India boasts a number of lesser-known treasures that remain unexplored by many. One such hidden gem is Kongthong. This small, picturesque village is located in Meghalaya’s East Khasi Hills, which is approximately 60 kilometers from the capital city of Shillong. This village has a population of about 600 people and is known for its natural beauty and self-sustainability. The place is also renowned for its extraordinary tradition of using musical melodies as names. This ritual has earned Kongthong the nickname ‘The Whistling Village.’ In Kongthong, every individual’s identity is woven into a unique melody, known as Jingrwai Lawbei, or ‘Song of the Clan’s First Woman.’ When a child is born, the mother composes a distinct melody that serves as the child’s life-long identifier. According to reports, this enchanting tradition has been passed down through generations and symbolizes the deep bond between mother and child. The melodic names serve not only as a cultural expression but also as a practical means of communication. Surrounded by dense forests and rugged terrain, conventional communication methods can be challenging in Kongthong. The whistling names enable villagers to call out to one another across long distances, ensuring that the intended recipient recognizes the tune immediately. Each tune is distinct and categorized into two forms. These forms are a longer one that is created at birth while a shorter version of the melody is used for regular interactions. These musical names exist alongside traditional names, which are used for formal identification or by outsiders. Kongthong’s villagers take immense pride in their heritage, which has enabled them to preserve this unique tradition for centuries. The village is an experience unlike any other and has attracted the attention of travelers and cultural enthusiasts in recent times. As the village opens up to ecotourism, visitors can experience the serene environment and immerse themselves in the musical culture. This hidden gem is a must-visit destination for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of India’s rich cultural diversity.

Chicago Essentials- Top Experiences in the City You Cannot Miss

Chicago is the centre stage of history, culture, and diverse neighbourhoods, all of which blend into an unforgettable experience of one of the world’s great cities. Chicago’s top 10 greatest sights and experiences include the magic of Millennium Park and its iconic Cloud Gate sculpture by Indian Origin artist – Anish Kapoor, family fun of Navy Pier, and the iconic deep-dish pizza to the vibrant performing arts scene, showcasing the very best of the windy city. Marvel at the ArchitectureThe city’s skyline reflects more than a century of architectural exploration sparked, in part, by the Great Fire of 1871, which decimated hundreds of old wood-frame and brick buildings on the lakefront. In their place came a new generation of steel structures perfected by the original Chicago School of architects. Today, the Windy City is known worldwide for its collection of towering skyscrapers. Visitors explore the city’s architectural display with tours by foot, water, bike, bus, trolley, or train. Stops include imposing, spare modernist towers reflected in the flat expanse of Lake Michigan and older, smaller buildings packed with history. Moreover, the Loop and the Pilsen neighbourhoods, Oak Park, Wicker Park, and the University of Chicago Campus all preserve and present Chicago’s deep-rooted history and evolving architectural. Browse through the Rich Collection at the Art Institute of Chi-

cagoNo trip to Chicago is complete without a visit to the Art Institute, rated among the world’s top museums. The Art Institute of Chicago is home to the greatest collection of Impressionist paintings outside of Paris, including works by Monet, Renoir, Seurat, and Van Gogh. Explore the Renzo Piano-designed Modern Wing and its extraordinary collection of works by Chagall, Dalí, Matisse, Picasso, and Pollock, and visit the Ryan Learning Center, a free space offering programs and art-making activities for the whole family.Spend an Eventful Day at Millennium ParkCompleted in 2004, Millennium Park is a state-of-the-art collection of architecture, landscape design and art located in the heart of the city. Chicago’s second-largest visitor attraction is a lively gathering spot welcoming five million visitors annually to enjoy hundreds of cultural programs including concerts, exhibitions, tours, and family activities. A park of this stature would not be complete without a significant nod to Chicago’s architectural pedigree. One of the park’s most famous architectural elements includes the iconic sculpture officially named Cloud Gate, but known by most as The Bean, designed by Anish Kapoor.Explore the Navy Pier Like a LocalCentrally located on Chicago’s beautiful lakefront, Navy Pier is a civic landmark and one of the top-visited leisure and cultural destinations in the world. It serves as a world-class public place in the vein

of famed architect Daniel Burnham’s vision for the Chicago lakefront—as an attractive and useful public space where the people of the city and from all over could gather to play, interact, and foster community. Open year-round, Navy Pier offers entertainment, food, and cultural attractions for the whole family.Enjoy 360-degrees view of Chicago360 Chicago is an attraction that will forever change the way visitors see Chicago. TILT debuted in the spring of 2014, providing the ultimate window to the Windy City. A one-of-a-kind experience, TILT is an enclosed, glass and steel moveable platform that holds up to eight visitors per cycle. Once safely situated inside, the platform slowly tilts outward to an adventurous angle, generating downward-facing views of Chicago – from one thousand feet above The Magnificent Mile providing thrill-seekers an exciting and safe way to take in unsurpassable views of the city, from a never-before-seen angle.Dish on Chicago-Style PizzaChicago-style pie was born in 1943 when The Pizzeria downtown placed a thick crust in a pie-like pan with sides and “inverted” the toppings. Cheese, vegetables, and meat come first, followed by sauce on top. Today, some of the best deep-dish pizzas in Chicago can be found at Pizzeria Uno, Lou Malnati’s Pizzeria, Giordano’s, Gino’s East, and Pequod’s Pizza and every local debates the best!Experience the Amazing Chicago NightlifeChicago has some of the na-

tion’s best restaurants, a deep-rooted history of music, and a diverse theatre and comedy scene that is full of talent. Enthusiasts will love the city’s famed Chicago comedy clubs like Second City and Zanies for laughter-filled evenings. For the best bars in Chicago, there is a wide range of historic taverns, speakeasies, dives, chic rooftop lounges, and cocktail-focused spots all around the city. Add to that a thriving LGBTQ community that invites everyone to enjoy some fierce drag performances and epic dance parties, and you have a city that really comes to life after hours.Hear the Chicago BluesThe city’s signature sound developed when African-American musicians joined the Great Migration north from the Mississippi Delta region after World War II to find work and escape Deep South discrimination. Their traditional Delta blues set tales of rural troubles against a backdrop of acoustic guitars and harmonicas that gradually evolved into the modern Chicago blues sound. Willie Dixon’s Blues Heaven Foundation displays a rich collection of memorabilia in the former home of Chess Records, a leading blues label that employed Willie as a writer, producer, and session musician. Top places in the city to catch a show include Buddy Guy’s Legends, House of Blues Chicago, Kingston Mines, and Rosa’s Lounge.Catch a Performing Arts ShowBroadway in Chicago offers the latest and greatest award-winning musicals in Chica-

go’s vibrant and bustling theatre district at three of the city’s most historic theatres, the Cadillac Palace Theater, James M. Nederlander Theatre, and the CIBC Theatre. Chicago’s theatre scene would not be complete without the performing arts. The Joffrey Ballet is a world-class ballet company presenting classic, cutting-edge, and breathtaking works like Nutcracker. Contemporary dance has a long history in Chicago thanks to the Hubbard Street Dance Company. If classical music is your passion, then do not miss a visit to Symphony Center to see the acclaimed Chicago Symphony Orchestra and legendary conductor, Riccardo Muti.Get Your Retail Fix at Magnificent MileChicago’s famous Magnificent Mile is a bustling hub for stores, restaurants, attractions, and architecture with shopping here being an experience not to be missed. Start at The Shops at North Bridge, a collection of upscale stores and restaurants that serve as the base of North Michigan Avenue. Here you will find one of the country’s largest Nordstrom stores, as well as chic shops like Hugo Boss, Swarovski and Vosges Haut-Chocolat, all in an ultramodern, mega-mall setting. On the north end of the Magnificent Mile lies the 900 North Michigan Shops, where more than 70 luxury retailers such as Gucci, Michael Kors, and Bloomingdale’s combined with diverse dining options create a retail retreat where you will want to stay all day.



Sankranti Special Treats

Nolen Gur to Til Laddoo & Morena Gajak

You focus on ensuring your kite flies high while we ensure you get your Makar Sankranti delicacies on The beginning of the harvest; the marker of prosperity and the harbinger of delicious foods, Makar Sankranti is a tapestry of colours both on the table and in the skies; a festival of camaraderie and bonhomie. And, the occasion calls for digging into delicacies — til laddoos (sweet, bite-sized treats made of sesame seeds and jaggery), khichdi (a comforting bowl of rice and lentils), sakkarai pongal (a South Indian dish made with rice, lentils, jaggery, and ghee) and pinni (a Punjabi speciality made with wheat flour, ghee, and jaggery). If you are short on time, don't worry. Here's where you can order your Sankranti favourites online.

1. Nolen gur

Something of a hero in Indian homes, nolen gur is a jaggery made from the sap of the date palm tree Phoenix sylvestris, which produces the elixir only from November through February. Once collected, the sap is reduced over a fire for a certain amount of time, depending upon the consistency of jaggery desired. A natural sweetener, nolen gur has added its flavour to Indian desserts through the ages. Even Sukumar Ray, father of Satyajit Ray, once declared, “Kintu shobar chaite bhalo, pauruti aar jhola gur (The best of all is bread with jhola gur).” The jaggery forms a core ingredient in many desserts such as roshogulla (a dessert made with Indian cottage cheese in sugar syrup), sandesh (a dessert made with Indian cottage cheese, milk, and sugar syrup), and payesh (a pudding of milk, rice, and sugar). And Joynagar — a West Bengal brand founded in 2016 to help farmers find buyers for their produce — does justice to its depth of flavour. Joynagar exports around the world and is known for its authenticity.

2. Til laddoo

As the chill peaks towards the end of January, Indian homes have their time-tested shield — sesame seeds known to be a ‘warming food’ providing the body with some much-needed heat. Rich in calcium, iron, and magnesium, sesame seeds are versatile and feature in a multitude of savoury dishes and desserts. One of them is til laddoos. In some regions of India, every exchange of the treat is accompanied by the adage ‘Til gud ghya, god god bola’ (Eat sesame and jaggery, speak sweet words). This Makar Sankranti, order your fill of til laddoos from Rajasthan’s Sahu Gajak Bhandar, a century-old heritage brand synonymous with premium handmade gajak (a dry sweet made from sesame seeds or peanuts and jaggery) and chikki (peanut brittle).



3. Morena gajak

Crisp and wholesome is how the world describes this cult favourite that originated in Morena, a city in Madhya Pradesh. The origins of the sweet — made with sesame seeds, jaggery, peanuts, fruits, and ghee — are credited to the royal family of Morena that ruled during the 17th century. But whilst the recipe was a

legible in its taste. The town of Morena is filled with outlets that satisfy a global demand for the sweet. One particular brand that has been serving delicious gajak is Kabliwalas. What started in 1994 as an endeavour to sell packaged premium nuts and dried fruit in Atta Market in the heart of Noida soon blossomed into a brand synonymous with gajak.

4. Puran poli

Nothing in this world can compete with the joy of waking up early on the morning of Makar Sankranti to a hot plate of puran poli (a traditional Indian sweet flatbread filled with a mixture of chickpeas and jaggery). While the dish's protein content makes it a perfect winter recipe, the combination of sweet jaggery and wholesome chana dal (chickpeas) symbolises prosperity, abundance, and good health. And you'll be hard-pressed to find a better spot than Pune's iconic Chitale Bandhu to order your share of puran poli online. The brand wears its history proudly on its sleeve — Chitale Bandhu was established in 1950, by the Late Shri Bhausaheb Chitale and has become a household name. Today, it is known for its range of namkeen (savoury snacks) and sweets, especially its Maharashtrian bakarwadi (sweet and spicy disc-shaped snack).

5. Murmura laddoo

One of my personal favourites, murmura laddoo (a popular Indian sweet made from puffed rice, jaggery, cardamom, ghee, and dry fruits) is a light, crispy, and delicious snack that makes it to the menu of Makar Sankranti for its choice of ingredients. Like the others mentioned in this list, the combination of murmura and jaggery is considered auspicious and believed to summon good health, prosperity, and warmth in the winter. One spot to order your murmura laddoos online is Patankar Khauwale which dates back to the late 1940s. In the heart of Pune city, a gentleman, Vasant Patankar, founded a store on the bustling street of Bajirao Road. In the '60s, the store was host to a well-heeled crowd, the likes of legendary artists. Today, it is an eponymous brand.

6. Pinni

What do you get when you blend wheat flour, ghee, jaggery, and dry fruits? A delicious energy ball, it seems, that North India likes to call pinni. While the flour gives the sweet a characteristic texture, the ghee lends it a melt-in-mouth flavour. The resultant sweets are a powerhouse of antioxidants, a welcome addition to the winter. You can order your fill of pinni from Pahalwan's, started in the 1920s when a gentleman, Anant Ram Abrol, used to work in a sweet shop owned by his mentor Mani Ram Pahalwan in Machhi Hatta, Lahore. Having gained significant experience, Anant Ram named his venture 'Pahalwan di Hatti', which began selling yogurt (curd), barfi (fudge), and rabri (sweetened and thickened milk).

Traditional Khichdi recipes for Makar Sankranti

Makar Sankranti is the festival of harvest which marks a massive celebration in India. Food indeed takes the top spot in its celebrations. However, among those traditional delicacies, Khichdi stands in the center representing simplicity and wholesome-ness. This simple food made from harmonious mix of rice, lentils, and spices has diverse regional variations to make it so unique. Now, let us see some authentic traditional Khichdi recipes one must try out on this special festive occasion.

Bengali Bhuni Khichuri

A favorite in West Bengal, Bhuni Khichuri is the dry, flavour-rich version that is made from roasted moong dal and gobindobhog rice. The aromatic spices like bay leaves, cinnamon, and cardamom add more flavour to it. Seasonal vegetables like peas, cauliflower, and potatoes are added to it and cooked till perfection. Fry eggplant slices or have tomato chutney with it for an authentic Bengali festive meal. Start by roasting moong dal until golden brown and fragrant. Cook with gobindobhog rice, turmeric, and salt. In another pan, make a tempering by heating ghee, bay leaves, cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves. Add the vegetables, saute lightly, and then mix with the cooked rice and dal. Simmer until all the flavours combine in harmony. Masoor Dal Khichdi in northern India, Masoor Dal Khichdi is a staple for Makar Sankranti. This version is light yet flavourful, made with red lentils and basmati rice. Asafoetida, cumin, and ginger add a comforting aroma. It is often served with ghee and pickles; it is a soulful meal. Wash and soak red lentils and rice. In a pressure cooker, heat ghee, and temper with cumin seeds and asafoetida. Add ginger, green chilies, and turmeric. Mix in the lentils and rice, then cook with water and salt until soft and mushy. Drizzle some ghee before serving. Makar Sankranti is the festival of harvest which marks a massive celebration in India. Food indeed takes the top spot in its celebrations. However, among those traditional delicacies, Khichdi stands in the center representing simplicity and wholesome-ness. This simple food made from harmonious mix of rice, lentils, and spices has diverse regional variations to make it so unique. Now, let us see some authentic



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Vaghareli Khichdi

A classic from Gujarat, Vaghareli Khichdi is a spiced and tempered version that is both comforting and flavourful. Made with rice, tuvar dal, and vegetables, it is seasoned with mustard seeds, curry leaves, and green chilies. This one-pot dish is a favorite during festive gatherings. Cook rice and tuvar dal together with turmeric and salt. In a pan, heat oil and prepare the tempering with mustard seeds, curry leaves, and green chilies. Add diced vegetables like carrots, peas, and potatoes, and saute until soft. Mix the cooked rice and dal into the tempering,

and garnish with coriander leaves.

South Indian Pongal

Ven Pongal, a savoury Khichdi variation from Tamil Nadu, is synonymous with Makar Sankranti. Made with rice, yellow moong dal, and a generous amount of ghee, it is tempered with black pepper, cumin, and cashews. It is offered as prasad during the festival and enjoyed with coconut chutney or sambar. Dry roast moong dal and cook it with rice, turmeric, and water until soft. Prepare a tempering with ghee, black pepper, cumin, and cashews. Mix the tempering into the cooked rice and dal. Garnish with fresh curry leaves and serve hot. Chana Dal Khichdi

In Bihar, Chana Dal Khichdi is a staple on Makar Sankranti. This is a hearty preparation made with rice, chana dal, and a number of spices. It is accompanied by Aloo Chokha and ghee, which makes it a wholesome festive delight.

Boil chana dal with rice and turmeric. Add salt until it is very soft. Ghee should be heated in a pan. Add cumin seeds, dried red chilies, and bay leaves while tempering and pour over Khichdi while mixing well. Serve with ghee and all accompaniments. These are the traditional recipes of Khichdi that reflect the richness in Indian culinary diversity. From Pongal to Vaghareli Khichdi, mild and creamy, to spicy ones, they make the spirit of Makar Sankranti all the more vibrant. Incorporate these in your festive menu and feel the warmth and comfort that comes across the table.

Simple Kheer recipes to try at home

As we step into the New Year, it is time to embark on new beginnings by indulging in something sweet, and what can be better than celebrating with Kheer? There's no denying that Kheer is the most loved Indian delight and is made by simmering milk with rice, grains, sugar/jaggery, nuts, and dry fruits. This comforting and rich delicacy is perfect for any occasion. Whether you're looking to prepare a traditional kheer or are interested in new variations, these six simple kheer recipes are easy to make and will surely satisfy your sweet cravings. Classic Rice Kheer Rice kheer, also known as Chawal Ki Kheer, is the most traditional variety. It's a creamy, comforting dessert that requires just a few ingredients: rice, milk, sugar, and cardamom. Start by boiling rice in milk until it softens and the milk thickens. Add sugar, crushed cardamom, and a few saffron strands for extra richness. Garnish with chopped almonds or cashews, and you have a classic dessert that's perfect for any occasion. Carrot Kheer Carrot kheer is a healthy, flavorful twist on the traditional rice version. Grated carrots are cooked in milk, sugar, and cardamom to create a rich, smooth kheer with the natural sweetness of carrots. To make it, cook grated carrots in milk until soft, add sugar, and simmer until the mixture thickens. Top with a garnish of chopped nuts like cashews or pistachios for crunch. This vibrant dessert is both delicious and nutritious. Mango Kheer Mango kheer brings the tropical flavor of ripe mangoes to the traditional dessert. To make it, prepare a basic rice kheer and then blend in fresh mango puree once the kheer has cooled to room temperature. The result is a smooth, fruity dessert with the creamy richness of milk and the natural sweetness of mango. Garnish with extra mango pieces or a sprinkling of saffron for an added burst of flavor. Sago Kheer Sago kheer, or sabudana kheer, is made with sago pearls (sabudana), a starch derived from tapioca. Soak the sago pearls and cook them in boiling milk until they turn translucent and soft. Add sugar, cardamom, and saffron for flavor. This kheer is light yet filling and chewy texture due to the unique texture of sago pearls. It's often made during fasting times but can be enjoyed at any time as a comforting treat. Chia Kheer Chia is a healthier, the classic seed kheer. Simply soak chia seeds in milk (or coconut milk for a dairy-free option) and let them sit until they expand and thicken, creating a similar texture to tapioca. Add sweetened jaggery and flavor with cardamom. The unique texture, and this kheer is packed with omega-3s, fiber, and protein. Serve it chilled as a refreshing, nutritious dessert. Pineapple Kheer Pineapple kheer is a tangy variation that combines the sweetness of milk with the tropical flavor of pineapple. Start by cooking chopped pineapple in milk until it becomes soft and the flavors meld together. Add sugar and cardamom, then simmer until the kheer thickens. Garnish with fresh pineapple chunks or mint leaves for a vibrant and refreshing twist on the classic. It's perfect for a light, fruity dessert after a meal.



SPORTS

Is Messi going back to Barcelona Laporta, the club president, provides an update

New Delhi: Barcelona all-time great Lionel Messi returning to the Catalan giant is “unrealistic”, the club’s president Joan Laporta said on Wednesday. The 38-year-old Argentine superstar made a surprise appearance at Barca’s Camp Nou stadium on Sunday night and said he hoped “one day I can return, and not just to say goodbye as a player, as I never got to do”.Eight-time Ballon d’Or winner Messi, Barca’s record goal-scorer and appearance maker, left for Paris Saint-Germain in 2021 after two decades there because the club’s precarious financial position meant it could not afford to keep him.

“Out of the utmost respect for Messi, the pro-

fessionals at the club, Barca, and the Barca club members, I believe that now, for me to make speculation that is unrealistic, nor do I think is fair, well, I believe that is not appropriate,” Laporta told The president, who was in charge at the time of Messi’s departure, said he did not regret what happened because tribute can make up for what wasn’t done, I think it would be a good thing,” explained Laporta.“It would be right that he has the best tribute (match) in the world, and it would be wonderful to have it here, in front of 105,000 fans,” he continued.The president said Inter Miami forward Messi’s surprise visit to the stadium on Sunday was a “spontaneous” display of his



love of the club.Messi is currently in Spain with the Argentina national team, where it is training before a friendly against Angola.

BCCI’s message to Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma Play domestic one-dayers to play for India

New Delhi: As speculation grows over Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma’s ODI future, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has reportedly mandated domestic cricket participation for the veteran duo, if they are to be considered for selection in the national team. Having retired from Tests and T20Is, Rohit and Kohli remain active cricketers only in the 50-over format. Hence, their match fitness for selection has become a big subject of debate. Ahead of the squad selection for the South Africa ODI series, the subject of the duo’s potential participation in the Vijay Hazare Trophy has intensified. According to a report in the Indian Express, Rohit has already informed the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) that he will be available to play in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Kohli, on the other hand, is yet to clear the status of his availability for the domestic one-day tournament. In fact, the level of Rohit’s dedication

can be understood by the fact that he has informed the MCA that he might even be available to play for the team in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament too, which is scheduled to start on November 26.Not long ago, the BCCI selection committee chief, Ajit Agarkar, reiterated the importance of playing domestic cricket for players if they are to be selected in the national team.“We made it clear a year, or a couple of years back, that whenever players are available, they should be playing domestic cricket. That’s the only way you’ll keep yourself sharp and playing cricket, if you’ve got a long enough break. Whether that’s possible with the international cricket you’re playing or mestic cricket,” he had said on the subject.The duo returned to the national team for the first time since the conclusion of the ICC Champions Trophy in the 3-match ODI series against Australia. In the series, Rohit emerged as

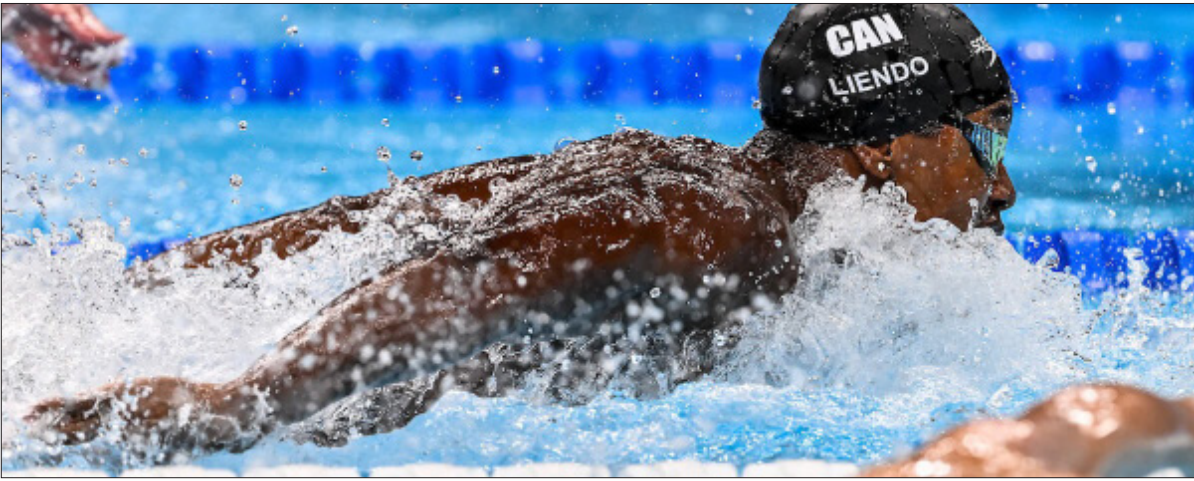


the player of the match, scoring one fifty and a century. Kohli, on the other hand, only managed to live up to his potential in the final match of the series, which was a dead rubber, registering a 74-run knock.“The board and team management have conveyed to both of them that they will have to play domestic cricket if they want to play for India. As they both have retired from two formats,

they have to play domestic cricket to be match fit,” sources in the BCCI told Kohli and Rohit returned to play the Ranji Trophy, featuring in one match each.Though both later decided to hang up their boots ahead of the squad selection for the England tour, a similar availability is sought from them if they are to fight for selection in India’s 2027 ODI World Cup team.

Cal’s Yamato Okadome a Star on NCAA Scene, Potential to Shake Up Japanese Breaststroke Hierarchy

New Delhi: Strength in the breaststroke has long been a hall-mark of Japan. The likes of Yoshiyuki Tsuruta and Kosuke Kitajima have been enshrined in the International Swimming Hall of Fame as multi-time Olympic champions. Meanwhile, Nobutaka Taguchi was a force during the first half of the 1970s, his career highlighted by a gold medal in the 100-meter breaststroke at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. Okadome is coming off a freshman season in which he registered top times of 50.62 in the 100 breast and 1:50.19 in the 200 breast, so his early-season efforts for the 2025-26 season are noteworthy. During that initial campaign with the Bears, Okadome was third and second, respectively, in the breaststroke events at the ACC Championships. He followed with a pair of finals appearances at the NCAA Championships.Obviously established as an elite short-course performer, the question is whether Okadome can transfer that success to the Olympic-sized pool and push Japan’sOkadome currently owns a career best of 1:00.21 in the long-course version of the 100 breaststroke and has been 2:12.19 in the 200 breaststroke. His time from the 200 breaststroke is from 2022, so it wouldn’t be surprising to see Okadome generate a significant drop over four laps.For now, Okadome will continue to serve as a premier contributor for Cal. Down the road, keep an eye on the 20-year-old among Japan’s top-end breaststrokers. Perhaps the emergence of another world-class performer is on the hori-



zon.These days, Japan is particularly rich in breaststroke depth. While five men rank in the top-25 in the world this year in the 100 breaststroke, the 200 distance is even more impressive. features three Japanese athletes among the top-five performers in the world, and four of the top-10. On the road to the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, the battle for supremacy should be sensational. As Cal moves through the fall season, the Golden

Bears have already received several strong performances from Yamato Okadome, a key figure on last year’s squad that claimed a runnerup finish at the NCAA Championships. A sophomore from Chiba, Japan, Okadome shined over the weekend during Cal’s triple-distance meet with Stanford. Across all three breaststroke distances, he went 23.46 in the 50 breaststroke, 50.89 in the 100 breaststroke and 1:52.20 in the 200 breaststroke.

South Africa confident of history of our own in India Head coach Shukri Conrad

New Delhi: Head coach Shukri Conrad said South Africa are confident of creating history in their upcoming two-match Test series against Shubman Gill’s India. The Proteas begin their campaign on Friday, November 14, with the opening Test at Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

“It gives us a lot of confidence that if the conditions are (conducive) we feel that we’ve got the armoury to obviously challenge India in that respect as well. We’re quietly confident that we can make history of our own here in Eden Gardens and in India,” Conrad said.

“Look India, tough challenge anyway in the world, and when you come to an iconic venue like Eden Gardens, it just makes it even tougher.“I don’t think you can compare the quality of the sides we played against (Pakistan) to India, and this will be our biggest challenge. Certainly in my 20th match, I don’t think there’s been a bigger challenge (than this),” Conrad added.South Africa’s spinners impressed



in Pakistan, where Simon Harmer, Senuran Muthusamy, and Keshav Maharaj combined for 33 wickets. Harmer and Muthusamy bagged one six-wicket haul each, while Maharaj stood out with a seven-wicket performance.

Having toured India seven times, South Africa have managed just one series win - back in 2000. Conrad believes their strong spin attack of Senuran Muthusamy, Keshav Maharaj, and

Simon Harmer gives them a real chance to end their 25-year wait for a Test series victory on Indian soil. “Having good spinners in your team, does that add spice to the overall contest? Yes, I think it gives us a lot of confidence. Not saying that we didn’t have good spinners in the past, but we certainly think we’ve got a better pack of spinners now in Keshav, Simon and Sen,” Conrad said during a press conference on Wednesday.

Japan Masters 2025: Kiran and Shetty eliminated, but Lakshya advanced to the second round

New Delhi: India’s Lakshya Sen advanced to the second round of the Japan Masters, a BWF World Tour Super 500 event, in Kumamoto City on Wednesday. Seventh seed Lakshya took down local hope and World No. 26 Koki Watanabe 21-12, 21-16 in 39 minutes. The Indian will take on Singapore’s Jia Heng Jason Teh for a place in the quarterfinals.However, Kiran George and Ayush Shetty

both suffered straight-games defeats. While Malaysia’s Kok Jing Hong beat Kiran 22-20, 21-10, fourth-seeded Japanese Kodai Naraoka took down Shetty 21-16, 21-11. Later in the day, H. S. before eventually losing 12-21, 21-19, 20-22 to Americans Presley Smith and Jennie Gai. Later in the day, H.S. Prannoy and Tharun Manneppalli will also be in action in the opening round of men’s singles.

Ashes 2025-26: Smith says England kings could struggle

Mumbai: Steve Smith believes England may have picked the wrong bowlers for the Ashes, suggesting Australian wickets will be better suited to seam and swing than an all-out pace attack. The tourist is heavily relying on speed merchants led by Jofra Archer and Mark Wood for the five-Test showdown, with Gus Atkinson, Brydon Carse, Matthew Potts and Josh Tongue also in the squad.Almost all of them can deliver rockets in excess of 145 kph (90 mph), but none are seen as traditional seamers.Smith, who will captain Australia at the first Test at Perth next week with Pat Cummins injured, said the wickets could better suit bowlers like James Anderson and Stuart Broad.Smith’s assessment came after playing Sheffield Shield matches at the Gabba in Brisbane and Sydney Cricket Ground, where he was in fine touch with the bat.

In-form Dhruv Jurel slots in at 6, top-order Cheteshwar Pujara

New Delhi: Cheteshwar Pujara believes Dhruv Jurel is primed to take over the No. 6 batting position for India in the opening Test at Eden Gardens, beginning Friday, November 14. With the squad preparing for South Africa’s arrival, Pujara feels the in-form wicket-keeper-batter has presented an undeniable case for selection.

India’s top order, which has shown stability and consistency

since the England tour, should remain unchanged, according to Pujara. He expects Pujara, who played 103 Tests for India, sees the vacant No. 6 slot as the natural place for Jurel to walk in. KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal to continue their established opening partnership, with Sai Sudharsan at No. 3, Shubman Gill at No. 4 and Rishabh Pant at No. 5. These five, he believes, have already laid a strong foun-



dition and need continuity heading into the series.

Macpherson, a virtual qualifier, will compete

New Delhi: Sydney professional Gavin Macpherson will tee off at the New South Wales Open this week, having qualified late last month without setting foot on a single blade of real grass.The Glasgow-born former footballer earned his spot at the tournament and a cheque of A\$10,000 (\$6,498) by winning the inaugural NSW Virtual Open, which was played on a network of golf simulators. “I’m a bit of a gear head, so I like to look at all numbers and data and stuff like that. Then I saw Golf NSW had come up with this pathway, and so I entered the qualifying and got into the final, and then it all paid off, thankfully.”

Macpherson played



semi-professional football for Scottish club Stirling Albion before moving to Australia a decade ago and now works at the exclusive Royal Sydney Golf Club. It was his knowledge of another course in Sydney’s eastern suburbs, however, that helped him win his ticket to this week’s A\$800,000 tournament.“The course on the final was Bonnie Doon and I have played there a few times, so I know where I was going and stuff like that,” he added.

Chess World Cup, Round 4:

Arjun, Praggnanandhaa and Harikrishna draw; Pranav, Karthik knocked out

New Delhi: No Indians won — a rare sight in chess these days. But that has been the case in the last two days. In fact, two Indians — V. Pranav and Karthik Venkataraman — were knocked out of the Chess World Cup at Resort Rio, here on Wednesday.. But both Pranav and Karthik can head home with their heads held high; they were beaten by stronger rivals, Nodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan and Le Quang Liem of Vietnam, respectively.They have done exceedingly well to have reached the round of 32: Pranav had started as the 60th seed and Karthik as the 109th.

Three Indians now remain in contention, but to extend their stay, they will have to win their tie-breakers on Thursday.The host’s best hopes, Arjun Erigaisi and R. Praggnanandhaa, seeds No. 2 and 3, were held to draws by Hungarian Peter Leko and Russian Daniil Dubov.

The other Indian, P. Harikrishna, seeded 24th, also split the point with a lesser-rated player -- Nils Grandelius of Sweden. On the 16 boards, there were just three decisive results, the other winner being Alexander Donchenko, who overcame Matthias Bluebaum in an all-German battle. He, like Le Quang and Yakubboev,



made it to the fifth round without having to play the tie-breakers.

Also making it to the last 16 were former champion Levon Aronian of Armenia and the Mexican on a great run here -- Jose Martínez Alcantara. After winning on Tuesday, they needed only to draw in Game 2.

About his 35-move draw with Ra-

doslaw Wojtaszek of Poland, the articulate Aronian said, “My aim was to get the draw, so it was more like dribbling time out in the NBA.”Alcantara’s reaction was a bit more prosaic after his draw with Alexey Sarana of Serbia.“I want to thank my supporters from Mexico and Peru, for whom I used to play earlier.”