



THE MILEAGE

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BRIEF NEWS

Cashless Treatment for Accident Victims

New Delhi: After a successful pilot in a couple of states, the Centre will introduce a scheme to facilitate cashless treatment for road accident victims Rs 1.5 lakh each

UGC norms lifts cap on contract teacher hiring

New Delhi: The University Grants Commission (UGC) on Monday draft VC recruitment guidelines released Industry/public sector experts can be VCs

Bullet Train Debut in India Soon: PM

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a series of railway projects via video conferencing from New Delhi on Monday. During the event, Modi highlighted railway transformation.

8 DRG jawans, driver killed in Chhattisgarh blast

Bijapur: 9 killed in Naxal blast in Chhattisgarh with a powerful improvised explosive device (IED). Police said.

Caste Politics Threat to Rural Peace: PM Modi

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said some people are trying to disturb peace in the name of caste politics and called for thwarting such designs to preserve the social harmony in rural parts of the country.

Inaugurating the Grameen Bharat Mahotsav, the Prime Minister exuded confidence that villages will play a key role in pushing forward the dream of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Without mentioning any names, Modi said certain people are trying to disturb peace by spreading the venom of caste politics. "We have to work to strengthen the heritage of peace and harmony of villages," he said. Recalling

the steps taken by the NDA government since 2014, for



rural development, Modi, quoting an SBI research report, said poverty in rural India came down to below 5 per cent from 26 per cent in 2012.

The Prime Minister emphasized that, unlike the previous government, which neglected rural India and left villages deprived of basic necessities even after decades of independence His government now focuses on village empowerment.

One Nation, One Election

Parliamentary Panel Convenes for Initial Meeting

New Delhi: The parliamentary panel constituted to scrutinise the two bills on simultaneous elections held its first meeting on Wednesday.

Officials of the Ministry of Law and Justice are briefing the panel members on the provisions of the proposed laws, sources said.

Headed by BJP MP PP Chaudhary, the 39-member joint committee of Parliament comprises members from all major parties, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra from Congress,



Sanjay Jha from JD(U), Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde, AAP's Sanjay Singh, and Kalyan Banerjee from Trinamool Congress.

Chaudhary is a former minister of state for law.

The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws

(Amendment) Bill were introduced in the Lok Sabha during the recent Winter Session and referred to the committee.

The government decided to increase the committee's strength from 31 to 39, as more political parties expressed their desire to be part of the exercise to examine the two draft legislations on simultaneous elections.

Former Union ministers Anurag Thakur, Parshotam Rupala and Manish Tewari and several other

lawmakers, including Anil Baluni, Bansuri Swaraj and Sambit Patra, are also members of the committee.

The panel has 27 members from the Lok Sabha and 12 from the Rajya Sabha.

Congress leader Salman Khurshid highlighted the complexity of implementing such a system, saying, "It is not an easy task."

When the parliamentary committee sits, all the issues will be placed before it and will be discussed."



Rescue workers standing around a coal mine where at least nine workers were trapped in Assam. (AP)

Justin Trudeau Announces Resignation as Canada's Prime Minister

■ Trudeau cites internal struggles for not being the best option in the next election

Ottawa: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation on Monday, saying he will leave office as soon as the ruling Liberal party chooses a new leader.

"I intend to resign as party leader, as prime minister," Trudeau, who has been in power since 2015, told reporters in Ottawa following a protracted political crisis that saw top Liberal allies urge him to quit.

Trudeau, the latest incumbent to be driven out amid rising voter dissatisfaction worldwide, said it had become clear to him that he cannot "be the leader during the next elections due to internal battles."



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks at Rideau Cottage in Ottawa on January 6, 2025

He planned to stay on as prime minister until a new leader of the Liberal Party is chosen. "I don't easily back down faced with a fight, especially a very important one for our party and the country.

But I do this job because

the interests of Canadians and the well being of democracy is something that I hold dear," he said.

An official familiar with the matter said Parliament, which had been due to resume January 27, will be suspended until March 24.

Doctor Raped by Colleague in Gwalior

Gwalior: A 25-year-old junior doctor has allegedly been raped by her colleague at an abandoned hostel in a government-run medical college in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior city, police said.

The alleged incident took place on Sunday and the accused, also aged 25, was later arrested, the police said on Monday.

The victim was to appear for an exam and was staying in the girls' hostel of the Gajraraja Medical College, City Superintendent of Police Ashok Jadon said.

The accused, also a junior doctor who studied with the victim, called her to meet at an old hostel for boys, which is now lying abandoned, he said.

When the woman reached the uninhabited facility, the accused threatened her and raped her, the official said.

The victim later lodged a complaint at Kampu police station here following which the accused was arrested and booked under relevant legal provisions, the police said.

Congress Plans Major Overhaul Following Election Losses

New Delhi: Stung by the electoral setbacks in the assembly elections, the Congress is set for a major organisational shake-up in the coming months. It is in tune with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge's announcement during the Congress Working Committee meeting in Belagavi that 2025 will be marked by efforts to implement the Udaipur Declaration and equipping the party with necessary skills to win polls from the booth to the central level.

According to sources, the party will effect major changes in AICC, state units, general secretary/ secretary levels and state in-charges, among others.

Security forces seize WY tablets worth Rs 75 lakhs



Imphal: Security forces in Churachandpur, Manipur intercepted a large consignment of contraband drugs worth over Rs 75 lakhs in the international grey market.

The seizure was made along the Manipur-Myanmar border in Churachandpur district on Sunday.

Acting on intelligence inputs, the security forces apprehended two suspected smugglers, identified as P Thangkhanlam (45) and Mangliankhup (32), both residents of Churachandpur district.

The duo was found carrying WY tablets and Brown Sugar in a four-wheeler.

The recovered contraband includes approximately 776 grams of suspected Brown Sugar, packed in 60 soap cases, and 537 tablets of suspected WY tablets weighing 60 grams.

A four-wheeler was also seized from the possession of the arrested individuals.

The arrested persons and the seized items have been handed over to the Churachandpur police station for further investigation.

A case has been registered under the NDPS Act, and efforts are underway to trace the vehicle's owner and those involved in the drug trafficking operation.

China Reasserts Brahmaputra Dam Plans, India Concerned

India has urged China to protect downstream states' interests from upstream activities

New Delhi: China has reiterated its plans to construct the world's largest dam on the Yarlung Zangbo River in Tibet, despite concerns raised by India and Bangladesh. Yarlung Zangbo River is known as the Brahmaputra in Assam.

The project, located near the Arunachal Pradesh border in a seismically active region, has been approved after "rigorous scientific evaluation" and will not harm downstream countries, according to



Chinese officials. The proposed dam, estimated to cost USD 137 billion, has drawn criticism due to its

potential environmental and geopolitical implications. India has expressed concerns about the proj-

ect's impact on water flow and the potential for downstream flooding.

"The project will not have a negative impact on the ecological environment, geological conditions and the rights and interests related to water resources of downstream countries," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Monday.

He claimed the dam would even aid in disaster prevention and climate change mitigation.

Assam Mine Disaster: 3 Dead, 6 Missing Amid Rising Floodwaters

Guwahati: Rescue operations are underway in the remote coal mines of Assam's Dima Hasao district after a sudden surge of water trapped nine miners deep underground.

As of Tuesday afternoon, three miners have been confirmed dead, while six others remain unaccounted for, their fate hanging in the balance. The miners were

trapped after a powerful gush of water, believed to have been triggered by the breaching of an underground water source during excavation, rapidly inundated the mine at the Assam Coal Quarry in the Umrangso area.

Workers inside the mine were caught completely off guard, with many unable to escape the rising floodwaters.

Rescue efforts were immediately launched, with a multi-agency response involving the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Indian Army, and Assam Rifles.

Teams of skilled divers, equipped with specialized underwater gear, have been tirelessly working to navigate the treacherous.

7.1 Magnitude Quake Hits Nepal, Tremors in Assam

Guwahati: A powerful earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter Scale struck Tibet near the Nepalese border early Tuesday morning, sending tremors across large parts of India, including Bihar, Assam, and several other regions. The epicenter of the quake was located 93 km north-east of Lobuche, Nepal, according to the (USGS).

Serial theft gang busted in Itanagar

Guwahati: The police in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh have successfully dismantled a gang responsible for multiple thefts in the Itanagar Capital Region.

The gang's modus operandi involved targeting bank premises and parking areas, using deceptive tactics such as dropping fake currency notes to distract victims while stealing their valuables.

Their elderly appearance and temporary residency in Arunachal Pradesh had allowed them to evade suspicion until now, police said.

The police investigation, which lasted for a month, led to the arrest of three individuals.

They were identified as Chandan Gowala (57) from West Bengal, Deepak Sharma (57) from Uttar Pradesh, and Rakesh Singh (47) from West Bengal.

Tripura nears full electrification, electric trains coming by Feb 25

This Project aims to strengthen Tripura's economy and connectivity



Agartala: Tripura is on track to launch electric train services by February, with the Rs 46-crore railway electrification project nearly complete.

This initiative, started in 2022, aims to replace diesel-powered trains with more efficient electric trains, connecting Tripura to the national railway grid.

The electrification project covers the crucial Badarpur-Agartala route via Dharmanagar. Tripura

State Electricity Corporation Ltd (TSECL) has confirmed that power will be supplied to railway lines by February.

Three key traction substations in Kumarghat, Teliamura, and Udaipur will play a central role, with Kumarghat already operational and Teliamura and Udaipur set to be ready by January and February, respectively. While the Badarpur-Agartala line is fully electrified, work continues

on the hilly Lumding-Badarpur section. Once completed, the project will provide faster, more efficient rail services, boosting trade, tourism, and overall economic growth in Tripura and the northeast region.

Meanwhile, Kapinjal Kishore Sharma, Chief Public Relations Officer of the North Eastern Railways (NER), confirmed the completion of electrification work from Badarpur to Agartala via Dharmanagar, except for the hilly stretch between Lumding and Badarpur.

"Steps have been taken to complete the electrification work from Lumding to Agartala as early as possible," he said.

According to Guha, the Railways has requested 5 MW of power for each substation daily, with provisions to supply more if required.

Ukhrul Villagers Oppose Withdrawal of Central Forces



Imphal: People of several villages have started a demonstration urging the authorities not to transfer central forces from Uyak hills, where clashes between militants and security personnel were reported recently.

Villagers of Thamnapokpi, Sanasabi and Yaingangpokpi close to Saibol have been on a sit-in at the foothills of Uyak hills since Monday evening, officials said.

The villagers are afraid that members of the central forces such as BSF and CRPF, recently stationed at Saibol village bordering Imphal East district, might

be removed under pressure, the officials said.

The Superintendent of Police in Kangpokpi district was injured on January 3 evening when a mob attacked his office over the officer's alleged failure to remove central force from Saibol.

Kuki organisations have been protesting the alleged lathi charge on women by security forces on December 31 in that village.

"We heard unconfirmed reports that central forces stationed at Uyak hills will be moved. Mangi Leima, one of the demonstrators said.

Rainbow Children's Heart Institute performs world's first fetal aortic valvuloplasty with device closure

Guwahati: Rainbow Children's Heart Institute has achieved a world-first milestone by successfully performing fetal balloon aortic valvuloplasty with device closure on a 27-week-old fetus diagnosed with critical aortic stenosis.

This pioneering procedure, which involved sealing the puncture site with a device after relieving the valve obstruction, sets a new global benchmark in fetal cardiology. The groundbreaking pro-



cedure, led by Dr. Koneti Nageswara Rao, Chief Pediatric Cardiologist, along with Dr. Shweta Bakhru and Dr. Sri Phani Bhargavi Dhulipudi, utilized state-of-

the-art technology to perform the life-saving intervention. The fetus showed significant improvement in cardiac function and was recently discharged in good health following a successful delivery.

Dr. Rao hailed the achievement as a testament to the institute's commitment to pushing the boundaries of fetal therapy. He stressed the power of innovation and teamwork in saving lives before birth.

Nissan Expands Global Reach with new Magnite SUV Exports



Guwahati: Nissan Motor India has commenced exports of its newly launched New Nissan Magnite SUV, with over 2,700 units shipped to South Africa within a month of its international debut.

The compact SUV, manufactured at Nissan's Alliance JV plant in Chennai, will now be exported to over 65 international markets, including Left-Hand Drive territories, as part of Nissan's 'One Car, One World' strategy. The Magnite's success story continues with cumulative global sales surpassing 150,000 units. Building on this momentum, the New Magnite boasts bold aesthetics, a redesigned premium exterior and interior, and 20+ segment-first features. Enhanced safety measures include six airbags, Electronic Stability Control, and

Hydraulic Brake Assist, making it a standout in the compact SUV segment. In Guwahati, a growing hub for premium SUVs, the Magnite is drawing significant attention.

Dealers report rising interest, with customers valuing the vehicle's robust design, affordability, and advanced features. The region's evolving automotive market aligns perfectly with the New Magnite's urban-meets-adventure appeal. Frank Torres, President of Nissan India, emphasized, "India remains central to our growth strategy. The export of the New Nissan Magnite strengthens India's position as a global export hub." South African President Jordi Vila highlighted the vehicle's appeal, predicting strong demand across African markets.

Viraasat Handloom Expo to boost textile trade in Guwahati from January 8

Guwahati: The "Viraasat Special Handloom Expo," organized by the Development Commissioner (Handlooms) under the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, will kick off in Guwahati on January 8, 2025.

The week-long event, running until January 14, will be held at Mahavir Dharm Sthal, Fancy Bazar, and will showcase a diverse range of handloom products from across India. Open from 11:00 AM to 8:00 PM daily, the

expo will feature exquisite weaves such as Banarasi, Jamdani, Muga, Ikkat, and Patola, along with a variety of sarees, shawls, stoles, and home furnishings. The event is part of the Ministry's campaigns #MyHandloomMyPride and #MyProductMyPride, promoting sustainable and ethical fashion. Visitors will also have the unique opportunity to watch live weaving demonstrations, highlighting the craftsmanship behind these intricate

textiles. Guwahati stands to benefit significantly from this event. With a large number of local buyers and textile enthusiasts expected to attend, the expo provides a vital platform for weavers to connect directly with consumers.

This interaction will not only enhance the visibility of handloom products but also contribute to the economic upliftment of the weavers and promote the rich heritage of Indian textiles.

Vi launches SuperHero Annual Packs with unlimited data and OTT perks



Mumbai: Vodafone Idea (Vi) has unveiled its SuperHero Annual Recharge Packs, offering half-day unlimited data from 12 AM to 12 PM and savings of up to 25% compared to monthly plans. Designed for high-speed data users, these plans also include 2GB daily data for the remaining 12 hours, weekend data rollover, and emergency top-ups with the Data Delight feature. Vi's SuperHero Packs are priced at ₹3,599, ₹3,699, and ₹3,799, with premium options offering annual subscriptions to Disney+ Hotstar Mobile and Amazon Prime Lite. Costing as low as ₹10 per day, these packs save users over ₹1,100 annually while ensuring uninterrupted connectivity and entertainment. A rapidly growing market for digital services, Vi's SuperHero Packs are expected to resonate strongly. With increasing demand for affordable data among students, professionals, and streaming enthusiasts, these plans could significantly boost Vi's market presence. Vi's commitment to providing innovative and cost-effective solutions. Available in key markets like Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu, Vi's SuperHero Packs aim to strengthen its position in India's competitive telecom sector.

NSDC and Axis My India join forces to bridge skill gaps across India

Guwahati: In a major step towards strengthening India's skill development landscape, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has entered into a partnership with Axis My India, a leading consumer intelligence company.

This collaboration will leverage data-driven insights to identify and address skill gaps across the country, with a special focus on underserved regions.

The initiative aims to enhance the participation rates in skill development programs and assess their outcomes in terms of employability and socio-economic upliftment.

By utilizing Axis My India's expertise in real-time research and data analytics, NSDC plans to better align training programs with market demands, ensuring they meet the needs of various industries.

The partnership will also



conduct baseline surveys to evaluate current skill levels, beneficiary participation, and industry requirements, laying the groundwork for future assessments.

Pradeep Gupta, CMD of Axis My India, highlighted the importance of this partnership in connecting underserved communities with appropriate industries, driving economic growth, and capitalizing on India's demographic

dividend. In Guwahati, this collaboration is expected to have a significant impact on local industries by addressing the growing demand for skilled workers in sectors like IT, manufacturing, and healthcare. The region's expanding economic activity will benefit from a well-trained workforce that meets the specific needs of emerging businesses, thus enhancing employability and fostering regional growth.

Vi partners with Lionsgate Play to offer premium content on Vi Movies & TV

Mumbai: Vi, India's leading telecom operator, has announced a strategic partnership with premium streaming service Lionsgate Play, unlocking an exclusive library of top-tier content. Featuring action blockbusters, iconic franchises, acclaimed films and series, global awards, exclusive premieres, and a range of dubbed content, Lionsgate Play promises an unmatched entertainment experience.

This collaboration further expands Vi's OTT portfolio, providing a premium, diverse library of Hollywood movies, original series, international titles and more at an affordable price. Vi Movies & TV is designed to cater to the diverse entertainment needs of consumers, via aggregation of the top OTTs through a single app and single subscription offering consumers the convenience to enjoy content



from a wide range of OTTs. With Lionsgate Play, Vi Movies & TV users can now enjoy its extensive library of global hits, featuring blockbuster franchises like John Wick, The Hunger Games, and Saw, alongside standout titles such as Past Lives, Tokyo Vice, Paris Has Fallen, Normal People, Operation Fortune, Plane, Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard, The Iron Claw, The Beekeeper, Arcadian, and more. The partnership with Lionsgate Play is a testament to Vi's continuing pursuit of innovation and commitment to delivering best-in-class entertainment.

Godrej Agrovet Unveils Pride Hog Feed to transform Pig Farming in Northeast India

Mumbai: Godrej Agrovet Limited has launched Pride Hog, a scientifically developed pig feed range aimed at improving pig health, immunity, and growth. The product line, which includes Starter, Grower, and Finisher variants, is tailored to meet the nutritional needs of pigs at different stages of their lifecycle, offering a much-needed solution to enhance farm productivity and sustainability in Northeast India.

The launch event in Guwahati featured a roundtable discussion with key industry leaders, including Dr. Purnananda Konwar from Assam Livestock and Poultry Corporation Ltd and Capt. (Dr.) A.Y. Rajendra, CEO of Godrej Agrovet's



Animal Feed Business. The discussion highlighted the growing challenges of African Swine Fever (ASF) and the need for modern farming practices to improve livestock health and productivity.

The pig feed is seeing an increasing demand as local farmers face the dual challenges of ASF and rising input costs. Pride Hog is gain-

ing traction in the region as it offers a scientifically formulated feed solution that boosts immunity and supports growth. As farmers in Imphal look for ways to safeguard their herds and improve profitability, Godrej Agrovet's Pride Hog is poised to become a key player in the market, driving sustainable growth in the local pig farming industry.

CEAT expands retail presence in North East with new CFA in Tripura

Agartala: CEAT, a leading Indian tyre manufacturer, has inaugurated a new premium retail facility in Agartala, Tripura, marking a significant step in its expansion across the North East. The move is part of CEAT's strategy to enhance accessibility and service to meet the growing demand for tyres in the region, fueled by the steady rise in four-wheeler sales.

Speaking at the launch, Mr. Arnab Banerjee, MD & CEO of CEAT, emphasized the company's "Customer First" philosophy. He stated, "The North East represents immense potential for growth in the tyre industry. Our expansion here ensures faster deliv-



eries, improved service, and a superior customer experience." With 18 premium outlets and over 900 retail touchpoints already established in Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, and other states, CEAT aims to further strengthen its network with plans for new outlets in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya. The newly inaugurated CFA in Agar-

tala will serve the needs of Tripura and surrounding areas, offering a wide range of high-performance tyres for passenger cars, two-wheelers, and commercial vehicles. This facility is set to enhance the tyre brand's local presence and contribute to the region's economic growth through job creation and fostering strong dealer relationships.

Axis Max Life Insurance Rebrands with 'Double Bharosa' Campaign to Accelerate Growth

Guwahati: Axis Max Life Insurance Ltd., formerly known as Max Life Insurance, has officially unveiled its rebrand, marking a significant step forward in its growth strategy. With the inclusion of 'Axis' in its corporate name, the company aims to enhance its presence in the life insurance and financial services sectors.

The rebranding introduces a fresh logo, combining Axis's iconic 'A' with a modern burgundy hue, symbolizing trust, responsibility, and forward-thinking.

The new identity reflects



the company's promise of "Double Bharosa" (Double Trust), emphasized through an integrated marketing campaign featuring cricket captain Rohit Sharma and his wife Ritika

Sajdeh. Prashant Tripathy, MD & CEO of Axis Max Life, noted that the rebrand aligns with the company's vision to expand beyond metros and tier-1 cities, including significant strides

in Tier 2 cities. Guwahati is set to benefit from Axis Max Life's increased reach and enhanced customer engagement.

The company's recent expansion, with over 90 new offices and 41 new distribution partners, is expected to strengthen its foothold in the region, offering residents greater access to trusted financial solutions. Rajiv Anand, Deputy MD of Axis Bank, emphasized that this rebrand represents a deeper collaboration aimed at securing a brighter financial future for millions across India.

Sensex recoups 650 pts from low, ends flat; RIL, ITC, TCS rally

Mumbai: The Nifty index is trading within a range of 23,500 to 24,200. In Wednesday's session, it formed a hammer candlestick on the daily chart, closing near its 200-day EMA, thereby strengthening the 23,500 support level. A decisive move will require the index to close below 23,500, which could lead to heightened selling pressure, or sustain above 24,000 to pave the way for a potential rally toward 24,500. Monitoring these crucial levels is essential to identify the next trend in the index.

Slowing economic growth projections and caution



chip stocks and in expectation of government reforms in the upcoming budget to lift the tepid economy. The near-term sentiment is likely to be subdued due to the rise in US bond yield and fear of fewer rate cuts by the Fed.

Broader market indices BSE Midcap and Smallcap closed over 1 per cent lower. Apollo Hospitals, Trent, UltraTech Cement were among the top gainers on Nifty.

GDP growth may SLIP to 4-yr low

New Delhi: The Indian economy is slowing and is likely to post the weakest GDP growth numbers since 2021-22, according to the first advance estimate by the National Statistics Office (NSO). The NSO data, released on Tuesday, show that real GDP growth in FY25 is likely to have decelerated to 6.4% compared to 8.2% in the previous financial year. NSO's estimate for FY25 is lower than the 6.6% growth forecast by the Reserve Bank of India.

If GDP grows at 6.4% in FY25, it will be the lowest since FY21 when the country witnessed a negative



growth of 5.8% due to the pandemic. Growth recovered to 9.7% in FY22 largely due to the base effect, and it grew 7% in FY23.

The moderation in growth expectation can be attributed to the slow pickup in government and private investments, which grew at 6.4% in FY25, compared with 9% in FY24.

The NSO estimates also show a 7.3% growth in private consumption in real terms in FY25 compared to 4% in the previous year. This comes as a surprise amid all the talks of consumption slowdown. Analysts attribute the consumption growth to rural demand pickup. "Rural consumption, which constitutes about 60% of India's total private consumption, will receive a boost from healthy kharif production and promising prospects for the rabi season. This is reflected in higher agricultural growth estimated for this fiscal

CoinSwitch to launch Rs 600 cr recovery plan for hack victims

Bengaluru: Crypto platform CoinSwitch has launched a Rs 600 crore recovery programme to help users impacted by cyberattack on WazirX. It said this will provide an opportunity to users to recoup losses.

A cyberattack on WazirX in July last year led to the theft of about Rs 2,000 crore worth of funds.

"As an industry leader, we wanted to do our bit to help the ecosystem, especially now, when the market has picked up. We don't want crypto investors in India to



miss opportunities. This program is an important step to rebuild what was lost," said Ashish Singhal, co-founder, CoinSwitch.

The platform, which has over 2 crore users, said the programme will be rolled out in a way that it delivers max-

imum value to impacted users. Singhal said users who were affected due to cyberattack can recover losses and re-enter the

market. Users can upload their WazirX statements for verification and estimate recovery on CoinSwitch Cares portal. It said eligible users can earn up to 10% of the funds deposited through this program over two years.

Loneliness and social isolation are linked to specific proteins, says new research

Human beings are inherently social. We thrive on connection, communication and shared experiences, which help shape our identities and foster a sense of belonging. Yet, in an increasingly digital and fast-paced world, feelings of loneliness and social isolation have become alarmingly common.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that these feelings are widespread. About 25% of older people experience social isolation and 5%-15% of adolescents feel lonely.

These figures are important since published studies have demonstrated that social isolation and loneliness are linked to increased risk of disease and death. Indeed, our own study, published in 2022, found that social isolation in older people carried a 26% increased risk of developing dementia. We also found that loneliness was associated with depression.

We wanted to follow up our previous study by understanding the underlying biological processes behind this link between social isolation and loneliness and health. Why is loneliness so bad for our bodies and minds?



Exploring proteins

We focused on proteomics, the study of proteins. This is because we know that proteins play a role in gene expression, the process by which the information encoded in a gene is turned into biological activity. Proteins are also a major source of drug targets for developing medications.

In this collaborative study between the University of Cambridge and Fudan University, published in Nature Human Behaviour, we used data from 42,062 participants and studied 2,920 plasma proteins. We investigated

the association between proteins and self-reported loneliness and social isolation. We discovered that the proteins found to be significantly associated with loneliness and social isolation are also known to be implicated in inflammation as well as antiviral and immune responses.

In particular, our study suggested that loneliness may lead to an increase in the levels of five specific proteins expressed in the brain (known as GFRA1, ADM, FABP4, TNFRSF10A and ASGR1). In other words, all the proteins we identified as related to loneliness were "positively associated", mean-

ing that people who feel lonely tend to have higher protein levels compared to those who do not feel lonely.

We also studied data that tracked the health of our participants for about 14 years. This found that more than half of the proteins were linked to cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and death.

Based on our findings, having good social relationships and not feeling lonely may promote health by reducing the levels of certain harmful proteins. However, proteins may only partly explain the link between

loneliness and health. Other potential pathways, such as social stress, may also play a role.

To our knowledge, this may be the first demonstration of how loneliness affects morbidity and mortality through its association with these five key proteins.

SOCIETAL IMPACTS

Social isolation and loneliness affect all ages and genders and leads to major mental and physical health problems. This study helps to understand how this happens on a biological level.

It demonstrates how important it is to connect with others through social activities, for example volunteering or team sport. This can reduce the effects of social isolation and loneliness on the underlying biological processes important for health outcomes.

While technology offers new ways to stay in touch, it can sometimes lead to superficial connections that leave us feeling more disconnected than ever. This paradox — being surrounded by digital interactions yet feeling profoundly alone — underscores the importance of deep, meaningful social connections.

Face-to-face social interactions where you also

experience non-verbal communication often fosters better connections. Indeed one study showed that partners communicating face-to-face had more positive impressions than people interacting via a computer.

Social interactions are ultimately essential for our wellbeing, boosting both physical and mental health. Social connections reduce stress, lower blood pressure and support immune function. They also enhance cognitive health and improve brain health. In addition, they can foster empathy and understanding, strengthening our minds and providing emotional resilience.

Clearly, to foster a flourishing society we need to build meaningful connections with one another.

Barbara Jacquelyn Sahakian, Professor of Clinical Neuropsychology, University of Cambridge; Christelle Langley, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Cambridge; Chun Shen, Postdoctoral research fellow of Neuroscience, Fudan University, and Jianfeng Feng, Professor of Science and Technology for Brain-Inspired Intelligence/ Computer Science, Fudan University

'Snoob' that's making the world go round

The cliché is "Silence is golden." Really? What happens when good old silence strikes in the middle of a conversation? This brief pause of awkwardness raises a flurry of emotions in everyone. Psychologists call this pause "snoob," an awkward silence that creeps into conversations, leaving people nervous and self-conscious. While a snoob might make us squirm, science suggests it



communication where the brain pauses to recalibrate or process information. Dr Aparna Gupta, Founder and Lead Clinical Psychologist at Gray Cells Matter,

says, "Snoob is essentially a space where everyone knows the essence of the unspoken. And this transcends the speaker and the listener to a world of

mutual recognition and acceptance that paves the way to building golden bridges."

WHY DO WE FEAR THE SNOOB?

Silence in conversation can sometimes feel like an awkward pause that throws off the natural rhythm of interaction. When this flow falters, it's like hitting a pause button on our sense of security. Suddenly, it becomes a mirror, reflecting every self-doubt: Am I dull? Did they lose interest? Did I mess up by bringing up my love for ketchup in Maggi? These moments can shake our confidence and leave us feeling rejected.

Sleeping beauty

Sleep isn't merely a pastime; it's when your skin says, "Time for some self-care!" and starts enhancing collagen production. It contributes to your skin's elasticity, plumpness, and radiance. Finding the right amount of sleep is crucial. If you often skimp and get less than seven hours, it can disturb your skin's pH levels, turning your skin dry and flaky. Lack of sleep can also hinder your skin's elasticity.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SLEEP DEPRIVATION

When you don't get enough sleep, several issues tend to affect your skin:

Dark Circles: The notorious under-eye shadows that resemble raccoon eyes can leave others questioning your well-being.

Dehydration: Using external serums won't be effective if your skin isn't allowed to recover from within through adequate sleep, as a lack of rest leads to moisture depletion.

Dull Complexion: While contoured cheeks can be appealing, sunken cheeks resulting from inadequate sleep are not. The repercussions don't stop there. Irregular sleep patterns can contribute to various health issues, including autoimmune.

Boxer Saweety inspired by Arjuna Honor



Chennai: Away from the spotlight, India boxer Saweety Boora, at a time when she was just 21, had returned with a silver medal in her very first World Championships at Jeju City in 2014. Even though it was a sizeable performance, it didn't quite get the attention that it merited. That was due to various circumstances of course. Perhaps, the times were different then.

That has been the theme in her sporting career. She is not as celebrated as some of the elite names with almost identical CVs. But the former world champ possesses a firm head on her shoulders and takes everything in stride. After a decade-long grind, sprinkled with some notable successes, she is

upbeat as ever after finally being included in the Arjuna Award list.

"I could have gotten earlier but I never raised an objection. With God's will, you get when they deem fit. So it's good to get it this time. Between 2016 to 2019, my world ranking was quite high. And I had stopped applying as well. This is an ideal way to start 2025. Whenever you get an award, when your hard work is recognised, you tend to get even more motivated," Saweety said.

The boxer, who has competed in 75kg and 81kg categories in her career so far, has had her share of struggles, something that had pushed her in the shadows a few times. But she had bounced back with aplomb.

Amad Diallo's Goal Secures 2-2 Draw for Man United



Liverpool: Amad Diallo came back to haunt Liverpool with a late equalizer that secured a 2-2 draw for Manchester United against Premier League leader Liverpool on Sunday.

The forward turned home Alejandro Garnacho's cross in the 80th minute at Anfield after Mohamed Salah's penalty had looking like giving Liverpool the win.

Diallo struck at the end of extra time as United beat Liverpool 4-3 in a dramatic FA Cup clash last season and hit a 90th-minute win-

ner against Manchester City last month.

His goal on Sunday was only worth a point on this occasion, but it halted United's four-game losing run and prevented fierce rival Liverpool from opening up an eight-point lead at the top of the standings.

United head coach Ruben Amorim, however, was still unhappy.

"It's a point, a deserved point, but it's just one point, and we should get mad. Today we should be really disappointed," he said.

Doubtful Bumrah!

Injury blow: Bumrah likely to miss **England series**

Sydney: Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who sustained back spasms, is likely to be rested for the majority of India's home white-ball series against England, keeping an eye on the ICC Champions Trophy, starting from February 19.

Bumrah, who was India's stand out player with 32 wickets in their 1-3 thrashing at the hands of Australia in the just-concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy, couldn't bowl in the final innings of the series here after suffering back spasms.

The 30-year-old Bumrah bowled more than 150 overs in the series.

The injury has a direct link to his excessive workload in the series, and the BCCI medical team will try to ensure the new Test captain is ready for the ICC showpiece where his presence is mandatory to India's fortunes.

According to sources privy to the development, the grade of Bumrah's back spasm has not yet been ascertained.

India will open their Champions Trophy campaign against Bangladesh on February 20 in Dubai.

If Bumrah's injury is in grade 1 category, then it will take a minimum two to three weeks of rehabilitation before Return to Play (RTP).

In case of Grade 2 injury, the recovery can go up to six weeks while Grade 3, the most severe in nature, requires a minimum three months of rest and rehabilitation programmes.

It was always known that Bumrah will not play T20I bilateral series as this is not the World Cup year, but with the Champions Trophy around the corner, he would have certainly played two if not three ODIs against England as its the 50-over format.

But now, the grade of his injury will decide whether Bumrah plays the England series at all or at least the last match at his home ground in Ahmedabad on February 12 to check on his fitness.

India will face England in five T20Is and three ODIs from January 22.



Harbhajan Slams 'Superstar Culture' in Cricket

New Delhi: Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh has urged the BCCI to end the "superstar culture" in the team and pick players for future assignments solely based on performance and not on reputation.

Harbhajan's stinging remarks came after India's 1-3 Test series defeat to Australia for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in a decade.

"There is a superstar culture which has developed. We don't need superstars, we need performers. If the team has them (performers), it will move forward. Whoever wants to become a superstar should stay at home and play cricket there," the spin great said on his Youtube channel.

"There is a tour of England coming up. Now ev-



everyone has started talking about what will happen in England, who will go, who will not go. For me, it is a simple matter. Only players who are performing should go. You can't keep picking players on their reputation. If you do that, then you should take Kapil Dev sir and Anil bhai also. Here, the BCCI and the selectors will have to be firm and act tough. I don't think that the superstar attitude is taking the team forward."

Captain Rohit Sharma and star batter Virat Kohli were woefully out of form during the just-concluded Test series against Australia.

Bumrah named for ICC Player of the Month

Dubai: Star India pacer Jasprit Bumrah was on Tuesday nominated for the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for December 2024 after his standout performance against Australia in the just-concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

In December, Bumrah took 22 wickets in the three Tests at a phenomenal average of 14.22 and overall, the 31-year-old finished with 32 wickets across five Tests. Unfortunately, Bumrah could not bowl in Australia's second innings at Sydney because of a back spasm.

His standout spells included nine wickets in both the Brisbane and Melbourne Tests, which played a pivotal role in keeping India in competition.

Competing with Bumrah for the award is Australian skipper Pat Cummins, who guided Australia to 3-1 series win over India, and South African seamer Dane Paterson.

Bahadur Singh elected AFI chief, Mehta secretary

Chennai: The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has ushered in changes after Adille Sumariwalla finished three four-year terms as president. Even the secretary's post will see a new official. Former Asian Games gold medalist, Bahadur Singh Sagoo, has been appointed as the new president while the secretary's post will go to Sandeep Mehta, who was the senior joint-secretary earlier.

This was announced after the customary elections were held at the Annual General Meeting in Chandigarh on Tuesday. Like in previous years.

Messi Skips Presidential Medal Ceremony with Biden

Washington: Lionel Messi was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States, by President Joe Biden on Saturday but did not attend the ceremony at the White House.

The Argentine World Cup



winner and eight times Ballon d'Or winner, now plays in the United States for Ma-

yor League Soccer's Inter Miami.

Messi is the first Argentine to receive the honor and the first male soccer player.

Messi's representatives said in a statement distributed by Inter Miami that Messi had a prior commitment.