



## Mahatma Gandhi was a true Hindu: CM Siddaramaiah



Karnataka CM and others leaders unveil Mahatma Gandhi's statue

**Belagavi:** Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said Mahatma Gandhi was a diehard Hindu and the Congress believes in "Gandhi's Hindutva".

BJP always projected Mahatma Gandhi as 'anti-Hindu' but one must understand that it is 100 per cent false, Siddaramaiah said at the inauguration of Mahatma Gandhi's statue in front of Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, top Congress functionaries such as K C Venugopal, Randeep Singh Surjewala Congress

ministers, MPs and legislators participated in the event.

The event was organised to commemorate the centenary of the lone Congress session in which Mahatma Gandhi had chaired as the Congress president way back in 1924.

The Chief Minister said, "Mahatma Gandhi used to utter the name of Lord Rama, always.

When Nathuram Godse assassinated him, he uttered 'Hey Ram'. There cannot be a better example of it. He was a diehard Hindu."

According to him, Gandhi was never against Hindu faith but he wished to bring reform in Hinduism.

## Saif Ali Khan discharged from Lilavati Hospital

**Mumbai:** Actor Saif Ali Khan, who was stabbed last week and was operated upon in Lilavati Hospital, was discharged on Tuesday afternoon, sources close to the actor confirmed to HT. The actor was accompanied by his wife, actor Kareena Kapoor, as he left the hospital for his home in Bandra.

Saif actor spent five days in the hospital after undergoing an emergency surgery. Doctors have said that the actor is out of danger and recovering.

Saif Ali Khan (54) was stabbed multiple times by an intruder on Thursday morning.

The attack took place at the actor's house in Bandra, which he shares with his wife, Kareena Kapoor, and their two kids.

The actor reached Lilavati Hospital at 3 am on Thursday and had been admitted there since.



EAM Jaishankar represented India at the inauguration ceremony of Donald Trump as US President

## Arvind Kejriwal Unveils AAP's 7-Point Manifesto to Empower the Middle Class

Atishi accused BJP of creating "terror" in Kalkaji and urged the ECI to act

**New Delhi:** The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday released its manifesto, focusing on the middle class, ahead of the Delhi assembly election.

The AAP manifesto was released by its chief Arvind Kejriwal, who also raised the seven-point demands from the Centre ahead of the Union Budget.

"... We demand that the next Budget of the country be dedicated to the middle



class. Today, I am making 7 demands to the central government... first, the education budget should be increased to 10% from 2%. Private school fees should be capped. Second, subsidies and scholarships be given for higher education.

Third, health budget should be increased to 10%. Tax should be removed from health insurance. Fourth, income tax exemption limit should be increased to ₹10 lakh from 7 lakh.

Fifth, GST should be removed from essential commodities. Sixth, a strong retirement plan and pension schemes for senior citizens. Free medical services for senior citizens in all government and private hospitals.

## 'Mighty blow': Home Minister Amit Shah on killing of 14 Naxals in Chhattisgarh

Two women Maoists were among those killed on Monday in the same operation

**New Delhi:** At least 14 Maoists were killed in an encounter with Chhattisgarh Police in Gariaband district at state's border with Odisha on Tuesday, news agencies ANI and PTI quoted police as saying. The tally includes two women Maoists who were killed on Monday in the operation.

A Maoist carrying a bounty of ₹1 crore was also killed in the encounter, police said, adding that encounter is ongoing.

The number of Maoist casualties may increase, reports said.

Reacting to the encounter, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said it was 'another mighty blow to Naxalism'.

"Another mighty blow to Naxalism. Our securi-



ty forces achieved major success towards building a Naxal-free Bharat. The CRPF, SoG Odisha, and Chhattisgarh Police neutralised 14 Naxalites in a joint operation along the Odisha-Chhattisgarh border. With our resolve for a Naxal-free India and the joint efforts of our security forces, Naxalism is breathing its last today," Shah said in a post on X.

A day after two women

Maoists were killed and one CoBRA jawan was injured in the encounter during the same operation, fresh exchange of fire took place late on Monday night and early Tuesday morning in a forest under the Mainpur police station area along the Chhattisgarh-Odisha border, officials cited in a news agency PTI report said, adding that 12 more Maoists were killed.

## Bihar Man Sues Rahul Gandhi Over ₹250 Milk Loss

**Patna:** A Bihar man approached a Patna court with a complaint against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. The complainant, Mukesh Chaudhary, alleged that Rahul Gandhi's recent remarks shocked him enough to drop a bucket of milk, causing a loss of ₹250, news agency PTI.

The strange development has taken place in Bihar's Samastipur district. Chaudhary complained that he was shocked by Rahul Gandhi's "fight against the Indian state" remark last week.

"I was in such a state of shock that my bucket full of five litres of milk, priced at ₹50 per litre, slipped off my hand." Chaudhary alleged.

## BJP Vows Free Education Till PG, Exam Aid in Delhi Poll Manifesto

BJP promises ₹15,000 aid for Delhi youth's exam prep

**New Delhi:** The Bharatiya Janata Party on Tuesday released its second manifesto for the upcoming Delhi election 2025 and promised to provide free education "from KG to PG" for needy students in government education institutes of the city if voted to power.

Launching BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' for Delhi assembly election, BJP MP Anurag Thakur said the party will provide to the youth of the city one-time financial assistance of ₹15,000 for preparation of competitive examinations and reimburse two-time travel and application fees.

The BJP last week released the first part of its manifesto for the February 5 Delhi election and



kept women at the centre of its poll pitch by promising ₹2,500 monthly aid for them, ₹21,000 for every pregnant woman, LPG cylinders at ₹500 and also ₹2,500 pension for senior citizens.

**BJP's first manifesto** BJP president JP Nadda unveiled the first manifesto or 'Sankalp Patra' and asserted the manifesto -- which reflects a direct BJP attempt to rival Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) welfare-focused governance model -- would serve as the foundation for a "developed Delhi".

## Six proscribed outfits boycott Republic Day 2025, calls 18-hour total shutdown in Manipur

*The CorCom, an alliance of several militant groups in Manipur, seeks independence for the state*

**Imphal:** The Coordination Committee (CorCom), an apex body of six banned outlawed groups in Manipur, on Tuesday, called an 18-hour total shutdown on January 26, from 12:00 AM to 6:00 PM boycotting the Republic Day celebrations 2025.

The CorCom, in a statement, urged the public to refrain from participating in the celebrations, stay indoors, and avoid activities that could support the day's observance.

Essential services like medical, electricity, fire



services, water supplies, and religious functions have been exempted from the shutdown.

Highlighting the prevail-

ing situation of this strife state, the CorCom described it as a "militarized state" accusing the Indian government of using in-

telligence agencies and security forces exploiting ethnic people to suppress their legitimate movements.

It also criticized India's internal policies of launching "proxy insurgency" and "false indoctrination," creating divisions and suppressing the voices of the indigenous populations.

On Monday, the outlawed Socialist Revolutionary Party (SOREPA), Kangleipak, has also declared a boycott of R Day 2025 in Manipur.

## Worker Dies After Fall at Dalmia Cement Factory in Umrangso

**Haflong:** In a tragic incident, a worker died after falling from a building at a Dalmia Cement Factory construction site at Umrangso in Assam's Dima Hasao district.

The deceased has been identified as Bisanto, a resident of Bagisadubi under Kheroni police station in West Karbi Anglong district. He was immediately shifted to Nagaon Hospital but unfortunately succumbed to his injuries en route.

This incident follows a previous safety concern at the same site in August 2024 when six workers were injured after a tower crane collapsed.

This latest fatality has raised serious concerns about the safety measures in place for workers engaged in the construction project.

In another incident involving Damia Cement, three workers were killed when a coal hopper collapsed at the Dalmia Cement factory at Rajgangpur, Sundergarh district in Odisha on January 16.

The workers were trapped within the collapsed structure.

On January 16, three workers died in a coal hopper collapse at Dalmia Cement factory, Rajgangpur, Odisha.

## Assam CM Refutes Reports on Transport of Elephants to Gujarat

**Guwahati:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has categorically denied reports circulating on social media about the alleged transportation of elephants from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh to Vantara, Gujarat.

The visuals, which went viral on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook, showed elephants be-



ing transported in large ambulances on Guwahati highways, sparking widespread speculation.

Several media outlets picked up the story, demanding an explanation from the Assam government. However,

addressing the claims, the Chief Minister took to social media to clarify the situation.

In a tweet, he stated, "It is hereby clarified that no elephants have been transported from Assam in the recent past.

Certain news items and social media posts published linking Assam to such activities are completely unwarranted and false."

## Grenade found at doctor's residence in Imphal

**Imphal:** A hand grenade was recovered from the residence of a doctor at Kwakeithel Thokchom Leikai in Manipur's Imphal West district on Wednesday morning.

The explosive device, concealed in a bag, was found at the front gate of Dr. Leishangthem Sachindra's residence. The Singjamei police were immediately alerted.

The Manipur police bomb disposal squad ar-

rived at the scene and safely retrieved the 36-hand grenade around 8:00 AM.

A case has been registered, and the police are investigating the motive behind the incident. Local Meira Paibis have condemned the act, demanding swift action against the perpetrators.

They have also urged those responsible to refrain from such threats in the future.

## Guwahati Police Cracks ATM Fraud Ring

**Guwahati:** Five individuals were arrested in connection to sophisticated financial scams after a major ATM fraud racket was busted by the Basistha Police in Guwahati.

The identities of the arrested individuals have been revealed as Asif Iqbal Hussain, Sahil Ahmed, Ariful Islam, Dewan Azlan Haris, and Abdul Azad.

The police also seized 17 ATM cards from various banks, two motorcycles, and two iPhones from their possession which were possibly used to facilitate the fraudulent transactions. It was discovered during preliminary investigation that customers were manipulated by the scammers and had their money withdrawn illegally with the help of stolen or cloned ATM cards using deceptive tricks. The police is currently investigating to unearth a wider networks of financial fraud.

## Rs 280 crores spent for 2 lakh poor under health scheme: CM

**Imphal:** The Manipur Government spent Rs 280 crores giving benefits to approximately 2 lakh poor and disabled under the Chief Minister's Health scheme (Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang).

According to a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Secretariat, the scheme had earlier provided benefits for cashless treatment covering up to Rs 2 lakhs.

However, upon the improvement of the economic condition of the State, the cover amount had been increased to Rs 5 lakhs.

The scheme that started on January 21, 2018, had benefitted more than 2 lakh people, expending more than Rs 280 crores so far from the State's exchequer.

The scheme provides cashless treatment to the



poor at the Empanelled Network of Hospitals in Manipur and gives health cover worth up to Rs 5 Lakh per eligible family per year.

Chief Minister N Biren Singh, in the statement, stated that the Health For All scheme which provides door-to-door health screening for primary health care and chronic disease management had covered around 300 villages across the state so far.

Singh also informed that around Rs 100 crores had been sanctioned for the development of healthcare facilities in hill districts.

## Meghalaya Police Launch Helmet Drive

**Shillong:** Ri-Bhoi police are distributing free helmets across the district as part of a road safety drive ahead of Meghalaya Day and Republic Day 2025.

The campaign focuses on children, women, and the elderly, aiming to promote helmet use and save lives.

Police officials highlighted the importance of targeting children, stating, "If kids understand the value



of helmets, they'll influence their families to follow suit. These young ones are true force multipliers."

To enforce safety, the police have set up 24/7 checkpoints to monitor

compliance with double helmet rules for two-wheelers and mandatory seat belt use in cars.

The Meghalaya Chief Minister praised the initiative on social media, emphasizing the state's dedication to improving road safety. This campaign represents a key step in fostering safer driving habits, particularly through engaging younger generations.

## Tripura BJP declares new district presidents to boost party's growth and development

**Agartala:** Tripura BJP declared the names of the party's district presidents after holding elections today among 37 candidates.

Addressing a press conference, Prabhari of Tripura BJP, Dr. Rajdeep Roy, said that around 74 nom-



inations were filed for the District Presidents, among which 37 applications were

rejected, and the rest were accepted.

"On 2nd September, the Sangathan Parv started, and by 15th November, we had created new booth committees and Mandal committees. Today, we are declaring the district presi-

dents of BJP. The election concluded today, and we have declared their names in 10 organizational districts with the approval of BJP national election committees. Around 12 lakh members have enrolled in Tripura," he said.

# Assam's ITI Ecosystem Summit Boosts Green and Future-Ready Skills for Youth Employment

**Guwahati:** The Future Right Skills Network (FRSN), in collaboration with the Directorate of Employment and Training, Assam, successfully hosted the ITI Ecosystem Summit in Guwahati, aiming to equip 6,000 learners with job-ready, future-focused skills. The summit brought together industry experts, policymakers, and trainers

to discuss the integration of sustainable practices and green skills into Assam's Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), positioning the state's youth to thrive in the rapidly changing job market.

As India's economy shifts towards automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and green industries, the demand for a skilled workforce

in renewable energy, digital technology, and green construction sectors is on the rise. FRSN, a collaborative initiative by Quest Alliance, Accenture, Cisco, J.P. Morgan, and SAP Labs India, is focusing on trainer development and aligning ITI curricula with emerging global trends to ensure the workforce is equipped for tomorrow's challenges.

Guwahati is witnessing growing opportunities in green and tech-driven sectors, making it essential for the city's workforce to possess future-ready skills. By integrating these skills into ITI programs, Assam's youth will be better positioned to capitalize on these opportunities, securing a competitive edge in both local and global markets.

# India and Tanzania Join Forces on Skilling Initiatives to Empower Youth



**Guwahati:** India and Tanzania have entered into a strategic partnership to empower the youth of both nations through advanced skilling initiatives.

This collaboration was solidified during a meeting between Indian officials and a high-level Tanzanian delegation led by Ms. Carolyn Nombo, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, Tanzania. Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), welcomed the delegation and emphasized the potential for collaboration in key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. India's robust technical and vocational education and training (TVET) ecosystem has been pivotal

in shaping a skilled workforce.

With programs like the PM Vishwakarma Scheme, India is making strides toward becoming the global skill capital. Tanzania's delegation will visit several top training institutes in India, including NSTI Noida and ITI Pusa Road, to explore the country's best practices in skilling. In Guwahati, this partnership holds significant potential.

Assam's growing demand for skilled professionals in sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism will benefit from this collaboration, offering young people in the region opportunities for training and employment. The tie-up aligns with Assam's aspirations for economic growth through a skilled workforce.

## KISNA Jewellery awards 100 cars to customers in grand campaign finale

**Guwahati:** KISNA Diamond and Gold Jewellery, a flagship brand of the Hari Krishna Group, has successfully concluded its #Abki\_Baar\_Aapke\_Liye campaign, gifting 100 Maruti Celerio cars to lucky customers across India.

The campaign, which ran from September 1, 2024, to January 18, 2025, witnessed participation from over 51,219 customers, marking a milestone in the jewellery industry.

As part of the initiative, customers purchasing diamond, platinum, or solitaire jewellery worth ₹20,000 or more, or gold jewellery worth ₹50,000 or more, were eligible for a lucky draw.

Winners were announced across multiple regions, with special handover events organized in cities such as Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.

In Guwahati, the campaign resonated strongly, with local buyers showcasing a growing interest in diamond jewellery. Retailers in the city reported a significant increase in footfall and sales, reflecting KISNA's ability to connect with diverse markets, including tier-two cities.

Ghanshyam Dholakia, Founder & MD of Hari Krishna Group, said, "This campaign underscores our commitment to creating unforgettable moments for our patrons." Parag Shah, Director of KISNA, added, "The overwhelming response highlights the deep trust our customers have in the KISNA brand."

## Royal Stag BoomBox 2025: A new chapter in India's music and entertainment landscape

**Mumbai:** Seagram's Royal Stag BoomBox is set to return for its third edition, blending Bollywood's timeless melodies with the raw energy of hip-hop.

Produced by Mirchi, this year's festival features a star-studded lineup, including Armaan Malik, Amit Trivedi, Neeti Mohan, Raftaar, Ikka, and DJ Yogii, along with an exciting gaming collaboration with Ampverse DMI Pulse. The festival will tour major cities, including Hyderabad, Mumbai,

Gurugram, Guwahati, and Asansol. A rapidly developing industrial city with a youthful and energetic population, presents a unique market opportunity for the festival.

With increasing disposable incomes and a growing interest in modern entertainment, Asansol's audience is poised to embrace the fusion of music, art, and gaming that Royal Stag BoomBox offers. The festival's interactive installations, AR/VR technology, and live

gaming showdowns are expected to captivate the local crowd, elevating the entertainment experience in the region.

Kartik Mohindra, CMO at Pernod Ricard India, said, "Royal Stag BoomBox continues to bring together diverse music genres and cutting-edge experiences, truly embodying our 'Living it Large' philosophy." The festival's third edition is poised to set new benchmarks in youth engagement and entertainment across India.

## Skoda Kylaq Achieves Top Bharat NCAP Safety Rating



**Guwahati:** Skoda Auto India announces that its latest sub-4m SUV, the Kylaq, has earned a prestigious 5-star safety rating in the Bharat NCAP crash tests. With 30.88 points in Adult Occupant Protection and 45.00 points in Child Occupant Protection, the Kylaq stands as the safest car in its segment.

Equipped with six airbags and over 25 active and passive safety features as standard, the Kylaq embodies Škoda's legacy of prioritizing passenger safety. Petr Janeba, Brand Director, Škoda Auto India, stated, "The Kylaq's stellar performance in Bharat NCAP reflects our commitment to delivering world-class safety standards for Indian customers. This achievement is a testament

to our engineering excellence and focus on customer well-being." The Kylaq is expected to gain strong traction in Siliguri, where buyers value vehicles that combine robust safety with performance.

Its hot-stamped steel construction and advanced safety systems make it well-suited for the region's challenging terrains, including hilly roads and urban traffic. With Škoda's expanding network in Siliguri, the Kylaq is set to capture the attention of safety-conscious customers. Following the 5-star-rated Kushaq and Slavia, the Kylaq continues Škoda's leadership in automotive safety, reinforcing its commitment to bringing European engineering excellence to Indian roads.

## Airtel and Bajaj Finance Form Alliance to Lead India's Digital Financial Market

**New Delhi:** Bharti Airtel and Bajaj Finance have formed a strategic partnership aimed at creating one of the country's largest digital platforms for financial services. The partnership will leverage Airtel's 370 million customer base and extensive distribution network alongside Bajaj Finance's robust suite of 27 financial products, setting the stage for transformative growth in India's financial services sector.

Airtel customers will soon gain access to Bajaj Finance's offerings via the Airtel Thanks App, starting with products such as Gold Loans, Business Loans, and Personal Loans, with plans to introduce more products in the coming months. The collaboration promises to drive digital inclusion by delivering financial products seamlessly across the country.

## India champions skills, innovation and sustainable growth at WEF 2025

**Guwahati:** Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, is representing India at the prestigious World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting 2025 in Davos.

The event, running from January 20 to January 24, brings together global leaders to discuss pressing issues of skills, innovation, and sustainable growth.

Chaudhary is leading India's participation in discussions on technological advancements, workforce preparation, and the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in shaping the future economy.

"We have an opportunity to reimagine growth and social equity; to invest in people and build sustainable industries," he said in a tweet. This year's WEF agenda focuses on rebuilding trust, fostering international collaboration, and creating a skilled workforce to drive global



growth. In Guwahati, this emphasis on skills aligns with the growing demand for a trained workforce in local industries.

As the region embraces technological innovations and sustainable practices, businesses in Guwahati are poised to leverage India's national initiatives for a future-ready workforce, boosting local economic growth.

**PM Modi lauds 'Drive.Future' initiative by JSW MG Motor India at Mobility Expo 2025**

**Guwahati:** JSW MG Motor India unveiled its latest innovations in sustainable mobility at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting its pavilion themed 'Drive.Future.' The showcase emphasized the company's commitment to eco-friendly, technology-driven solutions shaping the future of mobility.

Director Parth Jindal and CEO Emeritus Rajeev Chaba welcomed the Prime Minister, presenting state-of-the-art electric and hybrid vehicles equipped with latest technologies like autonomous driving, artificial intelligence, and connected ecosystems. Speaking at the event, Jindal said, "We are proud to align with India's vision for a greener and smarter fu-



ture through our innovative mobility solutions." Key discussions during the expo included calls for "community chargers" and a "right to charge" policy to address barriers in residential EV infrastructure. Guwahati has emerged as a significant player in India's EV revolution.

Increasing consumer awareness, state gov-

ernment incentives, and growing infrastructure for EV charging are driving demand in the city, making it a strategic focus for automakers like JSW MG Motor India. Prime Minister Modi lauded the company's efforts and emphasized the role of innovation and public-private partnerships in advancing India's sustainability and economic goals.

**Truecaller finally functions now on iPhone**

**Guwahati:** Truecaller, the leading global communications platform, has announced the biggest-ever update for iPhone. The new update now offers the entire might of Truecaller's spam and scam-blocking abilities to iPhone users everywhere! It now has the ability to identify all types of calls, making it at par with its Android counterpart. This is made possible by Apple's Live Caller ID Lookup framework, developed especially for apps like Truecaller to provide live caller ID in a privacy-preserving way.

This API uses state-of-the-art homomorphic encryption, and Truecaller is the first in the world to deploy this at scale for Caller ID. Truecaller has now been in the business of



filtering unwanted communications for 15 years.

This update can leverage Truecaller's latest AI capabilities and global database to identify as many calls as possible. It can ensure that no call goes unidentified on iOS as long as Truecaller has any information about it.

Rishit Jhunjunwala, CEO, Truecaller, said, "We are excited to bring the full power of Truecaller to iPhone." Free users on iOS will continue to enjoy ad-supported number search and caller ID of verified businesses.

**Courtyard by Marriott Shillong: A Luxury Wedding Destination**

**Shillong:** Shillong, often referred to as the Scotland of the East, has emerged as a prime wedding destination, and Courtyard by Marriott Shillong is leading the way in offering luxury and elegance for couples looking to celebrate their special day. With its picturesque landscapes, pleasant weather, and a range of exquisite venues, the hotel is the epitome of a dream wedding setting.

The hotel's pillarless Grand Ballroom, Cosmos, provides the perfect venue for both grand and intimate celebrations, while its 182 elegantly designed rooms ensure a comfortable stay for all guests. Weddings at Courtyard by Marriott Shillong are a blend of elegance and tradition, with options for Western, Christian, and Indian ceremonies. The hotel also offers bespoke experiences, including lively bachelor parties, vibrant Sangeet nights, and serene poolside Haldi ceremonies. The hotel is gaining significant attention in the Guwahati, where luxury weddings are on the rise. Guwahati, as a growing metropolitan hub, serves as a key market for Shillong's wedding tourism, with many families seeking a scenic yet accessible location for their celebrations. Courtyard by Marriott Shillong offers an exclusive wedding package starting at INR 15,49,999 + taxes, including meals and accommodation for 50 rooms.

**HDFC Bank Q3 results: Net Profit Up 2%, NII Rises 7.7%**



**Mumbai:** HDFC Bank, the largest private sector lender in the country, reported a 2.2 per cent increase in net profit to Rs 16,735.50 crore for the quarter ended December 2024.

Net interest income—the difference between interest earned and interest expended—increased by 7.7 per cent year-on-year to Rs 30,650 crore, while other income remained almost flat at Rs 11,450 crore.

Mark-to-market gains on investments fell to Rs 70 crore, compared to Rs 1,470 crore during the same period last year. The net interest margin stood at 3.43 per cent for the third quarter of the financial year. Provisions and contingencies declined to Rs 3,150 crore from Rs 4,220 crore in the same period last year.

Asset quality deteriorated, with gross non-performing assets (NPAs) rising to Rs 36,019 crore from Rs 34,251 crore in the previous quarter and Rs 31,012 crore during the same period last year.

**Minister of State for External Affairs Margarita concludes his 8-day official visit to three nations**

**Guwahati:** Minister of State for External Affairs, Pabitra Margarita, has concluded his eight-day official visit to three nations on Tuesday. The journey began on January 14th in the Southeast Asian country of the Philippines and ended in the Western Pacific region with the Pacific Island countries of the Republic of Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). During this time, the minister met with the top leadership of all three nations and held constructive discussions to strengthen



bilateral relations with India. This visit is considered historic, as it marked the first ministerial visit from India to Micronesia. Before this, Margarita attended

the swearing-in ceremony of the Republic of Palau's President Surangel Whipps Jr. for his second term on Thursday. Margarita's extensive overseas tour be-

gan with a meeting with Philippine President Bongbong Marcos, where they had fruitful discussions to further enhance India-Philippines partnership. In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "The visit of Minister of State to the region is expected to further strengthen and deepen India's traditionally close partnership with the Philippines, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) as part of India's Act East Policy and our vision of the Indo-Pacific."

**Ultimate Care launches by Care Health Insurance**

**Guwahati:** Care Health Insurance, one of the leading health insurers of India, has announced the launch of Ultimate Care, a ground-breaking health insurance designed to set new benchmarks in health coverage.

Ultimate Care combines extensive benefits tailored to address unforeseen medical emergencies and rewards you for staying healthy.

Ultimate Care offers extensive health coverage, including the MoneyBack feature, where policyholders will get rewarded for staying healthy. The com-



pany will refund first year's base premium after every 5 claim-free years.

Additionally, the plan provides Wellness Discount which enables policyhold-

ers to enjoy up to 30% discount on renewal premium with the healthy days program. Commenting on the launch, Ajay Shah, Head—Distribution, Care Health

Insurance, said, "In the healthcare landscape of today, it is essential to provide customers with a comprehensive and robust financial security that addresses unforeseen medical exigencies while also encouraging a proactive approach to health and wellness." Welcome Discount that gives up to 30% discount on premium for new policyholders.

MediVouchers for ease of out-of-pocket expenses with two pharmacy vouchers worth Rs 250 each, provided upon the first policy renewal.

**India's budget likely to raise major subsidies by 8 percent**

**New Delhi:** India is likely to raise spending on food, fertiliser, and cooking gas subsidies to 4.1 trillion rupees (\$47.41 billion) in the next fiscal year, a moderate 8 percent year-on-year increase to cover higher food and energy costs, Reuters quoting "government sources" said.

The budgeted outlay for food subsidies in the current financial year ending March 31 is 2.05 trillion rupees (\$23.70 billion).

## Swiggy partners with Robin Hood Army to launch 'Swiggy Serves,' targets 50 million meals by 2030

**Guwahati:** Swiggy, India's leading on-demand convenience platform, has launched 'Swiggy Serves,' a flagship initiative to combat food wastage and hunger.

In collaboration with the Robin Hood Army (RHA), a volunteer-driven organization, the program aims to redistribute surplus food from restaurant partners to underserved communities, with an ambitious goal of

delivering 50 million meals by 2030.

The pilot phase has already yielded promising results, with over 2,000 meals redistributed across 33 cities, supported by 126 restaurant partners, including brands like Biryani by the Kilo and Charcoal Eats. Rohit Kapoor, CEO of Swiggy Food Marketplace, highlighted Swiggy's mission to reduce food waste while addressing hunger,

leveraging its logistics expertise to create social impact. In Guwahati, the initiative has resonated with the city's thriving restaurant market. With a diverse food culture and significant surplus from eateries, Guwahati holds immense potential to contribute to the program. Restaurant owners in the region have shown enthusiasm, viewing it as an opportunity to engage in community-driven

efforts while reducing operational waste.

India, home to 195 million undernourished people, ranks 105th in the 2024 Global Hunger Index. Swiggy's initiative aligns with its broader sustainability goals, transforming surplus food into a resource to combat hunger. Restaurant partners can join via the Swiggy Owner app, with RHA volunteers ensuring efficient food redistribution.

## NSDC: A Great Place to Work, Empowering India's Workforce

**Guwahati:** The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has been recognized as a Great Place to Work® for the second consecutive year in the Non-Profit and Charity category. This certification highlights NSDC's focus on fostering an innovative, inclusive, and employee-centric workplace culture. Ved Mani Tiwari, CEO of NSDC and Managing Director of NSDC International, attributed the recognition to the organization's core values. "This achievement underscores our commitment to integrity, inclusion, innovation, and impact, creating an environment that empowers our team to excel," he said. In Guwahati, NSDC's initiatives have had a tangible impact. With a growing pool of skilled professionals trained through its programs, Guwahati's market has seen significant advancements in workforce quality. These efforts have boosted sectors like retail, hospitality, and technology, enabling businesses to thrive with well-trained personnel. NSDC's nationwide efforts include training over 40.19 million individuals, placing 9.4 million in jobs, and launching the Skill India Digital Hub to integrate skilling and entrepreneurship opportunities. With 40,000 training centers across 750 districts, NSDC continues to strengthen India's skill ecosystem while maintaining its reputation as an exemplary workplace.

## Guwahati Hairstylist's National Fame Boosts Beauty Market Expansion

**Guwahati:** The Indian beauty and wellness market witnessed a notable milestone as Bhaskar Jyoti Saikia of Pink Villa Salon, Ambikagirinagar, Guwahati, emerged as one of the top 30 hairstylists nationally in the Godrej Professional Spotlight. This platform by Godrej Professional, a leading hair care brand from Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL), underscores the growing demand for premium hairstyling services across India.

The grand finale in Mumbai saw Bhaskar and 29 other finalists showcasing hair colour creations inspired by Godrej Professional's Surreal Collection. Backed by expert mentorship and government-recognized certifications under the National Skill Qualification Framework, participants gained



valuable exposure and tools to elevate their professional journeys.

In Guwahati, Bhaskar's achievement highlights the city's potential as a rising hub for the beauty and grooming market. With an increasing number of consumers seeking high-quality services, local salons are tapping into national trends and leveraging industry innovations. Bhaskar's recognition is expected to further

drive interest and investments in Guwahati's salon sector.

Abhinav Grandhi, General Manager at GCPL, emphasized the brand's commitment to empowering hairstylists through education and training. Supported by the Beauty & Wellness Sector Skill Council, the initiative aligns with India's growing beauty market, valued at over \$15 billion, as it moves towards global benchmarks.

## flipkart partners with APFBC to empower Assam's artisans through e-commerce

**Guwahati:** Flipkart, India's leading e-commerce platform, collaborated with the Assam Project on Forests & Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC) to host a workshop aimed at equipping local entrepreneurs, artisans, and weavers with e-commerce tools and knowledge.

Held on January 20 at Aranya Bhawan in Guwahati, the workshop was part of the Buyer-Seller Meet 2025, themed "Developing Market Linkages for Products Made by Forest Communities."

The workshop introduced participants to Flipkart's Samarth program, de-

signed to empower underserved communities by providing market access and capacity-building opportunities.

Attendees, including bamboo and wooden product makers, learned about product listing, logistics, and digital business strategies. APFBC will now join Flipkart Samarth as a partner, enabling Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) to reach PAN-India markets. The initiative is expected to enhance the visibility of Guwahati's vibrant artisan market, which specializes in traditional crafts and weaves. With

Flipkart's support, products from Guwahati's local businesses can now tap into nationwide demand, boosting income and promoting Assam's cultural heritage.

Flipkart's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Mr. Rajneesh Kumar, emphasized, "This collaboration highlights our commitment to fostering digital inclusivity and empowering communities to thrive in the digital economy."

The Flipkart Samarth program, launched in 2019, continues to bridge the gap for MSMEs and artisans, creating sustainable growth opportunities across India.

## JSW MG Motor India unveils next-gen models at Bharat Mobility Expo 2025



**Guwahati:** JSW MG Motor India showcased its next-gen models at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, unveiling nine global models, including the MG MAJESTOR, India's first D+ segment SUV. The company demonstrated its prowess in CASE (Connected, Autonomous, Shared, and Electric) technologies, reaffirming its commitment to sustainable and innovative mobility. The diverse lineup featured Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), and Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) models. Highlights included the luxury sedan IM5, the all-electric SUV IM6, the versatile MG HS PHEV, and the sleek MG7 Trophy Edition. CEO Emeritus Rajeev Chaba said, "Through our Drive.Future vision, we are transforming mobility with practical, sustainable solutions that enhance driving experiences." In Guwahati, the MG MAJESTOR and EV models are expected to resonate with urban and adventure enthusiasts, thanks to their innovative designs and focus on sustainability. MG's commitment to building a robust EV infrastructure, including its Battery-as-a-Service model, aligns with the city's increasing demand for electric mobility solutions. MG's EV Ecosystem Zone at the expo showcased initiatives like Project REVIVE and EV-PEDIA, positioning JSW MG Motor India as a leader in the country's EV transition.

## JSW MG Motor expands luxury EV portfolio with Cyberster and M9 launches

**Guwahati:** JSW MG Motor India has made a bold move into the luxury electric vehicle (EV) market, unveiling the MG Cyberster and MG

offering unparalleled luxury with features like reclining ottoman seats, a 3-zone climate control system, and a panoramic sunroof. In Gu-

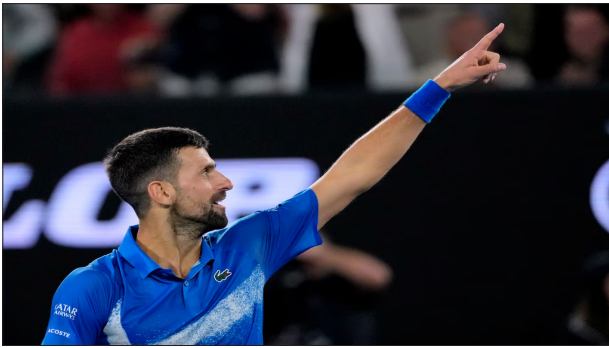
M9 under its new premium brand channel, MG Select, at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. These models bring India's first all-electric road-



ster and the first electric three-row presidential limousine, enhancing the company's EV portfolio, which now includes five models: Windsor, Comet, ZS, Cyberster, and M9. The MG Cyberster offers a futuristic roadster experience with a sleek design, lightning-fast acceleration, and innovative features like India's first-ever electric scissor doors. Meanwhile, the MG M9 targets the high-end market,

Guwahati, the demand for MG's EVs is surging, with the MG Windsor already gaining traction among environmentally conscious buyers. The region's growing focus on sustainable mobility and green technologies has positioned Guwahati as a key market for MG Motor's expanding EV offerings. MG Select, designed for discerning customers, aims to reshape the luxury car segment in India. With exclusive experience centers in 12 cities, MG is set to lead the transition towards accessible luxury EVs in the country.

## Djokovic beats Alcaraz, Grand Slam record in sight



**Melbourne:** Novak Djokovic refused to let anything stop his pursuit of a record 25th Grand Slam trophy in the Australian Open quarterfinals. Not a problem with his left leg. Not an early deficit. And not the kid across the net, Carlos Alcaraz, who was making things difficult and eyeing his own bit of history.

Djokovic overcame it all, just as he has so often along the way to so many triumphs, moving into the semifinals at Melbourne Park for the 12th time with a 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 victory over Alcaraz in a scintillating showdown Tuesday night between a pair of stars born 16 years apart and at opposite ends of their careers.

The action was non-stop, the shot-making brilliant, even as the match stretched on for more than

3 1/2 hours and nearly to 1 a.m. — never more so, perhaps, than when Alcaraz saved a break point that would have put Djokovic ahead 5-2 in the fourth set, allowing him to serve for the win. The 33-stroke exchange was the longest of the evening, and when it ended with Djokovic sailing a forehand long, the capacity crowd at Rod Laver Arena went wild. Djokovic reached for his bothersome leg and yelled toward his entourage; Alcaraz, his chest heaving, leaned on a towel box and grinned. Turned out that only delayed the final result. With his wife, son and daughter cheering in the stands, the No. 7-seeded Djokovic prevailed thanks to the sort of remarkable returning and no-mistakes-made groundstrokes against Alcaraz.

## Rishabh Pant named Lucknow Super Giants captain for IPL 2025

**New Delhi:** Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) owner Sanjiv Goenka announced Rishabh Pant as the captain of the Lucknow-based franchise ahead of Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 on Monday, January 20.

Pant, who was captain of Delhi Capitals (DC) in IPL 2024, was signed by LSG for a whopping Rs 27 crore in the mega auction, making him the most expensive player in the history of the T20 extravaganza.

Pant will become the fourth player to lead the Lucknow-based IPL franchise after KL Rahul, Krunal Pandya and Nicholas Pooran. Rahul was the captain of LSG in the first three IPL seasons and led the side to the playoffs in the first two campaigns. How-



ever, Goenka reportedly had a fallout with ex-captain Rahul after the team's humiliating ten-wicket loss against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in Match 57 of the IPL 2024. The LSG owner was also seen fuming at Rahul after the game openly on the ground and was even slammed for his behaviour. He tried to make up for his mistake after inviting Rahul for a special dinner, but it was apparent that Goenka was not satisfied with his leadership style. He dropped the wicketkeeper batter for next season.

# DOMINATES!

## Merciless Swiatek Overcomes Lys for Quarterfinals

**Melbourne:** Iga Swiatek showed no mercy as she ended "lucky loser" Eva Lys's historic run at the Australian Open on Monday, the world number two marching into the quarterfinals 6-0, 6-1.

There was to be no happy ending to Lys's incredible story against the ruthless five-time Grand Slam champion from Poland, who will meet either Emma Navarro or Daria Kasatkina for a place in the semifinals.

"There's a lot to improve. I don't feel like I'm in my peak yet," said Swiatek, who has dropped only two games in her last two matches.

"For sure, matches like that give me confidence and I feel like I'm playing a good game."

Swiatek has a patchy record in Melbourne, only reaching the semi-finals once, in 2022, but warned she was in the mood this year.

"I usually didn't feel comfortable at the Australian Open with my game," she said.

"But this year it's a bit better. So I'm just enjoying being on the court and off the court as well.

"Because for sure I have an amazing time here, and hopefully it's gonna last even longer." Lys fleetingly threatened another shock when she created two break points in the opening game, but Swiatek stepped up her pace to save both.

From then on the result was inevitable and the former world number one showed the gulf in class as she flattened the German in an hour. Swiatek conceded just 10 points in an opening set that lasted 24 minutes.

When Swiatek took a 3-0 lead in the second, an embarrassing "double bagel" 6-0, 6-0 scoreline loomed.

But Lys finally managed to hold her serve and raised her arms in celebration with her beaming smile eliciting a massive ovation from the packed Rod Laver Arena. The 23-year-old Swiatek has been in imperious form, dropping just 11 games.



## Mohammed Shami Returns for First T20I Against England

**Kolkata:** The last time Mohammed Shami took the new ball for India, more than a billion hopes soared. Shami, unlike the rest of the 2023 ODI World Cup, took the new ball ahead of Mohammed Siraj in the final against Australia at the Narendra Modi Stadium on the night of November 19.

At that time, there was no inclination that Shami would not put on India colours for another 14 months. It has been a long, frustrating lay-off to say the least. In March, he was on track to make a comeback in October for the New Zealand Tests. When India played the first Test in Bengaluru, Shami was training with them on the sidelines with a strapped knee. He sat at the National Cricket Academy and watched India lose a home Test series for the first time since he made his debut.

Even as he tried to make

a comeback in the domestic circuit, pushing himself to get on a plane for Australia, swelling in the knee did not help. In his defence, Shami did everything he could but it just did not happen. With questions over the veteran pacer coming up at every press conference, India captain Rohit Sharma even said in Brisbane that the update should come from the NCA to clarify things.

By the time the Boxing Day Test came along, the update also came stating that left knee had minor swelling and that he had not been deemed fit for the rest of the series.

India lost the series 1-3 while Shami was in India watching from half a world away. The bigger blow was Jasprit Bumrah's back spasm. Which, at this point, has left India with desperate hope of a Shami comeback for the Champions Trophy.

## Udita Duhan keen on WHIL lessons



**Agency:** It was a gloomy night at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro Turf Hockey Stadium in Ranchi a year ago. Despite their grueling efforts, the Indian women's hockey team could not beat Japan in the third-place playoff match of the 2024 Women's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers. Heartbroken the Savita Punia-led side watched as Germany, the United States and Japan booked their tickets to the Paris Olympics. After their heroic efforts in the Tokyo Olympics, where they missed the bronze medal by whiskers, this was a hard pill to swallow for each member of the team, including Udita Duhan, who was part of the squad in Tokyo.

## Axar Patel embraces new position

**Chennai:** AXAR Patel has always been the player that he is today. But the last year has seen a lot of upward trajectory. From quietly playing the most important knock for India at the 2024 T20 World Cup final against South Africa to be named vice-captain of the T20I team for the En-



gland series, the left-arm spin bowling all-rounder is getting what is perhaps a long-overdue move up the

ranks.

Early last year there was a question about what his role would be at a press conference. Axar, in his typical manner, said that what he is capable of doing is there to see and that he can play any role the team wants. Even now, his stand remains the same.