



DMK prioritizes politics over kids' future: BJP



Chennai, Mar 4: Tamil Nadu BJP chief K. Annamalai criticized the ruling DMK, claiming that the party prioritizes politics over children's future. The war of words escalated over the National Education Policy (NEP), with DMK deputy general secretary Kanimozhi challenging Annamalai to ensure the Centre released education funds if he truly cared about students.

Kanimozhi accused the BJP of manipulating data and selectively quoting statistics to fit its propaganda. She also criticized the Centre for allegedly removing foreign languages from Kendriya Vidyalayas while imposing Hindi and Sanskrit.

AAP protests over BJP's Rs 2,500 monthly aid to women

New Delhi, Mar 4: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) staged a protest demanding clarity from the BJP-led Delhi government on its promise to provide Rs 2,500 monthly financial assistance to women by International Women's Day on March 8.

The protest was led by former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition Atishi, along with AAP MLAs and party workers. Atishi questioned the BJP government

over the delay in implementing the scheme and asked if the promise would be fulfilled or if it was just a slogan. AAP MLA Kuldeep Kumar also criticized the BJP, asking Delhi's newly appointed Chief Minister Rekha Gupta to clarify the status of the promised financial assistance. The BJP promised Rs 2,500 monthly aid to women during the Delhi Assembly elections.

Nitish to contest Bihar polls with BJP, may switch sides later: Prashant Kishor

74-year-old leader too unpopular for fifth term, regardless of alliance

Patna, Mar 5: Election strategist-turned-politician Prashant Kishor on Wednesday claimed that JD(U) president Nitish Kumar will contest the upcoming assembly polls in Bihar in alliance with the BJP but may switch sides later, with hopes for another term as the chief minister.

The Jan Suraj Party founder, who was addressing a press conference in



West Champaran district, however, also asserted that the 74-year-old leader had grown too unpopular to enjoy a fifth consecutive term in office "no matter which alliance he becomes a part of." "Anybody can

become the chief minister in November, after the assembly elections are over, except Nitish Kumar. You can take it from me in writing. If I am proven wrong then I will give up my own political campaign," Kishor said.

The former JD(U) national vice president, who was expelled from the party in 2020 following a spat with Kumar.

Stalin urges newlyweds to promptly have babies amid Centre's delimitation plans

Chennai, Mar 3: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin reportedly took a sarcastic jab at the Centre's proposed delimitation plans, suggesting that newlywed couples in the state should plan their families immediately to secure an advantage when the exercise is conducted. "I would earlier ask newlyweds to take their time before they plan a family, but not anymore," an NDTV report quoted the Chief Minister



as saying at the wedding function of a DMK district secretary in Nagapattinam. "But now, with policies such as delimitation that the Union government is planning to implement, we cannot say that. We focused on family planning and suc-

ceeded, and were pushed into a situation such as this. So I would now urge newlyweds to immediately have babies and give them good Tamil names," CM Stalin said. The ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu has been vocal in opposing the Centre's delimitation plans, which involve redrawing the boundaries of parliamentary and assembly constituencies based on demographic changes.

Modi government weakening RTI in name of data protection: Kharage

New Delhi, Mar 4: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday accused the Modi government of weakening the Right To Information (RTI) Act in the name of data protection and asserted that his party will keep fighting against the "dictatorial" regime to secure the rights of the people.

Kharge asserted that the Congress will not let RTI weaken and will continue to raise its voice from the streets to Parliament. "On



one hand, India has been leading in misinformation and disinformation for years, while the Modi government is bent on weakening the RTI Act, originally implemented by the Congress-UPA, by introducing the Data Protection law," said the Congress chief in a post on X.

Maharashtra govt seeks Rs 6,486 cr in Day 1 Budget session demands

Mumbai, Mar 3: The Maharashtra budget session beginning on March 3 will be a litmus test for the ruling Mahayuti government led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis as it will have to put on a united front amid rumblings within the coalition, even as it faces the heat from the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

With 232 MLAs, the Mahayuti coalition, comprising the BJP, the Shiv Sena, and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), has the numbers on its side as compared to the MVA, comprising the Congress, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP), which has been relegated to 47 MLAs after a drubbing in the Assembly elections last year.

However, though the Opposition has weakened, the differences that have



cropped up between Fadnis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, coupled with controversies involving NCP ministers Dhananjay Munde and Manikrao Kokate, have set the stage for a noisy session.

Munde, the minister for food, civil supplies and consumer protection, has been under pressure to resign after his close aide Walmik Karad was arrested in a case linked to the mur-

der of Santosh Deshmukh, the sarpanch of Massajog in Beed district.

Meanwhile, Kokate, the agriculture minister, has been sentenced to two years in prison for his involvement in a 30-year-old document tampering and fraud case related to the acquisition of two flats under the chief minister's discretionary quota for the low-income category. Both issues are likely to be raised in the session. (PTI)

BJP-backed candidate secures victory in Telangana MLC polls

BJP's Telangana MLC win boosts party's prospects

Hyderabad, Mar 4: In the recent Telangana MLC elections, a BJP-backed candidate, Malka Komaraiah, secured a significant victory in the Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad-Karimnagar Teachers' constituency. This win is seen as a major achievement for the BJP, as it demonstrates the trust and support of teachers in the region for the party and its leadership.

The election was held on February 27, 2025, using a preferential voting system with ballot papers. Komaraiah won the seat with a margin of over 5,000 votes against his nearest rival, Vanga Mahender Reddy. Komaraiah secured 12,959 votes, while Mahender Reddy received 7,182 votes.

The counting of votes was a time-consuming process due to the segre-



gation of valid and invalid votes, followed by preferential counting.

Union Minister Bhandi Sanjay Kumar hailed Komaraiah's victory as historic and stated that it shows the teachers' trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. The BJP fielded candidates for all three MLC seats, while the ruling Congress contested only the Graduates' constituency. The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) stayed away from the election. In addition to Komaraiah's victory, an independent candidate, Sripal Reddy Pingili also won from another constituency.

UP hostels for SC/STs named after Ambedkar: CM Yogi

Lucknow, Mar 5: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced that all hostels for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in every district of the state will be named after Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

This decision was made to honor Ambedkar's legacy and contributions to the Indian Constitution. During the Budget discussion in the UP Vidhan Sabha, Adityanath criticized the opposition for not honoring Ambedkar and other Dalit leaders despite their claims of protecting the Constitution. Adityanath highlighted several initiatives taken by the BJP-led government to honor Ambedkar, including the construction of the Ambedkar International Centre and the establishment.



Ruckus erupts in Assam assembly as BJP and opposition engage in heated war of words

Guwahti, Mar 5: The Assam assembly witnessed a ruckus on Wednesday as the ruling BJP and the opposition engaged in a war of words over the use of two controversial terms, leading to the adjournment of the House for a brief period.

Baghor MLA Sherman Ali Ahmed, who has been suspended by the Congress, raised an issue related to the sub-divisional agricultural office of Alopai in the Barpeta district during Question Hour. While dis-



cussing the issue, he equated the "misleading replies" given by the officials to a particular word. The word was expunged by Speaker

Biswajit Daimary after BJP MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi objected to it.

After the Question Hour concluded, Kurmi again

raised the issue and asked if Ahmed had said it as he belonged to a particular community. While mentioning the community, the BJP MLA uttered a pejorative term used for Bengali-speaking Muslims in the state.

This led to a strong protest from the entire opposition with MLAs of the Congress, AIUDF, CPI(M) and Rajior Dal demanding an apology from Kurmi. The speaker immediately expunged the word.

Army sets up computer center in Imphal West

Imphal Mar 4: on Monday established a Computer Training Lab at Lerijao Upper Primary School at Khurkhu (Keingam), Imphal West District in Manipur to enhance digital literacy and promote quality education.

The facility, equipped with two computers, a printer, and two UPS systems, is part of the Army's initiative to support local communities by providing modern educational tools and opportunities for youth empowerment. The train-



ing lab aims to bridge the digital divide, enabling students and youth to develop essential computer skills and improve digital literacy.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from local students and community members, who expressed deep gratitude toward the Indian Army for the initiative.

Security forces recover 30 kg Bombs, averting threat in Tinsukia

■ **Explosives cache discovered, potential threat neutralized**

Tinsukia, Mar 3: In a significant operation, security forces recovered around 30 kg of explosives from the Digboi Reserve Forest in Assam's Tinsukia district. The explosives were unearthed during a joint operation by the Tinsukia police and the Indian Army. According to police sources, the explosives were buried nearly a year ago by Nabajit Asom, a recently surrendered cadre of the banned outfit ULFA-I. Officials said the explosives were concealed about 500 meters



from the Dibru River and were found hidden in eight polythene bags, a tiffin box, and a bucket. Security forces have launched a search operation in the area, suspecting the presence of more hidden stockpiles.

The operation followed the apprehension of two active members of the United

Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I) by Tinsukia Police on February 28. The apprehended militants, Nabajit Asom from Bolaguri in Kumthai, Golaghat, and Nitul Asom from Meleng Lohkor village in Teok, were found in possession of illegal weapons. The joint operation was conducted by Assam Police, Military Intelligence, and Assam Rifles. Earlier this year, on January 25, security forces uncovered a stash of explosives in Sonitpur district. Assam.

RSS chief emphasizes cultural heritage and modern aspirations in Arunachal

Itanagar, Mar 3: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Chief Dr. Mohan Bhagwat emphasized the importance of balancing cultural heritage with modern aspirations during his visit to the Donyi Polo Nye-dar Namlo, an indigenous prayer center of the Nyishi community in Naharlagun. Dr. Bhagwat highlighted the role of spiritual practices in fostering societal harmony and nation-building. The Namlo, situated near the serene banks of the Pachin River, is dedicated to the worship of the Sun (Donyi) and the Moon (Polo),

holding deep spiritual and cultural significance for the region's indigenous people.

Dr. Mohan Bhagwat participated in the traditional prayer ceremony with humility and reverence, demonstrating deep respect for the spiritual heritage of the state's indigenous communities, according to a statement. He engaged in discussions with Namlo priests and devotees, commending their efforts to safeguard their traditions. The Donyi Polo Nye-dar Namlo serves as a spiritual center for the Nyishi people.

20 illegal weapons voluntarily surrendered



Imphal, Mar 3: Following an appeal by Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla and public awareness campaigns by District Police, Assam Rifles, and CRPF, civilians and community groups in Manipur have begun surrendering illegally held weapons. On Sunday, 20 illegal weapons were voluntarily surrendered by the public in Imphal East, Bishnupur, Jiribam, and Imphal West districts.

In a separate operation, Manipur Police arrested two individuals for possessing 20 soap cases suspected to contain brown sugar weighing 828 grams. The arrest occurred near Upper Kathikho Karong at the KSTC waste dumping area in Senapati district. A four-wheeler used for transportation was also seized, according to an official statement.

Additionally, two active cadres of KCP (PWG) were arrested from the hilltop of Ngariyan Hill under Iriblung police station in Imphal East district. The duo allegedly involved in arms transportation and extortion.

Mizoram Minister to introduce bill on placement agencies

Aizawl, Mar 3: Mizoram Labour, Employment, Skill Development, and Entrepreneurship (LESDE) Minister Lalngthinglova Hmar is set to introduce a bill to regulate private agencies involved in recruiting and sending youths for placement jobs abroad. Hmar will present the Mizoram Private Placement Agencies (Regulation) Bill, 2025, in the state assembly on Monday.

This bill aims to regulate private placement agencies' operations, ensuring they legally send youths for jobs, including domestic work, both within India and abroad. If enacted, the bill will require private placement agencies to register with the government and obtain a license to operate. The necessity for this bill arose after some Mizo women,



illegally sent by private placement agencies to foreign countries, particularly Syria, UAE, and other Gulf nations for domestic work, encountered legal issues last year. The Mizoram government, along with generous individuals and the Centre, successfully rescued several Mizo women from Syria and other Arab countries.

The Mizoram Private Placement Agencies (Regulation) Act was enacted in 2015 under the Lal Than-hawla-led Congress government. However, the earlier law allowed agencies to place women as domestic workers nationwide.

Kohima windstorm ignites wildfires, causing widespread damage in Nagaland

Kohima, Mar 3: Strong winds on Sunday fueled multiple fire incidents across seven locations in and around Kohima, including Meriema, Chakhabama, Seikhazou D. Khel Kohima Village, the Medical College area, D. Block, and two sites in Lower Forest Colony. Chumbemo Patton, SI (O.C) of the North Kohima Fire Station, reported that nearly all the incidents were jungle fires, and no casualties have been reported. Authorities have controlled most of the fires, though the exact cause remains unknown.

In another incident, strong winds caused a tree to fall near the Nagaland Olympic Office (NOA) in Kohima, damaging at least three parked vehicles. The Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority



(NSDMA) reported significant damages across the state due to an unprecedented windstorm. Commissioner and Secretary Lhouchalie Viya stated that strong winds affected Kohima, Kiphire, and Noklak districts. In Kohima, fallen trees damaged parked vehicles at Raj Bhavan Colony and several VIP quarters. Additionally, a wildfire broke out at Forest Colony, prompting an immediate response from the State

Disaster Response Force and other agencies to protect residents and property. Kiphire and Noklak districts also sustained damages. Report indicated household destruction in Seyochung and Kiusam circles of Kiphire and Nokyan B Village in Noklak. NSDMA stated that it is assessing the full extent of the damages and awaits further reports from the District Disaster Management Authorities.

Godrej, Eyebetes Foundation launch 'Undekha Eye Test' at Maha Kumbh Mela

Guwahati: In a unique health awareness initiative, Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) has partnered with Eyebetes Foundation to introduce the 'Undekha Eye Test' at the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. This campaign, conceptualized by Godrej Creative Lab, transformed Naga Sadhus into living eye charts, raising awareness about

diabetes-related blindness among millions of pilgrims.

With over 100 million diabetics in India, of whom 60% remain undiagnosed, the initiative aimed to provide free eye screenings, diabetes tests, and distribute 50,000 eyeglasses to devotees and police personnel. The campaign saw Naga Sadhus sporting vision charts on their bare

backs, making them cultural influencers for public health.

"The Kumbh is a massive event with intense competition for attention. This initiative turned tradition into a powerful health awareness tool," said Sudhir Sitapati, MD & CEO of GCPL. Guwahati, a key player in the FMCG sector in the Northeast, has

shown strong consumer interest in brands that champion social causes. GCPL's initiative is expected to strengthen its brand recall in Assam, where demand for CSR-driven campaigns is on the rise. Industry experts believe this culturally resonant marketing approach could inspire similar health-focused activations in regional markets.

NSDC to launch centre for future skills at CCSU, aims to boost workforce readiness

Guwahati: The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is setting up a Centre of Future Skills at Chaudhary Charan Singh University (CCSU), Meerut, under NSDC Academy, to train youth in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Internet of Things (IoT), Healthcare/Paramedical, and Language courses.

Additionally, the Sports Physical Education Fitness & Leisure Skills Council (SPEFL-SC) will establish a Manufacturing-cum-Training facility for badminton racket and shuttlecock production, supported by CSR initiatives. Two MoUs were signed on Saturday in the presence of Union Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship,



Jayant Chaudhary. The agreements focus on integrating skill-based training with mainstream education and empowering 600 women from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) through skill-based employment. The initiative will leverage Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH), NSDC JobX, and NSDC International for job placements. With the increasing de-

mand for skilled professionals, Guwahati's job market stands to benefit from NSDC's expansion. Businesses in Assam, especially in IT and healthcare, could gain access to a trained workforce. Additionally, the sports manufacturing sector presents opportunities for Northeast-based retailers, linking them with national supply chains.

Women in rural India drive skilling boom, boost local economies

Guwahati: A major shift is underway in India's workforce as women in rural and non-metro regions embrace skill development, breaking traditional employment barriers. The Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH), spearheaded by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under Ved Mani Tiwari, is driving this transformation, equipping millions with industry-relevant skills.

In Uttar Pradesh, 1.17 million women have trained through SIDH, followed by 587,285 in Assam and 524,520 in West Bengal. Women in Jammu and Kashmir (340,814) and Rajasthan are leveraging these programs for financial independence. Courses in digital marketing, mobile repair, and entrepreneurship are empowering women like ManshaMohmad from Budgam and MohimaMondal from West Bengal to launch their own ventures.

With Assam emerging as a key hub for skilling, Guwahati's retail, beauty, and IT sectors are witnessing an influx of trained women professionals. Entrepreneurs skilled through SIDH are fueling local business growth, particularly in digital services and e-commerce, strengthening Guwahati's economy. The surge in online skilling—with 29,938 enrollments in Uttar Pradesh alone—is reshaping India's workforce. As AI and automation expand, SIDH-trained women are bridging the skills gap, fostering entrepreneurship, and driving inclusive economic growth.

Royal Stag BoomBox kicks off third edition with electrifying Guwahati show

Guwahati: Seagram's Royal Stag BoomBox launched its highly anticipated third edition with a high-energy event at Saru Sajai Stadium Complex, Guwahati, on March 1. The festival, blending Bollywood melodies with hip-hop beats, attracted thousands of music and entertainment enthusiasts, reinforcing its position as a premier platform for live experiences. The evening featured performances by leading artists, with DJ Yogii setting the tone, followed by rap icon Ikka's high-energy set. Singer Nikhita Gandhi enthralled the audience with her versatile vocals, while Armaan Malik closed the show with a power-packed performance. The event also featured immersive art displays, gaming zones, and curated food experiences, creating a multi-sensory celebration. Royal Stag BoomBox will continue its four-city tour, offering unique musical experiences. Pernod Ricard India's Chief Marketing Officer, Kartik Mohindra, emphasized the brand's commitment to live music, calling it "a celebration of culture and youth expression."

Hindustan Power to invest Rs 620 cr in Assam's renewable energy push

Guwahati: Hindustan Power, led by Ratul Puri, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Assam government to invest ₹620 crore in solar and battery energy storage projects. The agreement, finalized at the Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit in Guwahati, reinforces the company's commitment to sustainable energy solutions. As part of the investment, Hindustan Power will develop a 100 MW solar power plant with an allocation of ₹500 crore and a 100 MW battery energy storage system worth ₹120 crore. These projects align with the company's target of achieving a 5 GW energy portfolio in the next three years and will generate over 5,000 man-days of employment. Ratul Puri highlighted Assam's potential for renewable energy growth, crediting Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma's leadership in attracting investments. The MoU signing was attended by key officials, including Power Minister Prasanta Phukan and senior APDCL executives. The investment is expected to strengthen Guwahati by enhancing power reliability, reducing operational costs for businesses, and supporting industries adopting sustainable energy. The initiative is set to accelerate Assam's transition to clean energy while fostering economic development.



HDFC Life introduces Click 2 Achieve Par Advantage to empower financial goals

Shillong/Imphal: HDFC Life, one of India's leading life insurance providers, has announced the launch of HDFC Life Click 2 Achieve Par Advantage, a participating life insurance plan designed to provide financial security, flexibility, and liquidity to policyholders.

The plan includes Policy Continuance Benefit (PCB), which ensures that in the event of the policyholder's demise, future premiums are waived while benefits continue for the nominee. Customers can also select a customizable Death Benefit Multiple (5x, 7x, or 11x) and utilize the Paid-Up Addition feature, allowing conversion of cash bonuses into encashable benefits. The product also offers life coverage for spouses and tax benefits under applicable laws.

Aneesh Khanna, Head of Products & Segments, HDFC Life, commented, "This plan has been crafted to meet the evolving needs of individuals at different life stag-



es, helping them achieve milestones like homeownership and higher education for their children while ensuring financial protection." With a 99.50% claim settlement ratio in FY24, HDFC Life reaffirms its commitment to providing innovative, customer-centric insurance solutions.

RBL Bank Offices Searched by GST Authorities in Maharashtra

Mumbai: GST authorities conducted searches at three offices of RBL Bank in Maharashtra, the private sector lender has said.

In a regulatory filing on Monday evening, RBL Bank said on March 3, 2025, Maharashtra state GST Authorities have initiated searches at three offices of RBL Bank in the state.

"The proceedings are on going and the Bank is



co-operating fully in providing data as per request placed," the bank had said in a filing.

Shares of RBL Bank closed at Rs 154.50 on Tuesday, down 0.29 per cent over previous close on BSE.

Shopsy's Grand Mela returns with mega discounts and exciting deals

Guwahati: Shopsy by Flipkart, one of India's fastest-growing hyper-value e-commerce platforms, has launched the eighth edition of the Grand Shopsy Mela (GSM). Running from March 1 to 9, this digital shopping festival promises affordability with over 10 lakh products priced under ₹149 across categories like fashion, home, electronics, and kitchen essentials. With the theme 'Shopping Mela Sabse Bada, Prices Sabse Chote,' GSM recreates the spirit of traditional Indian fairs in an engaging online format. Key attractions include Grand Jhatpat Deals starting at Re 1, Grand Jackpot Deals, and the Sabse Chhota Price Zone featuring products



under ₹99. The event has consistently seen a three-fold surge in customer demand, positioning Shopsy as a go-to platform for budget-conscious shoppers, particularly from Tier 2, 3, and 4 cities.

Guwahati, a major commercial hub in the Northeast, is witnessing high engagement, with shoppers actively purchasing

fashion, beauty, and home essentials. Local sellers are capitalizing on the mela-themed promotions, reaching a broader audience through Shopsy's extensive network. The affordability factor is drawing more digital-savvy buyers, reinforcing Shopsy's growing influence in emerging markets. Prathyusha Agarwal, Business Head of Shopsy, emphasized the event's significance, stating, "For our shoppers in Bharat, a sale is an event, but a mela is a vibe."

This edition enhances the experience with gamified shopping features, real-time deals, and an expanded product range under ₹500, making e-commerce more inclusive and exciting."

Haier unveils India's first colorful Kinouchi ACs with AI-driven cooling



Guwahati: Haier Appliances India has launched the Kinouchi Limited Edition Air Conditioners, introducing India's first colorful AC range that combines aesthetic appeal with advanced cooling technology. Available in Black, Morning Mist, and Moonstone Grey, the new series caters to consumers seeking both style and high-performance cooling solutions. Equipped with AI-driven Supersonic Cooling, the Kinouchi ACs offer 20X faster cooling in just 10 seconds, even in

extreme temperatures of up to 60°C. The Frost Self-Clean Technology ensures 99.9% sterilization, while HEXA Inverter Technology enhances energy efficiency and long-term durability. With a 20-metre-long air throw and Turbo mode, the ACs provide uniform and powerful cooling. The Haier Smart App allows users to monitor energy consumption and optimize efficiency in real-time. "Haier is the only brand in India offering a colorful AC range, redefining home aesthetics

while ensuring unmatched cooling performance," said NS Satish, President, Haier Appliances India. With hot and humid summers, Guwahati presents a promising market for Haier's Kinouchi ACs. The demand for energy-efficient, durable, and stylish cooling solutions is rising in both residential and commercial segments, making the new series an attractive choice. Kinouchi series priced from ₹49,990 now available across top online and offline retail channels in India.

ICICI Prudential announces launch of 'ICICI Pru GIFT Select' – A new era in guaranteed income solutions

Mumbai: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance is proud to announce the launch of its latest innovation, ICICI Pru GIFT Select, a long-term savings product engineered to deliver guaranteed immediate income and enhanced liquidity in today's volatile market environment.

The product provides customers with the flexibility to choose the income start date, duration, and the

payout amount at maturity, while also incorporating a life cover component for added financial security. A standout feature is the increasing income option, which boosts payouts at a compounding rate of 5% per annum, effectively countering inflation. Amit Palta, Chief Product and Distribution Officer, remarked, "We continue to build on our legacy of inno-

vation to meet the evolving needs of our customers. ICICI Pru GIFT Select is a customizable solution that safeguards financial savings amidst market fluctuations and supports long-term financial goals." Where investors are increasingly seeking secure and flexible financial instruments, this product is expected to resonate strongly.

With local consumers fac-

ing economic uncertainties and inflationary pressures, the assured returns and liquidity of ICICI Pru GIFT Select are poised to offer a compelling option for long-term wealth preservation. ICICI Prudential reinforces its commitment to customer trust with an industry-leading claim settlement ratio of 99.3% in 9M-FY2025 and an average settlement time of just 1.2 days.

India's pension AUM to hit ₹118 trillion by 2030: DSP Pension Fund Managers

Guwahati: India's pension assets under management (AUM) are projected to reach ₹118 trillion by 2030, with the National Pension System (NPS) expected to contribute nearly 25%, according to DSP Pension Fund Managers. The surge is driven by demographic shifts, rising life expectancy, and increasing investor preference for market-linked retirement solutions. India's elderly population is set to grow 2.5 times by 2050, with post-retirement life expectancy averaging 20 years. Despite this, the pension market remains underpenetrated at just 3% of GDP, while the retirement savings gap is widening by 10% annually, potentially reaching \$96 trillion by 2050.

Investors are moving away from traditional savings, with cash and bank deposits declining from 62% to 44% over the past decade. NPS private sector AUM has grown at 26.8% annually over the past five years, reaching ₹2,78,102 crore. Between FY 2020 and 2024, male subscribers increased by 65%, while female registrations surged by 119%.

The recently launched NPS Vatsalya has already attracted 86,000 subscribers. The trend is also gaining traction in Guwahati, where investors are increasingly exploring NPS for long-term financial security. Financial advisors in the city are witnessing a growing interest in structured pension plans, aligning with the broader national shift toward retirement planning. "With the right policies and awareness, India's pension market has immense potential. We aim to be among the top five players in the next five years," said Rahul Bhagat, CEO, DSP Pension Fund Managers.

Star Health expands home healthcare network to 100 locations, strengthens presence in Guwahati

Guwahati: Star Health and Allied Insurance Company Limited (Star Health Insurance), India's largest retail health insurer, has expanded its Home Health Care (HHC) services to 100 locations across India, making it the country's largest provider of doorstep medical care. The initiative, launched in July 2023, now covers over 85% of Star Health's customer base, ensuring cashless, at-home treatment within three hours, with no out-of-pocket expenses. Anand Roy, MD & CEO, Star Health Insurance, said, "Health insurance should be more than financial coverage—it should provide direct access to quality healthcare. By eliminating logistical barriers and high hospitalization costs, we are bringing care to customers'

doorsteps." The service covers conditions like viral fever, dengue, gastroenteritis, and respiratory infections, with partnerships involving Care24, Portea, Argala, Athulya, and Apollo. Guwahati stands to benefit significantly from this expansion. The city's growing demand for accessible healthcare solutions aligns with the program, ensuring timely medical care while reducing hospital overcrowding.

With rapid urbanization and increasing healthcare costs, Star Health's initiative is expected to reshape the city's home-care sector. The service has seen the highest adoption in Mumbai, Delhi, and Pune, treating over 15,000 patients. With its expanding reach, Star Health aims to redefine India's health insurance landscape.

MoS Pabitra Margherita begins Latin America tour, strengthens India's global trade ties

Guwahati: Minister of State for External Affairs and Textiles, Pabitra Margherita, has embarked on a multi-nation tour of Latin America, beginning with São Paulo, Brazil. His visit, which includes Uruguay, the Bahamas, Barbados, and Nicaragua, aims to bolster India's economic and diplomatic engagements in the region. During his inter-



action with the Indian diaspora in São Paulo, Margherita praised their role in expanding India's presence in Latin America. Sharing his views on social media platform X, he stated, "Delighted to interact with the Indian community in São Pau-

Their efforts in foster-

ing stronger ties between India and Brazil and expanding India's presence in Latin America are commendable." As part of his itinerary, the Minister will attend the swearing-in ceremony of Uruguay's President-elect Yamandú Orsi and discuss trade opportunities in the Bahamas, building on agreements from the 2nd India-CARICOM Summit in 2024. His visit to Nicaragua marks a

historic first for India's Ministry of External Affairs. For Guwahati, stronger India-Latin America trade relations could open new avenues in textiles and manufacturing exports.

With Assam's emerging role in India's global trade strategy, businesses in the region may benefit from expanded commercial opportunities in Latin American markets.

Why Pig Health Matters More Than Ever By: Capt. (Dr.) A.Y. Rajendra, CEO - Animal Feed Business, Godrej Agrovet

As the world's fourth-largest pork producer, with approximately 9 million pigs, India's pork industry plays a crucial yet often overlooked role in the nation's economic landscape. However, as the world celebrates National Pig Day, it serves as an opportunity for reflection on the resilience of India's pig farming community, particularly in the wake of the African Swine Fever (ASF) crisis. The Heavy Economic Toll of ASF

The economic consequences of ASF have been severe. Since the disease was first detected in North-east, the total economic

losses in the pig farming industry due to ASF outbreaks from 2020 to 2024 were estimated at Rs. 80 crores across the region. These losses include direct costs and indirect costs. The crisis has disrupted not just farmers but entire supply chains, affecting feed mills, transport companies, and processing facilities.

The Struggles of Small-Scale Farmers

What makes this situation even more concerning is that most pig farmers in India are small-scale backyard operators, not large commercial enterprises. For example, in Mizoram, over 19,017 families have

been affected, with financial losses exceeding ₹132.20 crore. While America has a booming pig farming, India's pig farmers are fighting for survival and recognition.

Government Measures and the Road Ahead

The Indian government has implemented proactive measures to address the crisis, including culling infected pigs, imposing quarantines, strengthening biosecurity protocols, and enhancing surveillance programs. However, the informal nature of the pork industry poses challenges in enforcing and ensuring compliance with these measures. To address this,

farmers need to be trained to establish and adhere to biosecurity standards independently. Key practices include restricting farm access, requiring visitors to use protective equipment, and maintaining strict hygiene protocols.

Providing pigs with high-quality, nutrient-dense feed is also essential. A well-balanced diet, rich in essential nutrients, significantly strengthens pigs' immune systems, enhancing their resilience to diseases like African Swine Fever (ASF). Proper nutrition not only promotes the overall health and well-being of pigs but also reduces their susceptibility to viral and

bacterial infections.

Equally important is government support in raising awareness and assisting farmers in implementing enhanced biosecurity measures. This dual approach—combining traditional control strategies with a strong emphasis on biosecurity, early disease detection, and optimal nutrition—can better equip India to mitigate the economic and social impacts of ASF on its significant pork industry. Recognizing Pigs as an Economic Lifeline

It's essential to acknowledge that pigs contribute significantly to India's rural economy and food security. Moving forward, a com-

prehensive approach is needed—one that includes training farmers in biosecurity measures, ensuring optimal livestock nutrition, and enforcing stricter trading controls. The contrast between America's celebratory National Pig Day and India's current challenges in the pork industry serves as a reminder that while pigs are celebrated in some parts of the world, in others, they represent critical economic lifelines requiring urgent attention and support. Hence let's extend our recognition to India's pig farming community and their crucial role in the nation's agricultural landscape.

Hinduja College to become deemed university; Hinduja Foundation targets for 1 million students by 2030

Mumbai: Hinduja College of Commerce is advancing towards deemed university status, marking a significant milestone in its 75-year legacy. At the anniversary celebration, Hon'ble Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar, urged corporate India to invest in specialized educational institutions, emphasizing that education should not be driven by commercialization but by a vision for national development. Ashok Hinduja, Chairman, Hinduja Foundation, announced plans to expand student capacity multi-fold with a state-of-the-art facility set for completion by 2028.



The college will introduce new programs in Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Climate Finance, and Export-Import Management, reinforcing its commitment to industry-driven education. Hinduja Foundation, which has already impact-

ed over 700,000 students, aims to empower 1 million students by 2030 through various initiatives.

The growing demand for skilled professionals in Kohima presents an opportunity for investments in higher education and

vocational training. With expanding industries and increasing interest in tech-driven careers, Hinduja College's model of academia-industry collaboration could serve as a blueprint for similar institutions in the region. With NAAC A+ accreditation and autonomous status under NEP 2020, Hinduja College's transformation aligns with India's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision. The event also witnessed the presence of Maharashtra Governor Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan, with the Vice President felicitating outstanding students for their achievements.

Nissan Magnite achieves 50,000 export sales, now fully E20 compliant

Guwahati: Nissan Motor India has strengthened its commitment to sustainable mobility by making the New Nissan Magnite BR10 (Naturally Aspirated Engine) fully E20 compliant. This update aligns with India's shift towards eco-friendly fuels, with both powertrain options, including the 1.0L HR10 turbocharged petrol engine, now E20-compatible. The company has also hit a major export milestone, with 50,000 units of the Magnite shipped since its inception. The introduction of the Left-Hand Drive (LHD) variant has significantly boosted global reach, with shipments to Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia Pacific. In February 2025, Nissan reported wholesale dispatches of 8,567 units, comprising 6,239 exports and 2,328 domestic sales, marking a 97% year-on-year export growth. Saurabh Vatsa, Managing Director, Nissan Motor India, stated, "The New Nissan Magnite's global success underscores our focus on quality, innovation, and performance. Its E20 compliance aligns with our vision for future-ready mobility solutions." In Guwahati, the Magnite has gained traction due to its competitive pricing, fuel efficiency, and premium features. With Nissan expanding its dealership network, the SUV is expected to see rising demand in Assam's growing automotive market. Currently available in over 65 countries, the Nissan Magnite continues to strengthen India's position as a key export hub in the global automotive industry.

Oriflame expands Wellosophy with new skincare line, strengthens India presence

Guwahati: Swedish holistic wellbeing brand Oriflame has expanded its Wellosophy portfolio with the launch of Wellosophy Skincare, a seven-piece range designed to complement its nutritional supplements. This move reinforces Oriflame's inside-out approach to beauty and wellbeing, addressing rising consumer demand for holistic self-care solutions. The new skincare range is formulated with eight adaptogenic ingredients, including Ashwagandha from India and Siberian Ginseng, to combat oxidative stress, which affects 9 in 10 women globally. Free from parabens, mineral oils, SLS, and SLES, the products are 97% natural, biodegradable, and cer-



tified by The Vegan Society™. The range includes cleansers, serums, a face mist, and a sleep elixir, blending botanical actives with mood-enhancing aromatherapy. Edyta Kurek, Senior Vice President & Head of India and Indonesia, stated, "With Wellos-

ophy, we've crafted a holistic journey that nourishes the body from within and protects the skin externally." In Guwahati, a growing hub for premium skincare and wellness products, Oriflame's expansion is expected to attract consumers seeking sustainable beauty solutions.

The demand for natural, science-backed skincare is increasing, making Wellosophy's holistic approach a promising addition to the market. The Wellosophy Skin range is now available on Oriflame's website, further strengthening its footprint in India, where 85% of products are locally manufactured and 80% of Brand Partners are women.

RBI advises NBFCs to limit perpetual credit lines

Mumbai: RBI has raised concerns over the growing use of perpetual credit lines by retail-focused non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), cautioning lenders about potential risks associated with such products, reported.

The central bank has conveyed to some lenders that they should slow down the issuance of these credit lines, which allow borrow-

ers to access funds continuously without a fixed repayment schedule.

The RBI is particularly uneasy about lenders extending credit without clear visibility into a borrower's repayment capacity, raising concerns over financial stability and risk management. The regulator's warning comes amid a surge in flexible lending products in the retail segment.



MSDE strengthens governance with Rashtriya Karmayogi Seva-Bhav training

Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) conducted a Rashtriya Karmayogi Seva-Bhav training session on Tuesday under the Capacity Building Commission (CBC) initiative, reinforcing the government's focus on modernizing public service through Mission Karmayogi. The program aims to equip officials with leadership skills, accountability, and a citizen-centric approach to governance.

MSDE Secretary Atul Kumar Tiwari highlighted the transformative impact of the initiative, said, "Skilling is not just about individuals - it's about empowering institutions, strengthening governance, and ensuring that every decision we take aligns with the larger goal of national development. This session reaffirmed our commitment to proactive leadership and transforming governance into a purpose-driven, people-first mission. I extend my grat-



itude to our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for his vision of Mission Karmayogi, which is modernizing civil services and equipping officials with the right mindset and skills to drive India towards Viksit Bharat @2047."

Led by Pritam Dutta, Director, MSDE, who was trained as a Master Trainer under Phase-I, the session at Kaushal Bhawan, New Delhi, engaged officials through structured modules emphasizing collaboration, problem-solving, and real-world governance challenges. The initiative

holds significant relevance for business hubs like Guwahati, where improved administrative efficiency can streamline market regulations, boost trade, and enhance public service delivery. With better governance, industries in Guwahati stand to benefit from skill-based workforce development and stronger institutional support. As the training expands, the Rashtriya Karmayogi Seva-Bhav Program is set to create a more responsive, transparent, and growth-oriented public administration across India.

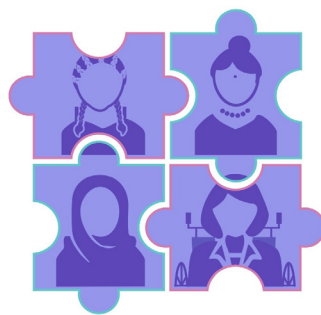
For International Women's Day 2025, GCPL introduces 'WomenAlly: Allies in Action'

Guwahati: Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL), a leading emerging markets company, has committed to fostering an equitable workforce—not just in principle, but through continuous action to drive meaningful change. For International Women's Day 2025, GCPL has introduced 'WomenAlly: Allies in Action', a month-long initiative spanning geographies like Asia (India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, UAE), Africa (South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana) and Latin America (Argentina & Chile).

This initiative recognizes and celebrates individuals within and outside the organisation—who are allies and actively champion inclusion, advocate for fairness, and contribute to a more supportive and dynamic workplace for women.

GCPL has four platforms

Godrej | CONSUMER PRODUCTS
International
WOMEN'S DAY



where the company will reiterate their stand on affirmative efforts with respect to women. Commenting on the International Women's Day initiatives, Vaibhav Ram, Global Head—Human Resources, Godrej Consumer Products Ltd., said, "At GCPL, our approach to Allyship ties in quite well to the broader pillars outlined by the

UN—For All Women & Girls—Rights, Equality, and Empowerment. These pillars guide our efforts in fostering a culture where every individual, regardless of gender, background, or role, can thrive. GCPL is soon releasing a docu-film on how sales have traditionally been a male-dominated field but is now changing.

TKM introduces the Manual Transmission variant of the Toyota Legender 4X4

Bangalore: Addressing the growing demand for high-performance, adventurous, and stylish SUVs, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) has introduced the Manual Transmission (MT) variant of the Toyota Legender 4X4. Designed for thrill-seeking driving enthusiasts, this new variant enhances engagement and control while delivering a perfect blend of power, luxury, and cutting-edge technology. At the heart of the Legender 4X4 MT is the renowned 2.8L diesel engine, engineered for unmatched power delivery. Producing 204 PS of power and 420 Nm of torque, this powertrain is tailored for those who prefer absolute control over their drive.

Speaking on the introduction of the Legen-



der 4X4 MT, Mr. Varinder Wadhwa, Vice President, Sales-Service-Used Car Business, said, "We are thrilled to unveil the new grade of the Toyota Legender, specifically designed in response to the evolving demands and preferences of our valued customers. This new addition of the MT variant will not only further boost the Legender's appeal but also reinforce Toyota's commitment to provid-

ing versatile solutions that cater to the dynamic needs of today's customer." The Premium 11 JBL speakers, including a subwoofer and an amplifier, ensures an immersive sound experience, making long drives even more enjoyable. Customers can visit their nearest Toyota dealership or book online at Toyota Bharat website - <https://www.toyotabharat.com/showroom/fortuner/index-legender.html>.

RBI names Dr. Joshi as new Executive Director



Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed Dr. Ajit Ratnakar Joshi as Executive Director (ED) with effect from March 03, 2025.

Prior to being promoted as ED, Dr. Joshi was serving as Principal Adviser in Department of Statistics and Information Management. Dr. Joshi has experience of over three decades in the areas of statistics, information technology, and cyber risk management.

He also served as member of faculty at the Institute of Development and Research in Banking Technology, Hyderabad. He has also served as member of several committees and working groups relating to compilation of macroeconomic statistics and policy issues. As Executive Director, Dr. Joshi will look after Department of Statistics and Information Management and Financial Stability Department. Dr. Joshi has a master's degree in statistics from Nagpur University.

Sanskriti Sports Fiesta 25 boosts sports economy with over 1,300 athletes

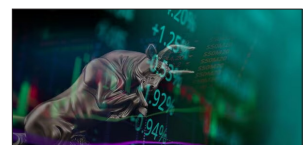
Guwahati: Sanskriti University, Mathura, has kicked off its flagship annual sporting event, 'Sanskriti Sports Fiesta 25,' attracting 1,312 athletes competing across 28 sports disciplines in 40 competitive matches. The event, running until March 1, 2025, was inaugurated by Indian wrestling star Babita Phogat and former cricketer Madan Lal, inspiring students to push their athletic boundaries. The sports extravaganza features cricket, football, javelin throw, shot put, badminton, chess, table tennis, and race events. Participants, divided into four groups, will battle for championship titles, showcasing skill, discipline, and sportsmanship. Cricket and football remain key highlights, drawing strong audience engagement.

Internationally recognized sports figures will also mentor athletes throughout the event. Chancellor Dr. Sachin Gupta emphasized the business impact of sports, stating, "Sports drive economic activity, from retail to sponsorships. This event provides students a platform for both competition and career growth." The growing popularity of sports has spurred demand in Guwahati's sports market, with increased sales of athletic gear, footwear, and fitness accessories. Local retailers report heightened interest in cricket and football merchandise, reflecting a shift toward an active lifestyle. Events like Sanskriti Sports Fiesta 25 contribute to this momentum, reinforcing sports as a business driver.

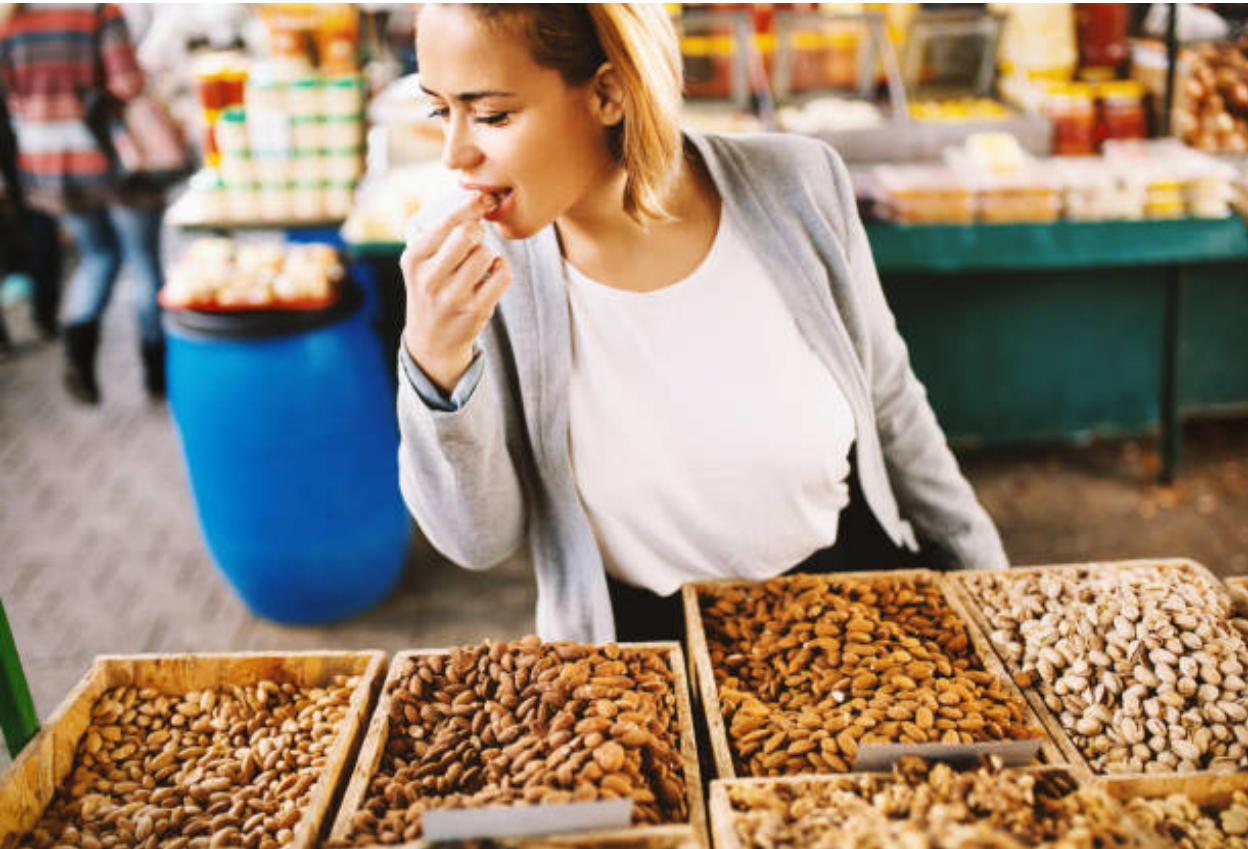
Nifty 50 ends longest losing streak in 29 years, Sensex reclaims 73,000

Mumbai: After 10 days of decline (Nifty 50), bulls finally took charge of the Indian market in today's session, March 05, brushing aside Donald Trump's threats of reciprocal tariffs on Indian imports.

All 13 major sectoral indices ended in the green, while the broader market also rebounded strongly,



bringing much-needed relief to investors' portfolios after a prolonged period of pressure. Mixed sectoral performance hindered the market's rebound attempts in previous sessions.



The surge in nut consumption in India and the global competition

People embracing a plant-based vegan diet prioritize alternative sources of protein, instead of those derived from animals, resulting in soaring demand for nuts and nut-infused foods.

India, once regarded merely as an emerging market, is now the hottest destination for international nut growers and trade associations. As Indian wallets have gotten thicker, a surprising dietary trend has emerged: Indian snackers are going nuts for, well, nuts. Almonds, walnuts, pistachios, cashews, pecans—you name it. This growing population of health-conscious Indians has led nut producers and suppliers worldwide to scramble for a slice of India's lucrative market.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in a recent report, noted that India's agricultural imports, valued at \$37 billion in FY 2023, are relatively small compared to its population size. In contrast, China imported \$262.7 billion worth of agricultural products during the same period. This disparity highlights the untapped potential of the Indian market.

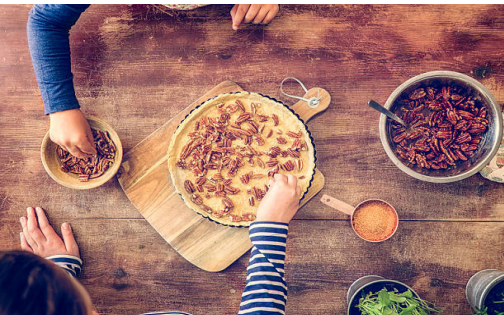
Currently, tree nuts are the second-largest agricultural import from the US to India, with almonds alone accounting for \$932 million out of the total \$2.8 billion. The US, already India's biggest almond supplier, expects a 6 per cent increase in the almond market for FY 2023–2024. Building on this strong foundation and leveraging the recently reduced tariffs, the US is now pushing pecans, a nut known for its health benefits, into the Indian market. In FY 2022, India

imported over 103 metric tonnes of pecans from the US, and this figure is expected to grow as awareness increases.

Experts argue that the influx of foreign nuts could benefit Indian consumers by providing a wider variety of healthy options. Pecans, for example, are rich in nutrients and have been linked to improved heart health and diabetes management.

Various international Nut Boards have been working tirelessly in India to promote their produce. The Almond Board of California has been debunking myths regarding their produce for over two decades in the Indian market, while the California Walnut Commission managed to reverse the ban on walnut imports in India in 2012. The Cranberry Marketing Committee tripled the demand for US cranberries by focusing on their benefits for gut health.

The American Pistachio Growers have significantly increased pistachio consumption in India by over 400 per cent in the last five years. Their large-scale advertising campaign featuring Indian badminton star PV Sindhu, emphasizing the tagline "as much protein as an egg," has been highly effective.



Seeing the success of these boards in India, other international agencies are also now making a push into the Indian market. These include the Almond Board of Australia, the Chilean Prune Association, the World Macadamia Organization, and the Turkish Hazelnut Promotion Group.

Seeing the success of these boards in India, other international agencies are also now making a push into the Indian market. These include the Almond Board

of Australia, the Chilean Prune Association, the World Macadamia Organization, and the Turkish Hazelnut Promotion Group. They negotiate tariff cuts with the Indian administration to make their products more price-competitive.



AMAZING BENEFITS OF A MORNING RUN

Running is undoubtedly a fantastic way to achieve your fitness goals, embraced by millions for its numerous benefits. It's one of the simplest forms of exercise, accessible to people of all ages. But did you know that running first thing in the morning feels like living two lives? The mental boost it gives your day, the thrill of a magical sunrise and the tranquillity of being immersed in nature while the rest of the world sleeps—there's truly no better feeling. We often underestimate how powerful a morning run can be, whether it's a solo journey or a pre-work running club. Check out some of the amazing benefits of a morning run below.

IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH

Running positively impacts your mental health and boosts your self-worth. A morning run, especially outdoors, lets you enjoy nature's beauty and the calm of fewer people and cars, making it a refreshing and rewarding start to your day.

BETTER SLEEP

If you struggle to sleep, try running in the morning. Studies show it promotes deeper sleep, and establishing a routine of early runs can help you fall asleep faster and improve your sleep quality.

IMPROVES HEART HEALTH

Morning running is an aerobic exercise with numerous health benefits, especially for heart health. It raises your heart rate, strengthens your cardiovascular system, and, with consistency, reduces the risk of heart disease and related conditions.

BETTER JOINT HEALTH

Running in the morning can help prevent joint pain and injury. Our joints are naturally stiffer in the morning, making them less prone to injury. By running early, you allow your body to warm up gradually, reducing strain on your joints and preparing for a longer, safer run. Starting your day with a run before work helps establish a consistent exercise routine and develop discipline. Committing to a morning run makes it easier to build the habit of regular exercise, which can boost your energy, productivity, and success in other areas of your life.

Morning runs can significantly boost your metabolism, the process that converts food into energy.

INDIA KOHLIFY FOR FINAL

India qualifies for final with 4-wicket win over Australia

Dubai, Mar 4: Virat Kohli led the way with 84 runs off 98 balls as India beat Australia by four wickets on Tuesday to reach the final of the Champions Trophy. Kohli's 74th ODI half-century helped India finish with 267-6 in reply to Australia's 264 all out in the first semi-final. Pacer Mohammed Shami spearheaded India's bowling and took 3-48 in 10 overs to restrict Australia on a slow wicket. "This game is all about pressure – if you go deep, the opposition usually gives in," Kohli said. Steve Smith top-scored for Australia with 73 off 96 balls. Indian spinners Varun Chakravarthy and Ravindra Jadeja grabbed two wickets each. For India, Shreyas Iyer helped put on 91 off 111 balls for the third wicket and anchor the chase. Lokesh Rahul finished with 42 not out off 34 balls as India registered the highest chase against Australia in an ICC event.

India's victory confirms that the final will be played in Dubai, where the 2013 champions will face the winner between South Africa and New Zealand, who play on Wednesday in Lahore, Pakistan. Lahore would have hosted the final if India had exited the tournament.



Steve announces retirement from ODI Cricket

Dubai, Mar 5: Steve Smith, the veteran Australia batter, announced his retirement from ODI cricket following his team's defeat to India in Tuesday's semi-final of the Champions Trophy 2025. Smith, who top-scored for Australia with 73, immediately informed his teammates that he'd played his last one-day international. The 35-year-old, however, will continue playing Tests and T20s for his country.

"It has been a great ride and I have loved every minute of it. There have been so many amazing times and wonderful memories. Winning two World Cups was a great highlight along with the many fantastic team-mates who shared the journey," Smith said. "Now is a great opportunity for people to start preparing for the 2027



World Cup so it feels like the right time to make way. Test cricket remains a priority and I am really looking forward to the World Test Championship Final, the West Indies in the winter and then England at home. I feel I still have a lot to contribute on that stage."

Australia, including 12 centuries, but more importantly as a two-time World Champions. He was part of Australia's World Cup-winning squads in 2015 under Michael Clarke and in 2023 under Pat Cummins. During his time with the Australian team, Smith succeeded Clarke as captain in 2015, and even though he had to give it up.

Atletico hoping Alvarez can end Real Madrid heartbreak in Europe

Alvarez scores 9 goals in 13 matches, totaling 21 in 40 games

Madrid, Mar 3: For Atletico Madrid it has been a repetitious and painful tale whenever they have faced city rivals Real Madrid in Europe, but they signed Julian Alvarez to try and rip up the script.

The Argentina international has become Atletico's key attacking threat after arriving from Manchester City last summer and will lead the line for them on Tuesday at the Santiago Bernabeu in the Champions League last 16.

Atletico have reached three Champions League finals and lost every time, including against Real Madrid in 2014 and 2016.

Those agonising defeats, the first in extra-time and the second on penalties, were compounded by Los

Sharath Kamal to retire after WTT Contender Chennai tournament

Chennai: Sharath Kamal, 42, on Wednesday announced that the WTT Contender Chennai which will be played from March 25 to 30 this month will be his last tournament as a professional table tennis player.

Arguably one of India's finest athletes, the Chennai-based star has been an inspiration for a generation of players. The five-time Olympian has been a great ambassador of the game and at the age of 42 is still among the highest ranked players of the country in World rankings.

As per the latest World Table Tennis (WTT) ranking list, Sharath is a good 18 places above Manav Thakkar (60) who is the second highest ranked Indian player. Sharath chose the WTT Star Contender launch event in the city to announce his retirement.

Sharath as usual was calm and composed while making the statement to quit the game that has been dear to him and part of his life for more than two decades. "I played my first international tournament in Chennai, I will be playing my last international also in Chennai. This (WTT Contender) will be my last tournament as a professional



athlete," said the table tennis legend.

Sharath learned the ropes of the game from his father A Srinivasa Rao and his uncle Muralidhara Rao and went on to conquer one peak after another in his illustrious career. Sharath has won six gold medals in the Commonwealth Games (13 medals overall in 5 editions) and medals at the Asian Games too. He took part in his fifth and final Olympics in Paris last year.

"I have Commonwealth Games medals and Asian Games medals. The Olympic medal is something I don't have in my cupboard. I hope I can live that dream through the younger talent coming," said the 42-year-old. The 10-time National singles table tennis champion chose Chennai to hang his boots as the city is dear to him. Sharath's journey has been a fruitful one with several highs in a career spanning more than two decades. "It's tough to define one fine moment in my career.

Real Madrid beats Atletico 2-1 Champions League derby

Madrid: A superb goal from Brahim Diaz helped Real Madrid maintain its dominance of the Madrid derby on Europe's biggest stage with a 2-1 victory over bitter rival Atletico in the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie on Tuesday. Atletico has been beaten by the record 15-time European champion in both Champions League final matchups and has won only three of 11 meetings with their city rivals in UEFA competitions.

Also Tuesday, Arsenal made a massive step toward a quarterfinal spot with a 7-1 win at PSV Eindhoven. It was the biggest victory in an away match in the knockout stage of the Champions League, UEFA said.

"It's a massive result away from home in a competition that we love, that we miss for so many years," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "Today is a really special night for us."

On a good night for Premier League teams, Aston Villa won 3-1 at Club Brugge, and Borussia Dortmund drew 1-1 with Lille.

Campions Trophy South Africa hope to end title jinx

Lahore, Mar 4: South Africa has a long history of near-misses in ICC tournaments, often reaching the semifinals or finals but failing to secure the title. The only ICC trophy they have won is the 1998 Champions Trophy. As they prepare to face New Zealand in the semifinals of the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy, they hope to break this "title jinx" and win their first ICC silverware since 1998. South Africa has consistently performed well in ICC tournaments, reaching the semifinals or finals on 13 occasions across both limited-overs formats. However, they have often fallen short at the crucial moments. This time, they are determined to change their fortunes.



Blancos wins in the 2015 quarter-finals and 2017 semi-finals. The only other occasion they have met in the competition was in 1959, when after an aggregate semi-final draw the tie went to a play-off. Real Madrid emerged triumphant and went on to lift a fourth consecutive European Cup. Their dominance in the competition has held

until this day, with Carlo Ancelotti's side record 15-time winners and the current holders.

Diego Simeone's team were ousted by Borussia Dortmund in last year's quarter-finals, one of the low points of a miserable campaign. They responded in the summer by signing Alvarez for 85 million euros (\$88 million).