



## BJP seeks removal of J'khand Ministers

**Jamshedpur:** Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has intensified its demand for the dismissal of Jharkhand Minority Welfare Minister Hafizul Hasan and Health Minister Irfan Ansari, accusing them of disrespecting the Indian Constitution. The controversy stems from Hasan's recent statement prioritizing Shariat law over the Constitution, which has sparked widespread political outrage.

Minister Hafizul Hasan reportedly stated, "We hold Shariat in our heart and the Constitution in our hand. Our priority is Shariat, then Constitution." This remark, made during a public event, has been criticized as undermining the sanctity of the Constitution.

Health Minister Irfan Ansari also faced backlash for opposing the implementation of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, recently passed by Parliament, in Jharkhand.

BJP staged protests statewide, including at East Singhbhum collectorate.

## Pope Francis passes away at 88, Vatican confirms

**Vatican City:** Pope Francis, the 266th pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, has died at the age of 88, the Vatican confirmed on Monday. His passing marks the end of a transformative era for the Catholic Church, characterized by his emphasis on humility, social justice, and a more inclusive approach.

Cardinal Kevin Farrell announced the Pope's death, stating that Francis "returned to the house of the Father" at 7:35 AM at his residence, Casa Santa Marta, within the Vatican. The news comes after Pope Francis had recently faced serious health challenges, including a prolonged hospitalization for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia. Despite these health struggles, he

made a public appearance on Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025, demonstrating his dedication to his duties. Pope Francis, born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Argentina, made history as the first Latin American pontiff when he was elected in 2013. He consistently championed the cause of the poor and those on the fringes of society.

He sought to reform the Vatican bureaucracy and foster a more welcoming environment, particularly towards the LGBTQ+ community. He stressed the importance of compassion and significantly altered the Church's stance on the death penalty. He made strides in appointing women to more significant decision-making positions within the Church.



## Modi, Vance: India-US trade talks progress

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and visiting United States Vice President J.D. Vance yesterday lauded the "significant progress" achieved in negotiations for a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement (BTA), signaling a notable step towards bolstering economic ties between the two nations. The discussions, held in

a cordial atmosphere, underscored the commitment of both sides to forging a mutually beneficial trade framework aimed at enhancing the well-being of their respective populations.

The U.S. formally announced the finalization of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the trade talks, providing a clear structure

for upcoming discussions focused on shared economic priorities. Both leaders expressed optimism for an expeditious conclusion to the agreement, reflecting a shared desire to deepen economic engagement.

Beyond the immediate focus on trade, the Modi-Vance meeting encompassed a wider spectrum of strategic cooperation.

## Pawar rejects Hindi opposition, backs Marathi priority

**Mumbai:** Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has firmly addressed the growing controversy surrounding the mandatory introduction of Hindi as a third language in Maharashtra's schools, asserting that while Hindi holds its place, Marathi will

always remain the state's foremost priority. The decision to implement the three-language formula, as per the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, has ignited a political firestorm, with opposition parties raising concerns about the ero-

sion of Marathi identity.

The Maharashtra government's move to make Hindi compulsory for students in classes 1 to 5, across Marathi and English-medium schools, has drawn sharp criticism, particularly from the Maha-

rashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) and the Congress party. MNS president Raj Thackeray has been particularly vocal, accusing the central government of attempting to "Hindi-fy" Maharashtra and vowing to resist the policy.

### Quick bites

#### AAP to skip Delhi mayoral polls

**New Delhi:** The AAP on Monday announced that it will not contest the upcoming elections for the posts of mayor and deputy mayor in the MCD.

#### Sangram Thopte joins BJP

**Mumbai:** Former Maharashtra MLA Sangram Thopte, a three-time representative of the Bhor constituency, has decided to leave the Congress party and join the BJP.

#### Mumbai police arrest Kolkata dentist

**Mumbai:** Mumbai police arrested a Kolkata-based dentist, Reshma Santosh Kumar Banerjee, for child trafficking. Two children—a two-year-old boy and a three-year-old girl—were rescued in the operation.

#### Gujarat unveils India's first SpaceTech policy

**Ahmedabad:** The Gujarat government on Thursday announced a dedicated policy to support space tech sector industries through various incentives and fiscal assistance.

## Gandhi's actions relating to 2000cr property, without investment: BJP

### Financial irregularities in AJL, YIL transactions under scrutiny

**New Delhi:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has escalated its attack on Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, alleging that the mother-son duo illicitly sought to gain control of properties worth an estimated ₹2,000 crore belonging to the National Herald newspaper without making any financial investment. The saffron party leveled these accusations, citing ongoing investigations into the affairs of Associated Journals Limited (AJL), the publisher of the now-defunct National Herald, and Young Indian Private Limited (YIL), a company where the Gandhis hold majority stakes. Addressing the media, senior BJP leaders, including [mention a spe-



cific leader if available from previous context or if you want to invent one, e.g., party spokesperson Sambit Patra], asserted that the Gandhis masterminded a "brazen" scheme to misappropriate prime real estate assets across the country. The BJP contends that through the formation of YIL and subsequent fi-

ancial transactions involving a loan from the Indian National Congress to AJL, the Gandhis effectively took ownership of AJL's valuable holdings without contributing any personal funds. "This is a clear case of attempting to grab assets worth thousands of crores through dubious means," alleged a BJP leader.

## BJP MLA accuses Mamata of sheltering terror groups

**Kolkata:** Murshidabad has been engulfed in violence following protests against the Waqf (Amendment) Act, leading to three deaths and the displacement of several families. The clashes have sparked political blame games, with BJP leaders accusing the Mamata Banerjee-led government of inaction and appeasement, while the Chief Minister has blamed the BJP, the Border Security Force (BSF), and central agencies for orchestrating the unrest.

West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose has described the violence as a deep-rooted issue in the state, citing corruption and lawlessness as major concerns. Meanwhile, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has

launched an investigation into alleged human rights violations, visiting refugee camps in Malda to hear testimonies from displaced families. The Calcutta High Court has ordered the continued deployment of central forces to maintain law and order and has warned political leaders against making inflammatory remarks.

Mamata Banerjee has alleged that the BSF manipulated young boys from Bangladesh, offering them money to incite violence. She has also accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah of divisive politics and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene. BJP leaders have demanded Banerjee's resignation.



## Garo group demands MPSC chair



**Shillong:** A tribal rights organisation has called on the Meghalaya government to appoint a member of the Garo community as the next chairman of the Meghalaya Public Service Commission (MPSC), warning of statewide protests if their demand is not met.

The A'chik Conscious Holistically Integrated Krima (ACHIK) petitioned Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, arguing that the appointment should follow what they describe as an established rotational principle between the state's two major indigenous groups.

"We strongly demand that the next Chairman of the Meghalaya Public Service Commission be appointed from the Garo category, in accordance with the rotational principle and in restoration of the rightful balance," ACHIK stated in their petition. "If this demand is ignored, we will be compelled to take statewide protest actions and explore legal recourse."

## Manipur's Kuki-Zo and Mao Naga IAS officers appointed to top finance roles

■ Historic appointments highlight regional representation in financial governance

**Imphal:** Two IAS officers from Manipur, Vumlunmang Vualnam and K. Moses Chalai, have been appointed to key positions in India's Finance Ministry. This marks a significant moment as it is the first time Scheduled Tribe (ST) members from the Northeast have been appointed as finance ministry secretaries.

Vualnam, a 1992 batch IAS officer from the Kuki-Zomi-Hmar community, has been named Expenditure Secretary, while Chalai, a 1990 batch IAS officer from the Mao Naga



community, has been appointed Secretary of the Department of Public Enterprises.

Their appointments come amid a broader bureaucratic reshuffle, which saw 16 other IAS officers

being assigned to various ministries, including Commerce and Aviation.

This move is seen as a step toward greater representation of Northeast communities in top government positions.

## Scindia, Governor Bhalla review Manipur projects

■ Discussions focus on speeding up key projects and boosting regional sports

**Imphal:** Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, joined by Union Minister for Communications and the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, chaired a high-level meeting at Raj Bhavan's conference hall on Thursday, a Raj Bhavan statement reported. Scindia and senior MDoNER officials presented a comprehensive status review of ongoing development projects across Manipur.

During the session, Scindia underscored the urgen-



cy of bolstering key economic and social sectors. He identified handicrafts and handloom, sports, tourism, international trade and

agriculture—particularly palm oil cultivation—as priority areas. He further urged officials to expedite crucial infrastructure schemes, in-

## Congress Vows Grassroots Governance in Assam Polls

**Guwahati:** The Congress party on Friday unveiled its manifesto for the upcoming Assam Panchayat elections, promising to strengthen grassroots governance and fulfill commitments made to the public. The manifesto was released at Rajiv Bhawan in Guwahati by Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Bhupen Kumar Borah and senior leader and former MP Ripun Bora.

Speaking at the event, Bhupen Kumar Borah emphasized the party's commitment to decentralised development. "Rajiv Gandhi introduced the Pancha-



yati Raj system. We have released the manifesto for the Panchayat elections, and the Congress party will fulfil all promises made to the people," he said.

Assam is set to hold Panchayat elections in two phases. The first phase will take place on May 2 across 14 districts, and the second phase is scheduled for May 7 in the remaining 13 districts. Counting of votes for both phases will be held on May 11.

## Arunachal CM inaugurates 4th State Games



**Itanagar:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu officially inaugurated the 4th Arunachal State Games 2025 at the Golden Jubilee Stadium in Yupia. The event featured athletes from all districts competing in 23 different disciplines, showcasing the state's growing sporting talent.

In his address, Khandu highlighted the state's recent achievements, including a strong performance at the 38th National Games, where Arunachal Pradesh secured 2nd place in the Northeast with 13 medals. He expressed his ambition for the state to break into the top 10 states at the upcoming 39th National Games in Meghalaya.

The Chief Minister outlined the state's commitment to improving sports infrastructure, with new stadiums planned in Lower Dibang Valley, Pakke Kessang, and Longding, as well as a world-class 25,000-seat stadium under construction in the state capital, Itanagar. He stressed Mission Olympics' role in elite training, both in India and abroad.

## Naga Students Federation speaks out on key issues affecting Naga society

**Kohima:** Naga Students' Federation (NSF) has expressed serious concern over widespread irregularities in government appointments and recruitment processes across various state departments, alleging that such practices have been adversely affecting the future of deserving Naga youth.

**Backdoor appointments:** Addressing the media at NSF office here on Thursday, the NSF office bearers flagged "rampant backdoor appointments" in several departments and called for the immediate termination of all illegal appointees. They also demanded that all vacant posts be filled through the Nagaland Pub-



lic Service Commission (NPSC) and the Nagaland Staff Selection Board (NSSB).

In a letter submitted to the chief secretary on April 10, the NSF highlighted irregularities in 17 departments, particularly at Pay Level 3 and above. NSF information and publicity secretary Pithungo Shitio claimed that nearly 100 cases of backdoor appoint-

ments had been unearthed during their RTI Campaign 2024.

He alleged that these appointments were made in violation of the state government's recruitment ban on Group-C posts, which was introduced in 2019 to ensure that all such posts are routed through NSSB. The NSF criticized departments for bypassing proper recruitment procedures.

## Himanta Biswa Sarma rebuts Congress, defends Assam

**Guwahati:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday dismissed allegations by Congress leaders that their panchayat poll candidates were being threatened to withdraw nominations. Hitting back at the opposition, Sarma said Congress is "always trying to defame Assam."

The Chief Minister stated that there has been no evidence or formal complaint to support the claims made by Congress. "Congress is saying this, but I have not seen such reports in local newspapers or TV channels. If there is any specific complaint, the administration will take immediate action," he said. Sarma assured that both the district



administration and police are maintaining neutrality in the poll process. He pointed out that no major withdrawals have occurred and that a record number of candidates—over 2,000—have filed nominations for the 300 Zilla Parishad seats.

He further added, "We want a peaceful election. The people contesting are aware and responsible. If any incident happens, let them report it. But as of now, no one has lodged a complaint."



# TATA AIG's MediCare Select: Strategic move to capture expanding health insurance market

**Mumbai:** TATA AIG General Insurance Company has introduced MediCare Select, a new health insurance product designed to enhance its position in India's rapidly growing health insurance sector. The company plans to expand its hospital network from 11,500 to over 14,000 facilities by FY27, in line with



its goal to offer broader access to affordable health-care across urban and rural areas.

The introduction of MediCare Select aligns with the

broader trends in India's health insurance market, projected to grow at an 18% CAGR. Key features of the product, such as unlimited restorations of the sum insured, OPD coverage, maternity benefits, and customizable riders, cater to the changing needs of today's health-conscious consumers. TATA AIG's fo-

cus on expanding its retail health portfolio will drive penetration in Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets, where demand for affordable and comprehensive health plans is on the rise. TATA AIG's strategic initiatives place it in a strong position to benefit from the expanding ₹5.6 lakh crore health insurance market in India.

## Airtel Buys Adani's 400 MHz Spectrum



**New Delhi:** Bharti Airtel, one of India's leading telecommunications service providers, has announced its intent to acquire the entire 400 MHz spectrum holding of Adani Data Networks Ltd. (ADNL). This strategic move will bolster Airtel's 5G capabilities and enhance its network capacity across the country.

The spectrum being acquired by Airtel comprises airwaves in the 26 GHz millimetre wave band. Adani Data Networks secured this spectrum in the 5G auctions held in August 2022. While ADNL had acquired the spectrum primarily for its captive private network needs, this acquisition by Airtel signifies a strategic realignment of spectrum assets in the telecom sector. The addition of 400 MHz in the high-capacity 26 GHz band will significantly augment Airtel's 5G network capacity, allowing it to cater to the increasing demand for high-speed data and low-latency applications. This acquisition will further strengthen Airtel's overall spectrum portfolio, providing it with a deeper pool of airwaves across various frequency bands to optimize network performance and coverage.

By securing this additional spectrum, Airtel aims to enhance its competitive positioning in the rapidly evolving 5G landscape in India. Acquiring already allocated spectrum can be a more efficient route compared future.

## JK Tyre's India Racing Festival shifts into high gear with record-breaking Aizawl showcase

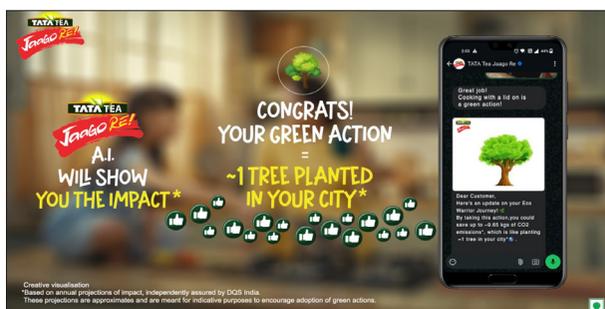
**Aizawl:** The JK Tyre-powered India Racing Festival concluded in Mizoram on April 16 with high-octane excitement, even as heavy rain tested the resilience of both performers and spectators. Thousands gathered to witness India's finest motorsport talents in action, with a historic highlight being the first-ever car drift around Mizoram's traditional Cheraw Dance — a spectacle blending speed and culture. Motorsport icons including Sohil Shah (F4), Yatharth Gaur and Aarav Sureka (GoKarts), Sandeep Kumar (IRL), and stunt performers like Ashwin Singh Takiar and Sanam Sekhon captivated the crowd. The event began with local heroes Mizo Superbikers and stunt



riders Mrs. Awmawmi and Mr. Francis, and featured musical performances by Lalmangaiha and LiLZO, adding a local touch to the festival's pulse. JK Tyre's Head of Operations Hari Singh hailed Mizoram's unmatched driving discipline and reiterated the company's commitment to nurturing local talent. Chief Con- vener Lalfakzuala Hauzel acknowledged the role of sponsors like GIG Motors, NEXA Aizawl, and local institutions. In Aizawl, the event sparked a noticeable rise in demand for motorsport merchandise, biking gear, and auto accessories. Retailers reported heightened consumer footfall, signaling potential for a niche motor-sports economy.

## Tata Tea Jaago Re harnesses AI to drive collective action against climate change

**Guwahati:** Tata Tea Jaago Re has launched its innovative AI-powered campaign, 'Har Green Action Se Farak Padega,' to inspire individuals to take small, actionable steps in their daily lives to combat climate change. The initiative, built on Google Cloud's AI suite, allows consumers to upload pictures of their "green actions" via a WhatsApp-based tool, offering immediate feedback on the positive impact of their efforts. Actions like using a lid while cooking or taking public transport are tracked and validated using advanced image recognition, creating an interactive and motivating experience. The campaign's aim is to combat the apathy often felt toward climate change by showing how small, individual actions collectively



contribute to larger environmental benefits. For every 10 green actions completed, Tata Tea will plant a tree, further strengthening the initiative's impact. In Guwahati, the market shows increasing interest in sustainability, with a growing number of consumers keen to adopt green practices. The Jaago Re campaign resonates strongly with the city's eco-conscious population, reflecting an upward trend in demand for environmentally respon-

sible products and initiatives. As consumers become more aware of their environmental footprint, campaigns like Jaago Re are poised to capture their attention and drive change. Puneet Das, President of Tata Consumer Products, emphasized the importance of collective action, saying, "Small daily actions can make a significant difference, and this campaign is all about empowering individuals to contribute to a greener future."

## Bingo! Tedhe Medhe taps into Bihu buzz with 'Jomonir Adda' experience in Guwahati

**Guwahati:** ITC's Bingo! Tedhe Medhe has launched a vibrant on-ground campaign, Jomonir Adda, to celebrate Bihu in Guwahati, blending festive cheer with regional flavours and cultural engagement. The activation, which kicked off on April 14 at Latastil Park, offers a mix of food innovation and entertainment tailored to Assam's festive spirit.

At the heart of the activation is the 'Build Your Own Bingo' (BYOB) chaat stall, where consumers can create personalized snacks using Tedhe Medhe products infused with local Assamese flavours such

as bamboo shoots, regional herbs, and masalas. Complementing the food experience is an interactive content zone featuring Bihu-themed music, props, and popular Assamese catchphrases, encouraging social sharing and cultural pride.

Suresh Chand, VP & Head of Marketing - Snacks, Noodles and Pasta, ITC Foods, said, "Bingo! Tedhe Medhe is all about embracing your cravings and expressing yourself without filter. With Jomonir Adda, we're connecting with consumers through local culture and festive energy."

## Nissan launches free summer AC check-up camp with exclusive offers across India

**Guwahati:** Nissan Motor India has rolled out a nationwide free AC check-up camp for customers, reaffirming its focus on customer-centric service and after-sales excellence. The initiative, running from April 15 to June 15, 2025, will be available at all 123 authorised Nissan service workshops across India.

As part of the campaign, Nissan vehicle owners will receive a complimentary 12-point AC check-up and car top wash. Additionally, customers can avail up to 10% discount on labour charges (at dealer discretion) and up to 15% off on Value Added Services (VAS). The service will be conducted by trained technicians using Nissan

Genuine Spare Parts to ensure top-quality maintenance. Appointments can be scheduled via the Nissan ONE App or the official website, [www.nissan.in](http://www.nissan.in). This summer service campaign is aimed at boosting customer satisfaction while ensuring vehicles are performance-ready for the heatwave season.

In Guwahati, where soaring temperatures have increased the demand for reliable car air-conditioning, the initiative has been well received. Local service workshops have seen a steady uptick in bookings, with customers keen to take advantage of the timely offering to ensure driving comfort and vehicle longevity during the summer.

## Flipkart to relocate domicile from Singapore to India

**Bengaluru:** In a significant strategic decision, Walmart-backed e-commerce giant Flipkart has announced its intention to relocate its holding company from Singapore back to India. This move, confirmed by the company on Tuesday, is widely seen as a precursor to a potential initial public offering (IPO) in the Indian market. Flip-



kart, which was founded in India in 2007 but shifted its legal domicile to Singapore in 2011, stated that this transition reflects its "deep and unwavering commitment to India and its remarkable growth."



## JK Tyre's Indian Racing Festival energizes Shillong, boosting Northeast motorsports

**Shillong:** The vibrant city of Shillong hosted a high-octane spectacle today as the JK Tyre powered Indian Racing Festival wrapped up in Meghalaya, in collaboration with the Meghalaya Motorsport Society and Assam Rifles. The event, held at DGAR Cantonment, brought together an electric mix of motorsport enthusiasts, featuring stunning drifting displays by high-performance Lexus and BMW cars, exhilarating superbike stunts, and impressive karting performances.

Lieutenant General Vikas Lakhera, Director General Assam Rifles, and Rosetta Mary Kurbah,



Deputy Commissioner of East Khasi Hills, were present to witness the excitement. Lt. Gen. Lakhera praised the event's contribution to spreading positivity, while Mr. Hari Singh, Head of Operations – JK Tyre Motorsport, highlighted the event's significance

in igniting motorsport passion among the youth.

The event was powered by JK Tyre's flagship Levitas Ultra tyres, showcasing cutting-edge performance technology. As the festival moves to Guwahati and Gangtok, it emphasizes the company's commitment to motorsports in Northeast India, a region showing increasing enthusiasm for such events. In Shillong, the local market's interest in motorsports is growing, providing fresh opportunities for automotive brands and tourism, as the event catered to a wide audience eager to engage with the world of high-speed racing.

## ITC's Sunrise Spices embarks on a culinary journey through Assam with the launch of "Xipa Bisari: A Back to Roots Series"

**Guwahati:** ITC's Sunrise Spices has launched "Xipa Bisari: A Back to Roots Series," a 10-episode culinary journey aimed at celebrating Assam's traditional food heritage. Unveiled at the Chandmari Bihu Xonmilon pandal in Guwahati, the launch event featured Mr. Rahul Das, Chief, Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Government of Assam, and was hosted by noted Assamese chef and culinary revivalist Atul Lahkar.

Backed by the Cultural Ministry of Assam, the series follows Chef Lahkar as he travels through the state's villages and bustling markets, rediscovering lost recipes, traditional cooking techniques, and generational culinary wisdom. Each episode showcases reinterpretations of age-old dishes—like Khulasapori Pitha and Kalangdang—blended with the signature flavours of Sunrise Spices. Guwahati is



responding positively to the initiative. Local spice retailers anticipate a surge in demand for authentic regional blends. "This series is likely to inspire consumers to explore local ingredients, driving footfall and sales," said a vendor at Fancy Bazar.

Piyush Mishra, Business Head, Spices, ITC Ltd., said the series is "a heartfelt tribute to Assam's culinary roots," while Chef Lahkar called it a celebration of tradition, sustainability, and community storytelling.

## Toyota Kirloskar ties up with Mizoram government to strengthen safety, infrastructure and disaster response

**Aizawl:** In a strategic move to expand its community-driven initiatives in the Northeast, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Mizoram to implement holistic CSR interventions. The MoU was exchanged in Aizawl in the presence of Chief Minister Lalduhoma, senior government officials, and TKM executives including Executive VP Vikram Gulati.

The partnership targets three key areas—road safety awareness for commercial taxi drivers, upgrading traffic surveillance



systems, and enhancing disaster response capacity. As part of the collaboration, TKM has handed over 34 Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cam-

eras and 20 CCTV units under Aizawl's Smart City mission, benefiting 4 lakh residents. In addition, two backhoe machines have been provided to boost

the state's preparedness against natural calamities such as landslides. Earlier this year, TKM conducted a statewide road safety and health awareness campaign for over 800 taxi drivers during National Road Safety Month.

In Aizawl, the investment in surveillance and infrastructure is expected to enhance urban mobility, reduce accident rates, and boost consumer confidence. The improved safety environment is likely to spur economic activity and attract further investments in the region's growing urban sectors.

## Aimee Baruah joins Anchor Oral Care to champion holistic oral health in North East

**Guwahati:** In a bid to strengthen its emotional and cultural connection with consumers, Anchor Oral Care has partnered with celebrated North East actor Aimee Baruah as its new brand ambassador. The brand also launched two new campaigns—"Laal. Kamaal. Bemisaal." and "Naye Zamane Ki Nayi Suraksha"—to resonate with the values of trust, family care, and natural wellness deeply rooted in the region.

Anchor Red Toothpaste, the centerpiece of the



campaigns, combines ten Ayurvedic benefits using six powerful herbs like tulsi, laung, and pudina. The toothpaste's appeal lies in its dual promise: scientific advancement through its CalFlo formulation and a 100% vegetarian, ethically-conscious composition.

## JK Tyre's Indian Racing Festival fuels youth participation in Guwahati

**Guwahati:** JK Tyre, in collaboration with Adventure-X Fusion Tribe, powered its flagship Indian Racing Festival into Guwahati, transforming the IIT Guwahati campus into a hub of motorsport innovation and youth energy. Despite an unexpected downpour mid-event, the crowd's enthusiasm remained undeterred as students and motorsport fans witnessed a dazzling showcase of performance and precision.

The event featured high-speed drifting, burnouts with Lexus and BMW cars, stunt performances, and a



display by the Indian Formula 4 car, offering a taste of professional open-wheel racing. Young karting talents on Rotax Karts also stole the spotlight with their fearless control and agility.

Graced by Prof. Perumal Alagarsamy, Dean of Student Affairs at IIT Gu-

wahati, the event was lauded for its dynamic engagement. "This was a first-of-its-kind experience for our campus. The connection

between motorsports and engineering was truly inspiring," he said. JK Tyre Motorsport's Head of Operations, Hari Singh, called the event a "super-fantastic show," praising the audience's natural connection with the thrill of the sport.

## PNB Housing Finance and Aadhar Housing Finance expand footprint in Guwahati, boost affordable housing in North East

**Guwahati:** PNB Housing Finance Ltd. and Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. have marked a significant milestone by launching their first-ever branch in Guwahati, Assam. This expansion aligns with the government's 'Housing for All' mission and aims to improve financial inclusion through affordable housing solutions in the North East. The newly inaugurated branch will provide customized housing finance products to meet the region's needs, with a focus on bridging the gap in home financing. Both companies



are committed to driving the success of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) in this underserved region. "We are excited to expand in Guwahati, marking the beginning of our efforts to make affordable housing accessible to the people of the North East," said Girish Kousgi, MD &

CEO of PNB Housing Finance. Rishi Anand, MD & CEO of Aadhar Housing Finance, highlighted their commitment to offering homeownership solutions for the lower-income segments. In Guwahati, the expansion is poised to address the growing demand for affordable housing, especially in a city with a rapidly developing economy. With this increased access to home loans, local real estate markets are expected to witness greater activity and growth, benefiting both the community and the broader region.



## National Housing Bank meeting in Guwahati to drive housing finance growth across North-East

**Guwahati:** The National Housing Bank (NHB) organized a strategic meeting on April 17, 2025, with Managing Directors (MDs) and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Housing Finance Companies, Small Finance Banks (SFBs), and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) to discuss the potential of housing finance as a growth engine for the North-East. The meeting, held in Guwahati, focused on the theme "Unlocking Potential:

Housing Finance as a Catalyst for North-East Development," and was attended by prominent officials, including Shri Manoj Ayyappan, Joint Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, and Shri Kuldeep Narayan, Joint Secretary (HFA), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, who joined virtually.

The event highlighted the role of housing finance in accelerating growth in North-Eastern states such

as Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura. A detailed presentation on the PMAY 2.0 Interest Subsidy Scheme was provided, emphasizing NHB's role as a Central Nodal Agency. Key discussions also addressed regulatory and refinancing challenges. Additionally, the meeting marked the virtual inauguration of new branches of PNB Housing Finance and Aadhar Housing Finance in Guwahati.

## ITC's Sunrise Spices launches 'Xipa Bisari' series to spotlight Assam's culinary heritage

**Guwahati:** ITC's Sunrise Spices has launched "Xipa Bisari: A Back to Roots Series," a 10-episode culinary journey aimed at celebrating Assam's traditional food heritage. Unveiled at the Chandmari Bihu Xonmilon pandal in Guwahati, the launch event featured Mr. Rahul Das, Chief, Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Government of Assam, and was hosted by noted Assamese chef and culinary revivalist Atul Lahkar. Backed by the

Cultural Ministry of Assam, the series follows Chef Lahkar as he travels through the state's villages and bustling markets, rediscovering lost recipes, traditional cooking techniques, and generational culinary wisdom. Each episode showcases reinterpretations of age-old dishes—like Khulasapori Pitha and Kalangdang—blended with the signature flavours of Sunrise Spices. Guwahati is responding positively to the initiative.

Local spice retailers anticipate a surge in demand for authentic regional blends. "This series is likely to inspire consumers to explore local ingredients, driving footfall and sales," said a vendor at Fancy Bazar. Piyush Mishra, Business Head, Spices, ITC Ltd., said the series is "a heartfelt tribute to Assam's culinary roots," while Chef Lahkar called it a celebration of tradition, sustainability, and community storytelling.

## India takes the lead at GITEX Africa 2025, promotes digital innovation and global collaboration

**Guwahati:** India's participation at GITEX Africa 2025, Africa's premier tech and startup show, highlighted the country's commitment to fostering global growth through digital innovation and knowledge sharing. Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Hon'ble Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, represented India at the summit, emphasizing the country's rapidly advancing Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), including Aadhaar, UPI, and ONDC, as key drivers of transformation. India's fast-paced digitalization, coupled with its growing AI talent pool (with a 33.39% YoY increase in AI hiring according to the AI Stanford Index 2025), positions the nation as a leading resource hub. Shri Chaudhary stressed

that India's experience in building scalable, inclusive digital systems offers adaptable frameworks for developing economies, particularly in AI, fintech, and cybersecurity. In Guwahati, the impact of India's digital initiatives is gaining momentum. Local businesses and startups stand to benefit from India's inclusive technology models, as they offer cost-effective solutions for digital payments, e-commerce, and digital identity. This growing infrastructure can catalyze digital adoption, fostering innovation and economic growth in the region. India's role at GITEX Africa 2025 cements its standing as a global leader in digital innovation, with an eye toward collaborative partnerships for equitable economic growth.

## Gold breaches Rs 1 lakh-mark with global jitters about US Fed overhaul

**Mumbai:** Gold prices in India have shattered previous records, surging past the significant ₹1 lakh mark for 10 grams of 24-karat gold on Tuesday. This unprecedented climb is being largely attributed to mounting apprehension in global financial markets fueled by speculation and uncertainty surrounding a potential "overhaul" of the United States Federal Reserve's policies or leadership.

The breach of this psychological barrier underscores the strong safe-haven demand for the precious metal as investors grapple with the implications of potential shifts in the world's most influential central bank. The US Federal Reserve plays a pivotal role in shaping global economic conditions through its monetary policy levers, most notably interest rate



adjustments and management of the money supply. Any hint of significant changes in the Fed's operational framework, the composition of its board, or its future policy direction invariably sends ripples of uncertainty across international markets. Analysts suggest that the current "jitters" stem from a confluence of factors, including recent economic data in the US, commentary from within the Federal Reserve system, and external pressures

that could potentially lead to a change in the status quo. While specific details of a potential "overhaul" remain speculative, the very possibility is enough to trigger risk aversion among investors. In times of economic and political turbulence, gold has historically served as a reliable store of value. The prevailing uncertainty surrounding the US Fed is prompting investors to flock towards the perceived safety of gold, driving up demand. Rupee

## Rupee dips to 85.23 vs USD



**Mumbai:** The Indian rupee experienced a slight downturn on Tuesday, depreciating by 8 paise to close at 85.23 against the US dollar. The domestic currency's fall was primarily influenced by prevailing strength in the greenback overseas and a cautious sentiment among investors awaiting further economic cues.

The rupee commenced trading on a weaker note and remained under pressure throughout the session. While there were some intermittent periods of stability, the overall trend leaned towards depreciation as the dollar index, which gauges the strength of the US currency against a basket of six major peers, exhibited upward movement. The primary factor contributing to the rupee's weakness was the broad-based strength of the US dollar in international markets. This strength can be attributed to a combination of factors, including: In times of global economic uncertainty or geopolitical tensions, the US dollar often benefits from its status as a safe-haven currency, attracting investors seeking stability. Expectations regarding the future monetary policy stance of the US Federal Reserve, particularly concerning interest.

## Ericsson expands manufacturing in India to make antennas

**Stockholm:** Swedish telecom giant Ericsson has announced plans to manufacture all its telecom antennas for the Indian market locally, reinforcing its commitment to India's growing digital infrastructure. The move comes as demand for 5G services surges, driven by major telecom operators Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio.

Ericsson, which has been manufacturing in India since 1994, will fully localize its passive antenna production by June 2025.



The company has partnered with VVDN Technologies to set up production in Gurgaon, while its logistics hub in Pune will support distribution across the region.

Beyond meeting domestic demand, Ericsson plans to export a significant portion of antennas manufac-

tured in India, positioning the country as a key production hub within its global supply chain. The initiative aligns with India's Make in India strategy and aims to reduce lead times, enhance coordination with local suppliers, and improve responsiveness to customer needs.

Industry experts believe this expansion will strengthen India's telecom ecosystem, supporting the rapid rollout of 5G networks and future technological advancements.

## India grants Amazon, Walmart full market access amid US pressure

**New Delhi:** United States is reportedly intensifying pressure on India to grant full market access to American e-commerce giants like Amazon and Walmart, according to sources cited by the Financial Times. This push is occurring within the framework of ongoing trade negotiations between the two nations, aimed at reaching a comprehensive India-US trade agreement. The US administration, under President Donald Trump, is seeking a "level playing field" for American companies in India's bur-



geoning e-commerce market, estimated to be worth \$125 billion. Currently, Indian regulations restrict foreign-owned e-commerce platforms from directly selling their own products to consumers and from holding inventory. They operate primarily as marketplaces connecting third-party sellers with buyers.

## Alcaraz's respect for Nadal grows after tough clay swing



**Madrid:** Carlos Alcaraz has expressed deep admiration for Rafael Nadal after experiencing the physical toll of the clay-court season first-hand. The young Spaniard, who won the Monte Carlo Masters last week, was aiming for his third Barcelona Open title in four years but was defeated by Holger Rune in the final, 7-6 (6), 6-2.

During the match, Alcaraz suffered a leg issue, requiring a medical timeout, raising concerns about his fitness ahead of the Madrid Open, which begins on April 24. Reflecting on the demanding nature of the clay swing, Alcaraz said, "That's what happens when

you play so many matches and have so few days to rest. It's so demanding, and you have to give 100% every day."

Alcaraz also acknowledged Nadal's legendary consistency on clay, stating, "I bow at the feet of Rafa because of what he did week after week. You have to respect that. Winning everything consecutively is impossible. Once you experience it, you appreciate what Rafa did much more."

Despite the setback, Alcaraz remains optimistic about his recovery, saying he will undergo tests but is confident the injury will not affect his performance in Madrid.

## Neeraj Chopra Classic javelin event moved to Bengaluru



**Bengaluru:** The inaugural edition of the Neeraj Chopra Classic, a highly anticipated international javelin throw event, has been moved from its originally scheduled venue in Panchkula to the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru. The event will still take place on May 24th.

The change in venue was necessitated due to inadequate lighting facilities at the stadium in Panchkula, which did not meet the standards required by World Athletics for international broadcasting. Despite the last-minute shift, the Neeraj Chopra Classic is set to be a star-studded affair. Organised by Olympic and World Champion Neeraj Chopra

in collaboration with JSW Sports, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI), and World Athletics, the event has been granted Category A status by World Athletics. Two-time World Champion and Paris Olympics bronze medalist. 2016 Rio Olympics gold medalist.

Silver medalist at the 2016 Rio Olympics and 2015 World Champion. Current season leader with a throw of 87.76m. A Brazilian finalist from the Paris Olympics is also expected to compete. Neeraj Chopra has also extended an invitation to Pakistan's Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem, although his participation is yet to be confirmed.

# RO-HITMAN SHOW

### MI dominate CSK with a commanding 9-wicket victory

**Mumbai:** Rohit Sharma (76 not out) and Suryakumar Yadav (68 not out) tore apart Chennai Super Kings to hand Mumbai Indians a commanding nine-wicket win in an one-sided Indian Premier League match in Mumbai on Sunday.

Chasing a below-par target, the hosts faced absolutely no difficulties on a batting-friendly surface in swatting away the challenge as they went over the line making 177 for one to win by more than four overs to spare, and take a leap to sixth spot in the points table.

Rohit capitalised on anything short from the pacers in the powerplay and swept with command against the CSK spinners to notch up his maiden fifty of the season, which came off 33 balls.

On a six-hitting spree, Rohit finished at 76 not out off 45 balls with four fours and six hits over the fence. MI's impact substitute Rohit laid the foundation with a robust 63-run stand for the first wicket in the powerplay -- their best start undoubtedly in this IPL -- and ensured the hosts remained on track for a big win keeping them at a scoring rate of 10 per over.

For CSK, it was a challenge stopping the former MI skipper in his tracks especially with their seamers failing to make any impact and seasoned spinners in Ravichandran Ashwin (0/25) and Ravindra Jadeja (1/28) not able to extract anything off the surface either.

CSK also introduced their most successful bowler Noor Ahmad (0/36) as late as in the 10th over, by which MI were nearing the 100-run mark with consummate ease.

The writing was on the wall when Noor was hammered for 15 runs with Suryakumar hitting three fours in a row off the left-arm spinner in the 14th over.

A few narrow escapes notwithstanding, Rohit's blitz innings gave MI their most convincing win and finally a big score to the right-handed batter after a string of ordinary scores.



## Punjab FC advances after 3-0 win



**New Delhi:** Punjab FC put on a masterful display to defeat Odisha FC 3-0 and secure a spot in the quarterfinals of the Kalinga Super Cup (KSC) Round of 16 match at the Kalinga Stadium on Monday, as per the official website of ISL.

The hosts were outplayed by the Shers thanks to goals from Nihal Sudeesh, Ezequiel Vidal, and Asmir Suljic. They will meet FC Goa in the quarterfinals on April 26, who defeated the I-League team Gokulam Kerala FC by a similar score.

Punjab FC head coach Panagiotis Dilmeris opted for an aggressive 4-2-4 formation, trusting his all-Indian defence line of Khaiminthang Lhungdim, Suresh Meitei, Paramveer, and Abhishek Singh.

With Muheet Shabbir in goal and Ricky Shabong and Nikhil Prabhur anchoring the midfield, Muhammad Suhail, Asmir Suljic, Ezequiel Vidal, and Petros Giakoumakis led the attack.

## BCCI Central Contracts: Iyer, Kishan back; Rohit, Virat retained in top grade

### ■ BCCI contracts highlight performance and fresh talent

**New Delhi:** The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has unveiled its central contracts for the 2024-25 season, with significant updates in player rankings and fresh inclusions.

Leading the list, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have retained their positions in the A+ category, securing an annual retainership of ₹7 crore. Joining them are Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja, maintaining their elite status.

A major development is the return of Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan to the contract list after their previous exclusion for prioritizing the Indian Premier League over domestic cricket. Iyer



has been placed in Category B (₹3 crore), while Kishan finds himself in Category C (₹1 crore).

Another significant promotion sees Rishabh Pant move up to Category A (₹5 crore) after recovering from injuries sustained in a life-threatening accident. He replaces Ravichandran Ashwin, who recently

retired from international cricket.

The contract list includes 34 players, with four fresh entrants in Category C—Harshit Rana, Varun Chakravarthy, Abhishek Sharma, and Nitish Kumar Reddy—rewarded for their impressive performances in domestic and IPL tournaments.

