

Messi Event 'Mess-up': Bengal Minister Aroop Biswas Offers Resignation Ghosh shares Biswas's resignation letter seeking relief from post

Kolkata, Dec 16: West Bengal Sports Minister Aroop Biswas has expressed his desire to step down from his position in the wake of the recent controversy over the "mismanagement" of the Lionel Messi event at the Salt Lake Stadium, TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said on Tuesday.

In a Facebook post, Ghosh shared what he described as a copy of a resignation letter written by Biswas to Chief

Minister Mamata Banerjee, seeking to be relieved of his responsibilities as the state's Sports Minister. The development came amid mounting criticism and political backlash over the alleged mismanagement and security lapses during the high-profile football event at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan, also known as Salt Lake Stadium, on December 13, in which angry spectators resorted to indiscriminate rampage and



clashed with the police, causing an estimated damage of Rs 2 crore of stadium furni-

ture. "Sports Minister Aroop Biswas has written to Chief

Minister Mamata Banerjee requesting to be relieved of the responsibility of the sports department," Ghosh said in his post, attributing the move to the controversy triggered by the Messi event fiasco. However, the letter shared by the TMC leader was not on Biswas's official letterhead, raising questions in political circles over its formal status. Repeated calls and messages to Biswas went unanswered. There was also no immediate

confirmation from the Chief Minister's Office on whether the resignation request had been accepted. Biswas, a senior TMC leader and close associate of the chief minister, has not made any public statement on the matter so far. The state government had previously constituted a high-level enquiry committee to probe the alleged lapses during the event, which drew massive crowds but ended amid chaos and protests by spectators.

SC Issues Notice to Parliament on Varma Impeachment Plea



New Delhi, Dec 16: The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued notice to the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariats and sought detailed replies after hearing a plea filed by Allahabad High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma challenging the impeachment proceedings initiated against him.

A two-judge Bench headed by Justice Dipankar Datta issued the notices while taking up Justice Varma's petition, in which he has questioned the procedure adopted for initiating his removal. "We issue notice and seek reply," the apex court said. In his plea, Justice

Varma contended that the impeachment process violated the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, arguing that the motion for his removal was not passed by both Houses of Parliament on the same day. He also challenged the constitution of the three-member inquiry committee, asserting that once motions are introduced in both Houses, the committee must be formed jointly by the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, and not unilaterally by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

Justice Varma is facing a probe under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, following allegations of corruption. A parliamentary inquiry committee has already submitted a report indicting him and recommending his removal. Earlier, the three-member panel, after examining more than 55 witnesses, reported the recovery of large amounts of burnt and unburnt cash from Justice Varma's official residence. In its 64-page report, the committee held, "This committee holds the money/cash that was found in the storeroom located within the premises of 30 Tughlaq Crescent... officially occupied by Justice Varma."

MGNREGA Replacement Bill Tabled; Gandhi Name Removal Angers Oppn

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025, that seeks to replace the existing rural employment law Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday amid strong objections from the opposition over the "removal" of Gandhi's name from it.

Introducing the bill, Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the Centre not only believes in Gandhi but also follows his principles. "The (Narendra) Modi government has done more for rural development than previous governments," he said. Opposition members opposed the proposed legislation at the in-



roduction stage and pressed for sending the bill to a parliamentary panel for greater scrutiny. The MPs, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra of the Congress, strongly objected to the "removal" of Gandhi's name. Speaking with the press, Priyanka also slammed the government for its "obsession" with changing the names of schemes. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, while opposing the

VB-G RAM G Bill in the Lok Sabha, took a sharp dig at the BJP-led Centre, recalling the 1971 hit Bollywood number, Dekho o deewano ye kaam na karo, Ram ka naam badnaam na karo. Tharoor said the VB-G RAM G Bill represents a "deeply regrettable and retrograde step" for the country and for its commitment to the welfare of its most vulnerable citizens.

23 Fatalities Reported Across UP Due to Dense Fog Chaos on Highways

Lucknow, Dec 16: Twenty people were killed and dozens others injured in multiple road mishaps reportedly caused by dense fog across Uttar Pradesh. At least 13 people were killed on the Delhi-Agra Expressway after multiple vehicles collided in the wee hours on Tuesday amid a thick fog near Baldev area in Mathura district, according to the police sources here.

Police said that seven buses and two cars were involved in the mishap which happened around 3.30 in the morning. The vehicles caught fire after collision trapping the people inside them. Some passengers in the buses were charred to death. It took several hours for



the fire tenders to extinguish the leaping flames, sources said. Mathura divisional commissioner Shailendra Kumar Singh said that four bodies have so far been identified. Eye witnesses said that visibility was almost zero at the time of the mishap. Sources said that

13 people died in the mishap while more than 100 others were injured. The injured were admitted to hospitals in Mathura and CHC, Baldev. Critically injured passengers were rushed to Agra Medical College Hospital. The number of dead could increase as many of the

injured were stated to be critical. The district administration has released helpline numbers to provide information about the incident.

In another accident, four people were killed after their vehicle hit a boulder in Bangarmau area on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway in Unnao district on Tuesday morning amid dense fog. Four passengers were killed and 20 others injured when the bus in which they were travelling collided with a truck in Sant Kabirnagar district at midnight on Monday. Two police constables were killed when their vehicle fell off the bridge on Hindon river in Meerut district late on Monday night amid thick fog

Bihar BJP appoints veteran Saraogi president, retains caste focus

Patna, Dec 16: A day after Bihar minister and five-time MLA Nitin Nabin was appointed BJP's national working president, the party on Monday named six-time MLA from Darbhanga, Sanjay Saraogi, as new Bihar state president.

A former cabinet minister, Saraogi replaces Dilip Jaiswal, who took oath as the state's industries minister in the Nitish Kumar government last month. Jaiswal had served as the Bihar BJP president for around two years. Like Jaiswal, Saraogi also belongs to the Vaishya community. Party sources believe the change follows the BJP's stated principle of "one person one post". BJP national general secretary Arun Singh said in a letter, "BJP national president Jagat Prakash Nadda

has appointed Saraogi as the state president with immediate effect." Saraogi said, "The party has placed its trust in me, and I will try my best to live up to expectations. We will work to take the party forward." He also highlighted the party's internal assessment system, adding, "The party keeps a close watch on each and every one of its workers. It observes what everyone is doing."

Born on August 28, 1969, the 56-year-old Saraogi has a strong connection with the business community. He has an MBA degree and has been associated with the BJP and its affiliated organisations since his student days. He began his political journey with the ABVP and formally joined the BJP in 1995.

Meghalaya approves specialised training facilities to boost police readiness

SHILLONG, DEC 16: The Meghalaya government is augmenting the operational capabilities of its police and security forces and preparing them for modern urban security challenges through realistic and scalable training.

Towards this end, the state government has approved the creation of two advanced training facilities in East Khasi Hills and South Garo Hills. Officials said a key decision has been taken to set up an urban warfare training facility at Mawiong, about 20 km

from Shillong. According to a notification issued by the Home (Police) Department, the facility will cover a wide spectrum of skills, from basic close-quarter battle techniques to complex operations such as clearing multi-storey buildings, conducting hostage rescue missions, breaching fortified structures and using integrated urban surveillance systems.

Sources said that the initiative is intended to enhance operational effectiveness, minimise risks to personnel

and improve coordination among agencies during urban security operations. The state government also sanctioned a Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare school at Bagmara in South Garo Hills district. The school will provide specialised training to state police personnel and commando forces, with a focus on counter-insurgency tactics and jungle warfare. Special units deployed in difficult terrain are also expected to benefit from the programme, officials said.

Tripura Govt, Patanjali Partner for Multi-Sector Development



AGARTALA, DEC 16: The Tripura government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Patanjali Yogpeeth (Trust), Haridwar, paving the way for collaboration and investment in multiple sectors of the state.

The sectors include biodiversity conservation, bamboo and agar-based value chains, AYUSH and wellness, skill development, tribal welfare, agri-tech, tourism, information technology and rural livelihood generation. "This partnership will bring new opportunities in various fields. Looking forward to working with Patanjali Yogapeeth Trust to boost our state's economy and promote

sustainable development," Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said on Tuesday.

The MoU contains non-binding provisions, aimed at creating a structured framework for future collaboration and project identification. In addition to the agreement, a sector-specific MoU has been signed between the Forest Department of the Government of Tripura and Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust. This agreement focuses on forest and agro-forest value chain development and is designed to strengthen research and innovation in the forestry sector. The areas of cooperation include scientific research on agarwood, digitisation and mapping of forest resources, development of ethical and sustainable global marketing channels, value addition of forest produce, and biodiversity exploration. The partnership also envisions the creation of research centres, seed banks and wellness-driven eco-tourism assets.

East Himalayan Trade Fair, Agri Expo opens

GUWAHATI, DEC 16: The India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), under the Union ministry of commerce and industry, will organise the 15th East Himalayan Trade Fair (EHTF) along with the second East Himalayan Agri Expo (EHAE) here from January 22 to 28, 2026.

The events will be held at the Assam Engineering Institute Playground in Chandmari. Addressing mediapersons in Guwahati on Monday, Lt. Col. Harsh Kondilya, general manager of the fair division of ITPO, said: "The East Himalayan Trade Fair is one of ITPO's flagship regional initiatives aimed at promoting inclusive economic growth, entrepreneurship, and market access in the Eastern and North-Eastern regions of India."

Aaranyak Hosts Nature and Biodiversity Program at Guwahati School

GUWAHATI, DEC 16: Biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak organised a 'Nature Learning cum Biodiversity Documentation' programme at Khanapara Adarsha LP School in Guwahati, aiming to reconnect young students with nature and build environmental awareness from an early age.

The programme saw active participation from students and teachers and focused on experiential learning to help children better understand their immediate natural surroundings. With rapid urbanisation reducing daily contact with nature, especially for children in cities like Guwahati, the initiative sought to address this growing disconnect through hands-on engagement. Led by Aaranyak's Young Professionals under the guidance of Jayanta Kumar Pathak, Assistant Director of the Environment Education and Capacity Building Division, the programme encouraged students to observe and document local biodiversity. Participants identified various plant and animal species in and around the school campus and were introduced to basic scientific field methods, including the use of simple instruments such as anemometers.

A highlight of the programme was a nature journaling session, where students recorded their observations through drawings and written



notes. The activity helped develop observation skills, creativity and a deeper emotional connection with nature. The sessions were facilitated by Aaranyak Young Professionals Bhanita Deka, Dipankar Mazumder, Hrishita Nath, Jyotishmita Kashyap and Kaushik Ranjan Saikia, with coordination support from Prajnyan Sarma and Andrew Roy. Aaranyak acknowledged the cooperation of the school's head teacher Namita Baishya and faculty members Sabina Zesmin and Tarpana Phukan. The programme was held under the "Mobius Young Climate Leaders for Himalayan Development – North East India Initiative", implemented by Aaranyak in partnership with YouthNet and the Mobius Foundation.

Lai ADC: Mizoram parties ZPM, MNF join hands to form legislature party

AIZAWL, DEC 16: The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) and Mizo National Front (MNF) have come together to form a joint legislature party – Lairam Legislature Party (LLP) – in the wake of no single party securing a clear majority in the 12th Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC).

The move is aimed at ensuring political stability and uninterrupted governance in the council. Under the power-sharing arrangement, T. Zakunga of ZPM has been nominated as the chief executive member (CEM) of the LADC, while the post



of deputy CEM will be held by a nominee from the MNF. Notably, ZPM secured six seats in the LADC elections. The elected members include T. Zakunga, L.R. Dingliana Chinzah, Lallura Chinzah, T. Lalchhuanvawra, K. Lalchhuanpuia and K. Lahramzauva. Zakunga — who also leads both the ZPM Legislature Par-

ty and the newly formed LLP in the LADC — addressed party members and supporters saying that although the party managed to win only six seats, the mandate should be accepted with humility and faith.

"The ZPM government in Mizoram is a blessing and that the LADC outcome, though modest, has been accepted as the will of God," he said. He further revealed that following the election results, the ZPM Political Affairs Committee had explored the possibility of forming a government with the Congress.

Northeast India showcased at Chiang Mai Design Week 2025 in Thailand

GUWAHATI, DEC 16: The handloom and handicraft traditions of Northeast India were showcased at Chiang Mai Design Week 2025, with artisans from all eight states of the region participating on an international design and craft platform.

The participation was facilitated by the North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation (NEHDC) through the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and the North Eastern Council (NEC). This marked the first time that crafts from all



eight northeastern states—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, and Mizoram—were presented together at Chiang Mai Design Week. The showcase of-

ferred international audiences a comprehensive view of the region's diverse handloom and handicraft traditions, reflecting both traditional knowledge systems and contemporary design applications.

The exhibition featured a wide range of craft practices including handwoven textiles, bamboo and cane crafts, pottery, bead jewellery, woodcraft and other handmade products. These were represented by artisans and artisan-entrepreneurs whose work is rooted in region-specific materials, techniques and community-based production systems.

During the event, close cultural parallels were observed between the craft traditions of Northeast India and the indigenous Lanna crafts of Northern Thailand. Shared elements such as the use of natural fibres and materials, handwoven and hand-crafted techniques, functional forms, symbolic motifs, and community-led craftsmanship facilitated meaningful interaction and cultural exchange between Indian and Thai artisans and designers. Exhibitions, interactions, and cultural exchanges boosted craft visibility and collaboration.

Minister warns: Railways need anti-influx guards

SHILLONG, DEC 16: Former Meghalaya Cabinet minister and adviser to the Social Welfare Department, Paul Lyngdoh has cautioned the government against implementing railway projects in Khasi and Jaintia Hills without putting in place the necessary safety mechanisms to check illegal immigration.

Lyngdoh said that the apprehensions of the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) over plans for railway projects in Khasi and Jaintia Hills, must be adequately addressed and allayed before any final decision is taken on the issue, which he said is "long-standing and highly sen-

sitive". On the lack of clarity from the Centre over the demand for implementation of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) in the state, Lyngdoh said, "It is difficult to speculate on the central government's intentions. But it is disheartening that such an important resolution taken up by the state Assembly has remained unattended for so many years." However, Lyngdoh said that despite the delay in ILP implementation, there was scope to strengthen the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act (MRSSA), saying that Act can be revisited and empowered with stronger provisions to make it more effective.



Godrej to invest ₹10,000cr in Telangana; Jersey signs ₹150cr MoU

Guwahati: Godrej Jersey, operated by Creamline Dairy Products Limited, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Telangana government to invest INR 150 crore in a new state-of-the-art dairy facility. With this, the total planned investment by the Godrej Industries Group in Telangana crosses INR 10,000 crore across various business verticals, including dairy, oils, housing and emerging sectors. Executives from Godrej stated that the facility is intended to support the fast-growing market for value-added milk products as consumer demand for nutritious and protein-rich packaged dairy continues to rise.



In Guwahati's retail market, distributors said that Telangana-based processing capacity could help companies expand eastern distribution routes in the coming years, especially as Assam and the Northeast show growing demand for packaged curd, paneer and

milk beverages. The MoU was signed in the presence of the Telangana Chief Minister and senior industry representatives. The project is expected to create more than 300 direct jobs, while also helping improve supply chains and the broader dairy ecosystem.

Amway unveils Kohima investment plan

Kohima: Amway President and CEO Michael Nelson reaffirmed India's importance in the company's global strategy during his visit, announcing a Rs 100-crore investment to enhance distributor capabilities and customer experience. In Kohima, local direct sellers say the move could strengthen digital training and product availability as Amway expands its physical footprint nationwide. The company marked 10 years of local manufacturing, with plans to boost innovation, wellbeing solutions, and entrepreneurship support across emerging markets like Kohima.

IGNOU-MSDE tie-up boosts Guwahati skill training

Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) have signed an MoU to strengthen nationwide skill training under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana through IGNOU's regional network, including Assam. The partnership will initially begin with 21 pilot Skill Centres, later expanding to all 70 IGNOU Regional Centres in the country. Officials said the plan combines vocational skilling with higher education and aligns courses with national qualification standards to help students receive recognised certification. The initiative is expected to benefit students in Guwahati who

seek job-ready training alongside regular studies. With the city's growing higher education ecosystem and demand for employable skill courses, local institutions may act as important training hubs in the coming years. According to MSDE, industry collaboration will support internships and apprenticeships. Digital platforms like the Skill India Digital Hub will also be used for training and certification, enabling wider access for learners in Assam and the Northeast. The Ministry said the aim is to bring skill learning closer to young people across regions, including those living outside major metros, helping students build confidence and prepare for work.

Vi Business unveils smart gas metering in Shillong

Mumbai: Vi Business, the enterprise arm of Vodafone Idea, has expanded its advanced metering infrastructure portfolio by introducing Smart Gas Metering solutions for City Gas Distribution companies. The announcement marks a major step in modernising utility services as India sees rapid growth in natural gas consumption. Officials said the solution is based on Narrowband IoT technology, which helps gas operators monitor leakage, theft, and manual billing errors. The move is expected to support CGD companies by reducing unaccounted gas and improving billing efficiency. With demand for natural gas rising, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board has projected the CGD industry to become the largest consumer by the end of the decade. Vi Business said the upgraded system will help companies manage operational challenges as cities continue to expand energy networks.



IndusInd, Jio-bp unveil Mobility+ fuel card

Guwahati: IndusInd Bank and Jio-bp have jointly announced a new co-branded credit card designed to provide higher value on fuel spending, lifestyle purchases and UPI payments. The IndusInd Bank Jio-bp Mobility+ Credit Card is powered by the RuPay network and positions itself for digitally active and "on-the-go" consumers. The card promises accelerated fuel rewards across more than 2,050 Jio-bp Mobility Stations, a monthly bonus on specific spending, and UPI-enabled transactions. Customers in Guwahati are expected to benefit particularly from the fuel reward structure as fuel-linked spending remains high among

city commuters. The launch includes 400 bonus points on the first fuel transaction and 12 reward points per ₹100 spent at Jio-bp Mobility Stations. The card also offers lifestyle benefits and a joining fee waiver on minimum opening transactions. Officials from both companies said the partnership reflects a shared plan to bring "future-ready" mobility payments and improved customer experiences. Jio-bp noted that customers can receive fuel benefits up to an estimated 60 litres annually under the scheme. Applications are available at selected Jio-bp outlets and digital channels, with onboarding expected to be fully digital.

Guwahati retail investors eye precious metals fund

Guwahati: Axis Mutual Fund has announced a new commodity-based Fund of Fund that invests in units of gold and silver ETFs. The scheme is available for subscription during the NFO period from December 10 to 22.

In Guwahati, financial planners said younger savers are exploring alternative investments beyond equity and fixed deposits. Many believe the combined exposure to gold and silver may help protect savings from inflation. Axis



AMC said commodities like gold and silver play an important role in diversification, particularly during volatile markets. The fund is managed by Pratik Tibrewal and Aditya Pagaria. Local distributors said more retail investors are showing curiosity about passive investing options.

Bank of Baroda joins Hornbill Festival

Guwahati: Bank of Baroda has partnered with the Government of Nagaland for the Hornbill Festival 2025, reinforcing its commitment to expanding financial inclusion and supporting regional development in the Northeast. The festival, held from December 1 to 10 at Kisama Heritage Village, saw the participation of the Bank's MD & CEO Dr. Debadatta Chand and Executive Director Ms. Beena Vaheed, who were felicitated as special guests. A dedicated engagement stall was inaugurated by Tourism Minister Temjen Inna Along in the presence of senior government and Bank officials. The stall showcased digital banking services, product information and interactive sessions with artisans, entrepreneurs, tourists and community groups. The initiative aligns with Nagaland's efforts to promote financial



literacy, digital payments and grassroots entrepreneurship. Dr. Chand and Ms. Vaheed also met Union Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia to explore expanded collaboration in the region. Discussions with Chief Secretary Sentiyaanger Imchen focused on accelerating credit flow into priority sectors and supporting youth-led ventures. Bank of Baroda currently operates 197 branches in the Northeast, with a significant rural presence. The Bank recently opens Guwahati zonal office expansion

Cipla launches Yurpeak® tirzepatide for obesity, type 2 diabetes treatment

New Delhi: Cipla Limited (BSE: 500087; NSE: CIPLA; and hereafter referred to as "Cipla") has announced the launch of Yurpeak® (tirzepatide), a one-weekly injectable therapy for managing obesity and type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM)—two of the country's most pressing health challenges. Cipla has the rights to distribute and promote Yurpeak®—the second brand of Lilly's tirzepatide in India, after Lilly received DCGI approval. Commenting on the launch, Achin Gupta, Global Chief Operating Officer, Cipla Limited, said: "The

launch of Yurpeak® marks a transformative moment in the fight against obesity and type 2 diabetes mellitus, two of India's chronic conditions with a heavy burden.

Cipla is entering this space with the same depth of expertise and scientific commitment that define our leadership in chronic diseases and in respiratory care. Our focus remains on accelerating access to globally benchmarked, future-ready therapies through collaborations like ours with Lilly, which bring together innovation, purpose, and scale to ensure advanced care

reaches patients wherever they are." Tirzepatide is the first and only dual agonist glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptors, indicated as an adjunct to diet and exercise for the treatment of Type 2 diabetes and Chronic weight management in adults with obesity (BMI ≥ 30) or overweight (BMI ≥ 27) with at least one weight-related comorbidity. Yurpeak® will be available on prescription in the KwikPen® device format in six strengths: 2.5 mg, 5 mg, 7.5 mg, 10 mg, 12.5

mg, and 15 mg, allowing for precise, convenient, and patient-friendly dosing. Launch of Yurpeak® in India will help expand access to tirzepatide so that more patients can benefit from this innovative therapy.

Lilly will manufacture and supply Yurpeak® to Cipla, and the price will be the same as Mounjaro®. Cipla will complement the launch of Yurpeak® with comprehensive patient education and support programs, including guidance on dosing, self-administration, and safe, informed use of the therapy.



Vi launches recharge-linked handset theft and loss insurance for prepaid users

Mumbai: Telecom operator Vi has rolled out India's first recharge-linked handset theft and loss insurance plan for prepaid customers, offering much-needed protection for smartphones lost or stolen. The move is expected to benefit a large number of mobile users in Meghalaya, where prepaid connections dominate the telecom market. The new insurance facility is available for both Android and iOS devices and comes bundled with select prepaid recharge packs. Under the plan, customers can claim insurance coverage of up to ₹25,000 in case of handset



loss or theft. This is significant, as traditional handset insurance policies usually cover only accidental damage and often exclude theft or loss. Vi has introduced three recharge options priced at ₹61 for 30 days, ₹201 for 180

days, and ₹251 for 365 days. Along with insurance, these packs also include data benefits. The company said the digital-first claim process will simplify paperwork and help customers receive quicker settlements.

Flipkart Minutes sees surge in Guwahati as quick-commerce adoption rises

Guwahati: Flipkart Minutes reported extraordinary growth in 2025, marked by a 16X year-on-year jump in orders and more than 53 million unique visitors nationwide. Guwahati emerged as one of the key expansion markets, with the platform extending its 10-minute delivery services across major neighbourhoods. Company officials said the city's young population and growing digital dependency helped accelerate adoption. Gen-Z users between 15 and 25 years were the largest driver of growth, followed by students who relied on rapid restocking of essentials. Fresh



produce dominated customer baskets, accounting for 45% of orders. Flipkart Minutes now sources fruits and vegetables directly from over 2,000 farmers, strengthening its supply chain across Assam and supporting local growers. The platform also onboarded regional and national brands, boosting hyperlocal market access for businesses. With rising demand in Guwahati, ex-

ecutives highlighted increasing repeat orders and stronger trust in the 10-minute delivery model. Sustainability efforts, including green packaging and EV-based deliveries, further enhanced customer engagement. Officials said the company aims to deepen its footprint in Guwahati through better inventory planning, city-specific assortments and an expanded last-mile network.

Guwahati SMEs urged to reassess insurance cover amid rising fire incidents

Guwahati: A series of fire incidents across the country, including recent cases in Goa, has renewed concerns over the preparedness of small enterprises, particularly in Guwahati, to withstand major disruptions. Industry observers note that while the city hosts a wide mix of businesses from tea warehousing and logistics to retail, hospitality, and small manufacturing many units remain either underinsured or inadequately insured, increasing their exposure to fire, natural disasters, and business interruption risks. TATA AIG has called for immediate reassessment of insurance protection among SMEs. Its SME Business Insurance Solutions offer cover for fire and allied perils, machin-

ery breakdown, employee hospitalization due to accidents, and loss of income arising from insured interruptions. The company stresses that regular evaluation of the sum insured is essential to ensure claims match potential losses. "Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, yet the most vulnerable when disaster strikes," said Pranay Shah, Head - SME Products, TATA AIG General Insurance. He added that the company aims to help enterprises maintain operational continuity and safeguard livelihoods. For Guwahati's tightly packed commercial markets, the message is clear: comprehensive insurance remains a critical pillar for long-term resilience.

HDFC Bank secures RBI nod for IndusInd stake

Mumbai: IndusInd Bank said on Tuesday the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved HDFC Bank's plan to buy up to a 9.50 per cent stake in the private lender. The approval allows HDFC Bank to become a significant shareholder in IndusInd Bank, which has been facing financial and governance challenges in recent months.



The RBI has asked HDFC Bank to complete the acquisition of a major sharehold-

ing within one year from the date of approval, which was granted on December 15. If the bank fails to do so within this period, the approval will be cancelled. This condition has been put in place to ensure timely compliance with regulatory norms.

Axis Bank shares drop 4%

Mumbai: Shares of Axis Bank fell over 4 per cent on Tuesday amid reports of a delay in net interest margin recovery, which would weigh on the lender's upcoming earnings. The lender's stock fell as much as 4.4 per cent during the day to ₹1,228.4 per share, the biggest intraday fall since July 19 this year. The Axis Bank stock pared losses to trade 4.2 per cent lower at ₹1,230 apiece, compared to a 0.55 per cent decline in Nifty 50 as of 1:09 PM. Shares of the company fell for the second straight session and currently trade at 2.7 times the average 30-day trading volume, according to Bloomberg. The counter has risen 15.5 per cent this year, compared to a 9.5 per cent advance in the benchmark Nifty 50. Axis Bank has a total market capitalisation of ₹3.82 trillion.

Philip Morris India targets illicit tobacco trade

Aizawl/Dimapur: Philip Morris India has highlighted the need for stronger enforcement against illicit cigarette circulation in the Northeast, stating that the region accounts for a major share of national seizures due to border vulnerabilities and long trade routes connecting neighbouring countries. Eurononitor International ranks India among the top markets for illegal cigarette consumption, placing it fourth globally. The company said illegal cigarettes affect revenue generation and allow non-compliant products to enter local markets. Philip Morris India noted that advanced digital tagging used in the EU and other regions could help India secure supply chains.

Shringla raises Darjeeling tea crisis urgency

Guwahati: Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla raised serious concerns in the Rajya Sabha over the growing crisis in India's tea sector, particularly affecting Darjeeling and the North-East. Speaking during Zero Hour, he said more than one million workers depend directly on tea employment and nearly six million people

rely on the sector for livelihood, making the matter urgent for the country. He noted that the crisis has been shaped by several issues such as climate change, declining forest cover, labour shortages, production instability and rising imports of low-quality teas. Imports from African countries and Nepal have re-

portedly increased by 45 per cent in the first half of 2025, impacting the global value of Darjeeling tea. Shringla urged the government to intervene strongly by regulating imports and protecting premium GI-tagged teas from regions like Darjeeling, Assam and the Nilgiris. He also pressed for community-based livelihood

options for tea workers to strengthen resilience. The MP highlighted that Darjeeling's tea output has dropped from 14 million kg in the 1970s to just 5.51 million kg in 2024. He called the situation a structural decline that could threaten heritage and long-term sustainability unless corrective action is taken quickly.

Airbnb brings Lollapalooza India 2026 experiences

Mumbai: Airbnb is redefining how music festivals are experienced by launching exclusive Experiences linked to Lollapalooza India 2026, offering fans a deeper and more personal connection to the event.

Unlike traditional festival visits, these Experiences focus on what happens behind the scenes. Participants can explore backstage areas, observe artists preparing for performances, and learn how large-scale festivals are organised. Sessions will be led by artists such as Ankur Tewari and OAFF-Sa-

vera, along with festival insider Raashi Sanghavi. Each Experience costs ₹5,850 and bookings open on December 15 at 10 am IST. Availability is limited to maintain the quality of interaction. Guests will need to arrange their own travel to Mumbai. Airbnb said the Experiences are designed to help fans feel more connected to the music and the people behind it. With Lollapalooza India scheduled over a long weekend, the initiative also encourages visitors to explore Mumbai's culture alongside the festival.

Fast-paced fashion takes over Jaipur at Blenders Pride Fashion Tour

Shillong: The Blenders Pride Fashion Tour took a high-energy fashion spectacle in Jaipur, featuring a rare blend of motorsports and haute couture. The event, held on December 8, transformed the runway into a racing-inspired arena, marking what organisers described as "Fashion's Next Move." The show was organised in collaboration with the Fashion Design Council of India and featured designers Namrata Joshipura and Abhishek Patni. Their

collections highlighted motorcore themes, combining speed-driven aesthetics with performance-centric silhouettes.

Former Miss Universe Harnaaz Sandhu was the finale showstopper and was joined on stage by rapper Raftaar, whose closing performance added another burst of high-tempo energy. The show was presented in three segments resembling racing laps, with chrome finishes, tactical designs and

dramatic glamour. The evening ended with a sports car stunt performance. Pernod Ricard India CMO Debasree Dasgupta said the tour aims to shape fashion and cultural conversations.

FDCI Chairman Sunil Sethi added that the collaboration celebrates India's design future. The tour will next move to Kolkata, where designer Anamika Khanna is scheduled to present the closing showcase on December 20.

Shillong youth explore new snack hacks with Golmaal

Shillong: Quick snacking is finding new excitement as Britannia 50-50 Golmaal highlights easy ways to customise biscuits into party snacks and chaat-style bites, a trend increasingly noticed among students and young working groups in the city. The brand says Golmaal can be enjoyed directly or turned into a fun base for toppings like potatoes, onions, chutneys and spices. Its Buttery Bites and Kala Jeera variants offer familiar tastes that appeal to people looking for something flavourful during college breaks or evening tea



sessions around popular Shillong hangout corners. For Shillong youth, the concept of quick snacking fits with

the fast routine of classes, music sessions or weekend meet-ups. Many prefer something simple that also feels different from routine packaged snacks. Golmaal suggests ideas such as a quick "biscuit chaat" that can be prepared in minutes using everyday ingredients easily available in local markets. As Shillong continues to shape a lively food culture influenced by youth habits and creative snacking, easy recipes like these could gain popularity among those who like experimenting without spending much time in the kitchen.

Apollo Excelcare pioneers NE's first TAVI-angioplasty

Guwahati: Apollo Excelcare Hospital has created medical history in the Northeast by performing the region's first-ever combined Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation (TAVI) and angioplasty, marking a major leap in advanced cardiac care. The landmark procedure was carried out by a senior team of cardiologists led by Dr. Neil Bardoloi, along with Dr. Dhanjit Nath, Dr. Amitava Misra and Dr. Diganta Buragohain, who executed both high-risk interventions in a single sitting under one anesthesia cycle. The patient; a 67-year-old man

from Shillong was diagnosed with severe aortic stenosis and a significant blockage in the Left Circumflex (LCX) artery. His medical condition was further complicated by Stage-5 chronic kidney disease, making open-heart surgery unsafe. Doctors opted for a minimally invasive strategy, first restoring blood flow through angioplasty and then implanting a balloon-expandable MyVal prosthetic valve to replace the diseased aortic valve. Hospital authorities described the achievement as a milestone for Guwahati's fast-growing medical

landscape. "This successful integration of coronary and structural interventions in one procedure is a breakthrough for the entire Northeast," the doctors said in a joint statement, noting the benefits of reduced risk, shorter recovery time and improved patient comfort. The patient showed rapid improvement and was discharged within days. Residents in Guwahati's healthcare hubs said the procedure signals that world-class cardiac care is now available closer to home, reducing the need to travel to metros for such complex treatments.

Winter skincare: Experts recommend almonds to combat seasonal dryness in Guwahati

Guwahati: Winter comes with cozy nights and festive cheer, yet it also brings a familiar challenge for many: dry, dull, and sensitive skin. The cold air pulls moisture from our skin, leaving it susceptible to flakiness and irritation. Topical skincare can help, but lasting nourishment starts from within.



She explains that winter dryness is not only a skincare concern but also a nutritional one. She highlights the importance of incorporating foods rich in protein, healthy fats, vitamin E, and omega-3, such as fatty fish and California Almonds. Including almonds in your daily diet can nourish the skin from within, helping

it stay soft, hydrated, and healthy, even in harsh weather conditions. As the winter season intensifies across Assam, skin problems such as dryness and loss of glow are becoming more common. Nutrition experts say almonds are among

the most effective winter foods because of their natural vitamin E content, which provides internal protection and keeps the skin moisturised. Almonds are also known to improve skin texture and elasticity, especially among

people spending long hours in cold outdoor conditions. Their healthy fats support internal hydration, while antioxidants delay early signs of aging. Doctors note that poor gut health often shows up in the form of acne and dullness. Almonds, being easy to digest and rich in nutrients, may help maintain better digestion. Experts recommend consuming them early in the morning or adding them to local meals. Lifestyle experts say investing in natural nutrition is more helpful than relying only on skin creams. A handful of almonds every day may help residents of Guwahati maintain healthier and more glowing skin throughout winter.

Japanese centre connects Northeast youth globally

Guwahati: A new Japanese Language Training Center to be set up at Manipur University is expected to create fresh global career opportunities for youth from the Northeast, including Assam. The centre will be established through a



partnership between NSDC International and Manipur University. The programme focuses on equipping young people with internationally recognised Japanese language skills, making them employable in Japan's fast-growing

sectors. NSDC International will oversee curriculum design, assessments, and training delivery, while the university will provide the necessary campus infrastructure. Officials said the training will cover multiple job-linked sectors such as caregiving, hospitality, agriculture, and manufacturing. Courses will guide learners from foundational language skills to advanced proficiency levels. Guwahati experts say centre links talent to global labour demand.

Rupee breaches 91 against dollar

Mumbai: The rupee is literally on a free-fall touching the 91/\$ mark. Given the sharp downward spiral in the currency, Pankaj Chaudhary, the Minister of State, Finance cited a higher trade deficit, evolving prospects of India-US trade agreement talks, and relatively weak capital account support as the key factors exerting pressure on the currency. He was speaking at the Lok Sabha. The Indian rupee weakened sharply in late November and early December 2025, touching record lows multiple times against the US dollar. The rupee closed at Rs 89.41 per US dollar on November 21.

Oriflame celebrates 30 years, drives innovation, local manufacturing

New Delhi: Oriflame's completion of 30 years in India highlights the brand's steady evolution in a competitive beauty and wellness landscape. Since entering the country in the early 1990s, the Swedish company has focused on combining scientific research, product safety and a community-driven business model to build long-term growth. The brand currently offers over 500 products spanning skincare, wellness, haircare, personal care, colour cosmetics and fragrances. Its emphasis on responsible ingredient choices and performance-based formulations has remained central to its operations. One of its most recognisable products, Tender Care balm, is now manufactured in India, reflecting Oriflame's growing reliance on local production to support scale and efficiency. Beyond products, Oriflame's business in India is pow-



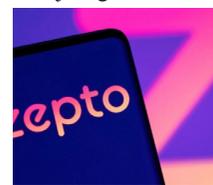
ered by a wide network of independent Brand Partners. With women accounting for nearly 80 percent of this network, the company has positioned itself as a platform for flexible income generation and entrepreneurship. This approach has remained a defining element of Oriflame's strategy over the years. Scientific research continues to play a

critical role in the brand's expansion. Oriflame's long-term study of skin ageing led to the development of Oripeptide 3, a patented bioactivating technology designed to work with the skin's natural biology. This innovation strengthens the NovAge+ range, one of the company's most advanced skincare lines.

As Oriflame moves into its next phase in India, it aims to broaden its wellness and skincare offerings, engage with younger consumer groups, and expand opportunities beyond major urban centres. India remains a key market in the company's global growth strategy, supported by local manufacturing and sustained investment in innovation.

Zepto to file IPO papers next week

New Delhi: The upcoming IPO calendar just got more exciting - Grocery delivery firm Zepto is reportedly preparing to file draft papers for an initial public offering of about \$500 million in Mumbai as early as next week, according to a Bloomberg report citing people familiar with the matter. The company is expected to submit its draft prospectus through a confidential route, the report added.



The Maldives: Luxury Destination is Now Surprisingly Affordable

The air smelled faintly of watermelons and salt as our ferry pulled into the island of Thoddoo, and the soundtrack was the pitter of motorbikes, not the thrum of seaplanes. Twelve years ago, when I last visited while filming an episode of BBC's *The Travel Show*, the Maldives was still a postcard fantasy of over-water villas, private islands and prices that kept most travellers at bay. Now, families were stepping off public boats with backpacks instead of bellboys unloading Louis Vuitton trunks. This wasn't the Maldives I remembered – and that was exactly the point.

Over the past decade, a quiet revolution has unfolded across the atolls. Government reforms have allowed Maldivians to open guesthouses on inhabited islands, breaking a long-standing rule that once confined tourism to unpopulated resort enclaves. The result has been transformative: more than 1,200 guesthouses now operate across 90 local islands, according to the Maldives' Ministry of Tourism. Travellers can experience the country's everyday culture, and, for the first time, local families can earn directly from the industry that powers their economy. On my recent visit with my three children, I wanted to see what this shift looked like in practice. Our trip took us from the home-cooked hospitality of Thoddoo, often called the "farm island" of the Maldives, to a mid-range resort that's redefining what sustainable luxury can mean. Together, they tell a story of a country broadening its welcome and quietly reshaping what paradise looks like.

Life on a local island

Stepping onto Thoddoo in the North Ari Atoll felt worlds away from the manicured perfection of resort life, much of which is found near the capital, Malé, in the North Malé Atoll. The public speedboat from Malé took 90 minutes and cost far less than a typical luxe resort seaplane. On arrival, we immediately noticed that the island's pace was immediately different – no cars, just bicycles and the occasional electric buggy buzzing between palm-lined, sandy lanes. Rows of papaya trees and watermelon fields stretched inland, ringed by the Maldives' iconic turquoise seas. We stayed at the island's first guesthouse, Serene Sky, owned by Ahmed Karam, president of the Guesthouse Association of the Maldives and a leading voice in the country's fast-growing local-island tourism movement. Serene Sky was simple and spotless. The pillows weren't designer, the bathroom was modest, but the welcome was genuine, and the meals were



home cooking at its best – fried reef fish caught just hours earlier, curried pumpkin from the farms nearby and the freshest watermelon juice imaginable. Karam told me this new wave of community-led tourism has reshaped the landscape here. "Locals now benefit directly from tourism dollars," he said, "but it's also made us more aware of how much we need to protect what we have – the island, the reefs, the wildlife. That's what people come here to see."

Sustainable luxury in the Maldives

The second leg of our journey was a world apart: Sun Siyam Olhuveli, a family-friendly, Maldivian-owned resort in the South Malé Atoll. The welcome was warm and theatrical – drums on the jetty, cold towels, smiling staff – but what struck me was the ease. Our ever-cheerful resort representative, Raail, handled everything via WhatsApp, from snorkel gear to kids' medicine. We upgraded to a two-bedroom beachfront villa and took an all-inclusive plan, a model that's often dismissed as generic, but here it felt liberating. We had the choice of more than 10 restaurants and bars spread across three islands, while activities and transfers were bundled, freeing us to focus on spending time together. For families chasing reef adventures without the ultra-luxury price tag, Sun Siyam Olhuveli delivers. My children roamed the shores freely, spotting reef sharks and tur-

tles just off the house reef, while I indulged in boat dives to explore Shark Point and Banana Reef, where manta rays glided like shadows and hawksbill turtles grazed on coral heads. Back on land, the six pools (including the Maldives' longest, at 210m) provided endless space for both play and relaxation. The resort strikes a rare balance, polished yet easy-going, with the kind of warmth that comes naturally to a Maldivian-owned property. Resorts like this are at the forefront of the Maldives' sustainability drive. Under the Sun Siyam Cares programme, guests can join beach clean-ups, plant coral and restore lagoons. The resort's "Recycle-Reuse" initiative turns old linens into cleaning cloths, and single-use plastics are being phased out entirely. Even my request for a plastic bag for wet swimwear was met with a smile: "We don't use those anymore." The push for sustainability extends beyond individual resorts. Tourism and environmental policy now work hand in hand, with regulations aimed at cutting single-use plastics, conserving energy and protecting marine life. Under President Dr Mohamed Muizzu, the Maldives has set an ambitious target: generating 33% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2028, a vital step towards reducing the country's carbon footprint and safeguarding the

fragile ecosystems that underpin its tourism industry. Thoriq Ibrahim, Minister of Tourism and Environment, sums up the strategy:



"Our pristine environment is our foundational asset. We are not pursuing growth at the expense of our environment."

The Maldives is evolving, and not quietly. Guesthouses and family-run stays now offer meaningful encounters with local life, while Maldivian-owned resorts are proving that comfort and conscience can coexist.

IDPWD: Early Eye Screening is a Disability Prevention Must

Vision has a profound impact on a child's overall development, and this is especially true for children with disabilities, who are already navigating challenges that can feel overwhelming from time to time. However, with the right care and timely intervention, many of these challenges can be eased effectively. Regrettably, vision health is often overlooked, resulting in missed opportunities for early intervention that could drastically improve these children's quality of life. Approximately 19 million children worldwide are estimated to have vision impairment, many cases preventable or treatable if detected early.



Dr G. Kalpana Rani, MS Ophthalmology, Consultant Ophthalmologist and VR Surgeon at NR Vision Eye Care and Laser Center, Nallagandla, Hyderabad, shares all you

need to know: Vision plays an integral role in communication, motor skills, and learning. When a child's vision is compromised, they face not only sensory deprivation but also increased challenges in acquiring language and cognitive skills. Studies highlight that untreated vision problems in children with disabilities can exacerbate developmental delays, leading to a cycle of frustration and behavioral issues. Early detection and treatment

of common childhood eye disorders such as amblyopia can improve vision outcomes by up to 90%, reducing long-term disability. According to pediatric eye care studies, vision problems that are detected and treated early can prevent long-term complications such as amblyopia (lazy eye), strabismus (crossed eyes), and refractive errors, all of which can impair educational performance and social interaction if left uncorrected.

Sugar's Threat to Sperm: Why Experts Say Excess Intake Harms Male Fertility

Festive seasons, celebrations, and even everyday cravings often come with a sweet side. But mounting scientific evidence shows that excessive sugar intake can do far more harm than simply adding calories, it can directly impact male fertility. From sperm count and motility to DNA integrity and long-term reproductive health, sugar plays a deeper role than most men realize.

Two leading experts Dr Spoorthi Prakash, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, Altius Hospital, HBR Layout, Bengaluru, and Dr Snehadarshini Karanth, Consultant & Fertility Specialist, Birla Fertility & IVF, Bengaluru break down the science and explain why mindful moderation is crucial. According to Dr. Spoorthi Prakash, diets high in sugar especially from sweetened beverages, packaged desserts, and confectionery have a measurable and concerning effect on male reproductive health. "Excess sugar leads to spikes in blood glucose and insulin levels, increasing insulin resistance over time. This imbalance triggers oxidative stress, a state where harmful free radicals damage cells, including the delicate sperm-producing cells in the testes," she explains. This damage affects key



aspects of male fertility. Research consistently shows a decline in: Sperm concentration, sperm motility, overall semen quality among men who regularly consume high-sugar diets. But the impact doesn't stop there.

Dr Spoorthi further notes that sugar intake contributes significantly to obesity, a known risk factor for male infertility. "Obesity is closely linked to erectile dysfunction, reduced testosterone levels, and increased sperm DNA fragmentation. Damaged DNA affects fertilization, raises miscarriage risk, and interferes with normal embryo development," she says. Some studies

even suggest that sperm DNA damage may predispose future children to long-term metabolic or developmental challenges, highlighting sugar's influence not just on fertility, but on generational health. "In simple terms," she emphasizes, "excessive sugar isn't just a calorie concern, it is a direct threat to male reproductive health."

Festive seasons often lead to a spike in sweet consumption, laddoos, cakes, mithai, chocolates, and celebratory drinks. While occasional indulgence is normal, Dr. Snehadarshini Karanth cautions that repeated sugar-heavy eating patterns can temporarily disrupt semen quality and, over time, influence fertility.



Turmeric or ginger: best for immunity!



Turmeric and ginger are popular herbs with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that may help with pain and digestion. While similar, turmeric and ginger work differently to offer distinct benefits and risks that may affect your health.

For immediate digestive relief, ginger is the better option. Ginger contains compounds called shogaol and gingerols that can relax the digestive tract and help the stomach empty faster, helping relieve digestive discomfort. They can

also help reduce nausea. However, turmeric has been shown to help relieve chronic inflammation. Over time, this may help ease symptoms of digestive conditions like inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

Both turmeric and ginger have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that can help support immunity. They have also both been shown to have an antimicrobial effect that can help prevent illness-causing bacteria and viruses. Some research shows the compound curcumin in turmeric can have a direct effect on the immune response, helping it fight off active infections. Ginger may be helpful with cold and flu symptoms, as it has been shown to ease nausea and sore throat.

Tiny Toxins: The Hidden Damage to Your Skin

The annual pollution problem in North India is no longer just an environmental inconvenience; but a full-scale biological stressor. And the data continues to be sobering. The Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) projected an 8.2-year reduction in life expectancy for Delhi by 2025. It is not merely a statistic, but a reflection of chronic systemic inflammation, particulate-induced oxidative stress, and long-term cardiovascular burden. But beyond this, the pollution also impacts your skin.

Such severe levels of pollution calls for a specific skin care routine or Enhanced Pollution-Protocol Cleanse. Conventional double cleansing is beneficial, but during severe AQI spikes, a modified three-step method can be more effective at removing PM2.5 and PM10 particles. Begin

with micellar water, a gentle, no-rinse skincare product that acts as an all-in-one cleanser. It helps lift surface pollutants without friction. Follow up with an oil or balm cleanser to dissolve lipid-soluble particulates, and finally a gentle, low-pH water-based cleanser to ensure complete removal. The evidence is clear: thorough but non-stripping cleansing reduces the inflammatory effects triggered by pollutant residue. Air pollution increases Transepidermal water loss (TEWL), the natural evaporation of water from the skin's surface. This compromises the stratum corneum or the skin's outermost layer, and



heightens inflammatory cytokines in the skin. This eventually makes barrier repair an absolute non-negotiable during this time of year. Using a formulation containing ceramides, cholesterol, and fatty acids—in the ideal physiological ratio—helps restore structural lipids. Niacinamide (5–10%) is particularly valuable for its anti-inflammatory, barrier-strengthening, and pigment-regulating properties. At night, an occlusive such as petroleum jelly can significantly reduce TEWL and supports overnight recovery.

Given the high oxidative load caused by PM2.5, nitrogen dioxide, and ozone, ad-

vanced antioxidant layering is increasingly relevant. A combination of vitamin C, vitamin E, and ferulic acid in the morning provides protection against free radicals and UV-induced damage. Evening antioxidants such as resveratrol (a powerful antioxidant from grapes, berries, and peanuts,) or pycnogenol further support repair pathways. The use of green tea polyphenols throughout the day offers additional ROS (reactive oxygen species) scavenging benefits. As masks return during high-pollution days, we are observing a rise in occlusive acne or “maskne.” Applying a thin layer of non-nano zinc oxide or using a breathable silicone barrier in high-friction areas can reduce mechanical irritation and moisture-trapping—two primary contributors to these flare-ups.

Nutrition Programs Are Dramatically Transforming Children's Lives

Here's the thing about nutrition: it quietly shapes everything a child can grow into. For many children from underserved backgrounds, a school meal isn't just food, it determines whether they can sit through a lesson with focus, finish their homework with energy, or even make it to school at all.

“When a meal is dependable, attendance rises, concentration improves, and learning finally feels within reach,” says Bipasa Giri, Health Educator and Nutritionist, Lotus Petal Foundation.

Nutrition also helps bridge the health gap created by poverty.

Children who grow up without steady access to healthy food often struggle with weak immunity, chronic fatigue, and delayed growth. “A consistent meal program brings balance back into their lives,” Giri explains. “You begin to see fewer sick days, stronger bodies, and a sense of physical stability that

chronic hunger never allows.” But the impact of good nutrition goes far beyond physical strength. It plays a critical role in cognitive and emotional development. “Adequate nutrition sharpens memory, stabilises emotions, and helps children engage with the world in healthier ways,” says Giri.

“Education ensures these benefits last beyond the classroom,” adds Giri. A meal doesn't just fill a plate. “It opens a future,” says Giri and that changes everything.

A child who isn't fighting hunger is more likely to participate in class, collaborate with peers, and express curiosity. Confidence returns in subtle but powerful ways, clearer answers, thoughtful questions, and the courage to raise a hand.

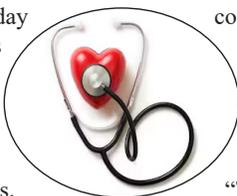
What this ultimately creates is dignity and opportunity. “A reliable meal gives a child the freedom to focus on learning instead of survival,” notes Giri. “It allows them to walk into school with their head held high and their hopes intact.” Regular health education classes are integrated into the curriculum so children learn not only what to eat, but why nutrition matters. “Education ensures these benefits last beyond the classroom,” adds Giri. A meal doesn't just fill a plate. “It opens a future,” says Giri and that changes everything.



Poor diet fuels major lifestyle diseases

This year has served as a wake-up call for many Indians. Health conditions that once felt distant, something to worry about “later in life” are now appearing among young professionals, new parents, and even people who consider themselves reasonably active. Diabetes, high blood pressure, fatty liver disease, and stubborn weight gain are no longer exceptions; they are becoming part of everyday conversation. What's alarming is not just how common these conditions are tied to daily habits that once seemed harmless, or were even marketed as healthy.

According to Siddhi Kripal, these conditions didn't suddenly appear overnight. They are the result of small, repeated lifestyle choices that seemed easy, harmless, and sometimes even labelled ‘healthy,’ she explains. Long working hours, dependence on packaged foods, irregular meals, sugary drinks, and low fibre intake quietly add up over the years, eventually showing up as lifestyle diseases. Kripal emphasizes that prevention doesn't require extreme diets or complicated rules. Simple, consistent choices can make a powerful difference.



Control hypertension during winter blood pressure spikes

Winter is often associated with cosy routines, and slower mornings – but for people living with hypertension, the colder months quietly raise cardiovascular risks. Blood pressure readings tend to climb as temperatures drop, making winter a particularly vulnerable period for heart health. This seasonal shift is driven by a combination of physiological responses to cold and lifestyle changes that affect activity, diet, stress, and medication consistency. Understanding how

overall cardiac health. When temperatures fall, our blood vessels constrict in an effort to preserve core body heat.” This increases systemic vascular resistance and forces blood pressure upward. Dr Niranjana Singh, Senior Consultant in Internal Medicine at CK Birla Hospitals, Jaipur, echoes this concern. He notes, “Even a drop of just a few degrees in temperature can impact cardiovascular function.” This constriction means the heart has to work harder, placing extra strain on individuals with existing hypertension, heart disease,



winter impacts blood pressure is the first step toward preventing serious complications.

Explaining the science behind the winter spike, Dr Joy Shome, Senior Consultant in Cardiology and Head of TAVR/TAVI at BM Birla Heart Hospital, Kolkata, says, “Cold weather has a direct and measurable impact on blood pressure and

or advanced age. Beyond the body's response to cold, winter habits often worsen blood pressure control. Dr Shome points out that colder months tend to reduce physical activity, alter medication routines, increase stress levels, and promote festive indulgences in rich, salty foods. Each of these factors independently raises blood pressure, and together, they amplify risk.

Dermatologist explains 'doing less' skincare works



Skin fasting refers to temporarily stopping most skincare products for a short period and allowing the skin to regulate and repair itself naturally. The idea is simple: stop overloading the skin, let it breathe, and allow its own repair mechanisms to take charge. But as the concept gains traction online, one question remains is skin fasting just another viral trend promising quick, flawless skin, or does it hold real dermatological value?

“Skin fasting is more relevant today than it has ever been,” says Dr Ridhima Arora, MBBS, MD (Dermatology & VD), Malik Radix Healthcare Pvt. Ltd. “The current beauty landscape is like a jungle of products, and consumers are often lost in it.” She explains that people are routinely layering retinol, vitamin C, exfoliating acids, niacinamide, peptides, and other ‘actives’ often without understanding compatibility or long-term consequences. According to Dr Arora, this ‘more is better’ approach has led to a silent but widespread issue: skin barrier damage.



Pressure building on Suryakumar as India eye T20I series win over South Africa

LUCKNOW, DEC 16 : Shubman Gill's lean patch has been the talking point but an equally "out of runs" skipper Suryakumar Yadav is also under intense scrutiny as India look to find the right balance and seal the five-match series against South Africa in the fourth T20I here on Wednesday. The third game was an ideal opportunity for Suryakumar to rediscover his touch while India chased a modest 118-run target, but the ease that once made him the top ranked batter in the world was noticeably missing. Shots that defined his dominance have been producing erratic results and the match in Dharamsala was no different as he fell to his trademark pick-up stroke, highlighting a continued struggle. But he was defiant when it came to self-assessment. "The thing is, I've been batting beautifully in the nets. I'm trying everything that's in my control. When the runs have to come, they'll definitely come. I'm not out of form, but definitely out of runs," Suryakumar confidently said at the post-match presentation ceremony after India's win in Dharamsala on Sunday. However, the numbers tell a worrying story. The Indian captain has been searching for fluency for over a year, averaging under 15 in the format this season. Additionally, he's still without a half-century in 2025, the longest such phase of his career. Only twice during this period



has he managed to bat beyond 20 balls. With the T20 World Cup less than two months away, the defending champions would want their leader and premier batter to rediscover his rhythm sooner rather than later. Vice-captain Shubman Gill's struggles are as bad if not worse. His elevation to the opening slot has seemingly unsettled India's top order. Gill replaced a well-settled Sanju Samson. The Kerala wicketkeeper-batter was first pushed down the order and eventually dropped despite forming a promising partnership with Abhishek Sharma earlier. Gill has shown his class in other formats, but in T20Is he is yet to come across the assured

batter that he is in Tests and ODIs. While he survived during Sunday's low-target chase, his scratchy run-a-ball 28 did little to ease concerns with seven matches to go before the World Cup. India have added Shahbaz Ahmed to the squad following Axar Patel's illness-enforced exit from the series, a move that could open the door for Kuldeep Yadav to get an extended run. Jasprit Bumrah's availability remains uncertain after missing the previous match for personal reasons. In his absence, Arshdeep Singh returned to form with a player-of-the-match performance, while Harshit Rana complemented him well in Dharamsala.

Salman, Chitrangada on Galwan Battle

MUMBAI, DEC 16: Actor Chitrangada Singh, who will be seen alongside Salman Khan in the upcoming film "Battle of Galwan", praised the superstar and said working with him has been a great experience. The much-anticipated is based on the 2020 Galwan Valley conflict between India and China. It is directed by Apoorva Lakhia of "Shootout at Lokhandwala" fame. "An actor can only do, what is written in the script, and as actors you have to add something. Luckily, with Salman, there is a lot of improvising, he likes to improvise on set, so a lot of moments and things are improvised. Salman is a very big name and I am trying to do my best," Singh told PTI in an interview. Without divulging details about her role, Singh said as an actor, it's her responsibility to shine through even in a supporting part. "Being an emotional anchor in any action, or any such film is very very important. So, all that is written already in the script. Besides, if you do a good job, even if it is a five minute role, you will always be remembered, and that matters," the actor said when asked about the length of her role in the film. Singh said "Battle of Galwan" is an important film and she is blessed to be part of it. "I come from an army background so it is very important, and it is an important film," the actor, who is awaiting the release of the



Netflix film, "Raat Akeli Hai: The Bansal Murders", said. In an interview with PTI earlier this year, Khan said "Battle of Galwan" is one of the most physically demanding films he's ever taken on in his career. "It is physically demanding. Every year, every month, every day it gets more and more difficult. I've to give more time now (for training). Earlier, I would do it (train) in one or two weeks, now I'm running, kicking, punching, and all that stuff. This film demands that," Khan said. - She described working with Salman Khan as exciting, noting that he improvises a lot on set, which adds freshness and authenticity to scenes. - While not revealing specifics, she mentioned being an emotional anchor in the action-heavy war drama, emphasizing the importance of supporting parts in such films. - Known for his star power, Salman reportedly brings spontaneity to the set, creating improvised moments that enhance the narrative. Improvisation can make performances more natural, conflicts. This marks her first time sharing the screen with Salman Khan, making it a significant career milestone, which likely influences her portrayal.

Sunny, Diljit, Varun Unite as India's Soldiers

Border 2 Teaser

MUMBAI, DEC 16: The highly-anticipated teaser for Border 2 has been released by the makers. The teaser came with spinechilling moments that define patriotism and nationalistic fervour. Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh and Ahan Shetty play soldiers who are trying to navigate through the 1971 Indo-Pak war. In one instance, Sunny's character says, "Tum jahan se bhi ghusne ki koshish karoge, zameen se, aasmaan se, samundar se, saamne ek Hindustani fauji khada paoge..." (Wherever you try to enter from, be it the land, the sky or the sea, there would be one Indian soldier standing in front of you.) In another instance, Sunny's character says, "Aawaz kahan tak jaani chahiye?" to which the other soldiers scream, "Lahore tak!" The same sets the tone for the film as it delves into the bravery of the soldiers who fought in the gruesome war. The teaser was launched



at an event in Mumbai. It was attended by Sunny Deol, who made his first public appearance after father Dharmendra's death. The other actors, including Varun Dhawan and Ahan Shetty joined him on stage. The trio was also joined by director Anurag Singh and producers Bhushan Kumar and Nidhi Dutta. Sunny Deol opened up about working in Border 2 and reliving the memories of the 1997 movie Border. He shared about the scenes being hard-hitting and how wearing the soldier's uniform is uplifting and comes with responsibility. Varun Dhawan and Ahan Shetty shared about working with Sunny Deol. While Varun Dhawan opened up about the "Lahore Tak" dialogue and how it became a crucial part of the teaser, Ahan Shetty quipped about the advice his father Suniel Shetty gave him before he started working on the film.

WTL 2025: Indian Tennis Stars Learn, Grow With Global Icons

BENGALURU, DEC 16: The Indian tennis fraternity will get a golden chance to watch and learn up-close from an array of top stars including the former US Open champion Daniil Medvedev when the World Tennis League begins here on Wednesday. The

Indian names in the fourth edition of the four-day event, which is being played on these shores for the first time, are no less experienced on the circuit themselves. But being part of the squad and getting a chance to exchange notes with some high-achievers



will certainly help the tour regulars like Sumit Nagal, D

Suresh, Ankita Raina and Sahaja Yamalapalli to add a new dimension to their game. The younger names such as Shrivalli Bhamdipaty and Maaya Rajeshwaran Revathi too will be eager to use the tournament as a study time to sharpen their skills ahead.

Messi's India Tour: Love, Chaos



MUMBAI, DEC 16: Despite the early turbulence in Kolkata, the tour largely fulfilled its promise. Lionel Messi experienced first-hand the scale of India's love for football. India lived the Lionel Messi dream for three unforgettable days as the four-city tour of the football great drew to a close in Delhi. The 2022 World Cup-winning captain commands a staggering fan base in the country, and this visit — his second to India

— was purely about acknowledging that love, unlike his 2011 trip, which revolved around a friendly match. While the tour stood out as a landmark moment for Indian football, it also sparked debate, with some arguing that similar resources should be directed towards developing the sport. Yet, the presence of a once-in-a-generation figure like Messi carries its own weight especially in a football loving nation still searching.

