

IN BRIEF

Census Vigilance

Imphal: The Joint Committee Opposing Delimitation Exercise in Manipur (Kangleipak) (JCODEM) has urged the Government and people of Manipur to remain alert as the nationwide Census, scheduled to begin in April 2026, approaches.

Poppy Ban

Imphal: Civil Society Organisations of Sadar Hills in Kangpokpi district have reportedly resolved to impose a complete ban on poppy cultivation across the district with effect from the New Year 2026.

Inter-faith Advent Christmas in Imphal highlights peace, reconciliation

Civil groups unite at Imphal Christmas programme

IMPHAL, DEC 23

An inter-faith Advent Christmas celebration was held on December 21, 2025, at Diamond Jubilee Park, Adimjati Shiksha Ashram, Imphal, under the auspices of the Imphal Naga Forum (INF), with prayers offered for peace, healing and stability in Manipur.

The programme, organised as an advance Christmas celebration and preparatory prayer meeting during the Advent season, brought together leaders from Meitei, Thadou and Naga communities. The



organisers conveyed that the gathering was intended to pray collectively for an early return of peace and to promote harmony among different communities in the State. Imphal-based INF, a peace advocacy group, extends festive greetings to Manipur's peace-loving citizens.

TYCM urges withdrawal of Imphal-Saikul bandh

IMPHAL, DEC 23

The Tribal Youth Council Manipur (TYCM), Council Headquarters, has expressed serious concern over reports that the Imphal-Saikul Road Joint Development Committee (ISRJDC) has announced an indefinite shutdown of the Imphal-Saikul road stretch from midnight of December 24, 2025. In a statement, TYCM-CHQ strongly appealed to the ISRJDC to withdraw the proposed indefinite bandh, citing the observance of Christmas 2025 and the New Year 2026. The council suggested

that the shutdown be rescheduled after January 5, 2026, to avoid inconvenience to the public. The TYCM noted that during the festive season, people from various communities, including non-Christians, travel extensively to participate in celebrations. Church leaders and members also move between villages and Imphal for essential preparations, including procurement of goods and materials for Christmas and New Year programmes. The council warned that any disruption of movement during this period could cause serious difficulties for the general public.

National Farmers Day Celebration in Wangjing

THOUBAL, DEC 23

Manipur State Co-operative Bank (MSCB) Thoubal Branch and Wangjing GPL MPCs Limited joined hands to organize a financial literacy awareness programme and celebrate National Farmers Day at the latter's office on Tuesday. The event aimed to promote financial inclusion and support farmers in the region. As part of the programme, altogether 56 farmers, who were the best repayment KCC loanees belonging to MSCB

Thoubal Branch, were felicitated with simple gifts. Of these loanees, 44 were from Primary Agriculture Co-operative Societies (PACS/GPL MPCs Ltd), and 12 were from Farmers Producer Companies/Organizations (FPC/FPO).

MSCB Thoubal officials, including DGM K. Tarakeshwori Devi and Branch Manager N. Rameshwor Singh, emphasized the importance of responsible financial management and encouraged farmers to utilize bank services effectively.

UCM President urges unity to safeguard Manipur at Assam commemoration

IMPHAL, DEC 23

The President of the United Committee Manipur (UCM), YK Dhiren, called on the people of Manipur to rise above personal rivalries and narrow group interests, emphasising that the State's unity and security require collective responsibility. He warned that failure to act in unison could lead to serious and irreversible consequences for Manipur.

Dhiren made the remarks during a programme jointly organised by the United Peoples' Front, Manipur (UPF), the



Maharaj Gambhir Singh Memorial Committee (MGSMC), the Manipur Youths' Front of Assam (MYFA) and Apunba Khungang Mapan Chaokhat Lup (Apun Lup), held at the Manipur Levy ground, Chan-

drapur, Assam. The event was held to pay tribute to Maharaj Gambhir Singh and Nara Singh on the 173rd anniversary of the Manipur Levy, and included cultural presentations and visits to the Manipur Levy Museum.

Delhi clashes over Bangladesh killing

NEW DELHI, DEC 23

Holding saffron flags and shouting slogans against the lynching of a Hindu man in Bangladesh, hundreds of supporters of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal broke barricades and clashed with police near the fortified Bangladesh High Commission on Tuesday. Several barricades lay in disarray as police struggled to contain the surge. The high security area witnessed a beefed-up police presence in the morning ahead of the protest announced by the Hindu.

13 get life term for Murshidabad lynching during Waqf Act protest violence

Second mob lynching conviction, West Bengal's first ever

KOLKATA, DEC 23

A court in West Bengal's Murshidabad district on Tuesday sentenced 13 people to life imprisonment for the lynching of a man and his son during the protests over the Waqf (Amendment) Act.

Special public prosecutor Bivas Chatterjee said this is the country's second conviction in a mob lynching case and first in West Bengal. The fast-track court in Jangipur directed the state to give Rs 15 lakh compensation to the family of the victims. Hara-



gobinda Das (72) and his son Chandan Das (42) were killed by a mob at their house in Jangipur in the Samsanganj police station area on April 12.

Chatterjee said the prose-

cution had prayed for capital punishment for the convicts, maintaining that the crime falls in the rarest of rare category. He said the state government will decide whether

it will appeal against the judgment before the Calcutta High Court. The court had convicted the 13 accused on Monday. Each of the 13 convicts was also sentenced to 10 years in prison for dacoity, 10 years of imprisonment for house trespass and a five-year term for rioting. All the sentences will run concurrently, the court said. Violent protests rocked Murshidabad district from April 8 to 12, after the Waqf (Amendment) Act was passed in Parliament. Central forces had to be deployed to control the situation.

Financial Literacy Awareness programme held at Wangjing

IMPHAL, DEC 23

A Financial Literacy Awareness Programme, along with the observance of National Farmers Day, was held today at the office of Wangjing GPL MPCs Limited, Wangjing. The programme was organised by the Manipur State Co-operative Bank (MSCB), Thoubal Branch.

During the event, 56 KCC loanees were felicitated by MSCB, Thoubal Branch. Of the total, 44 loanees belonged to Primary Agriculture Co-operative Societies (PACS/GPL MPCs Ltd), while 12 were from Farmers Producer Companies/Organisations (FPC/FPO). The pro-



gramme was attended by K. Tarakeshwori Devi, DGM of MSCB, Thoubal; N. Rameshwor Singh, Branch Manager; H. Jugindro of Leisangthem GP; and M. Nabadweep of Tenth GP as presidium members. The programme concluded with a call to integrate financial education into everyday life, underscoring that informed financial decision.



Manipur: Security forces arrest RPF/PLA cadre in Imphal West

GUWAHATI, DEC 23: Security forces on Monday arrested a senior operative of the banned Revolutionary People's Front/People's Liberation Army (RPF/PLA) in Manipur's Imphal West district, officials said. Acting on specific intelligence, the forces picked up Kshetrimayum Nilakanta Singh alias Kanta or Mangal (51) from Takyel Kolom Leikai Leirak-6 under Lamphel police station limits. Singh hails from Kakching Turel Wangma in Kakching district and also maintained a residence at Langjing Achouba Awang Leikai in Imphal West.

During the operation, personnel seized two mobile phones and a driving licence from the arrested cadre. Officials said investigators are examining his activities and links to the outlawed organisation to determine his exact role in insurgency-related operations. In another coordinated action the same day,



security forces unearthed a stockpile of weapons and communication equipment from the Konaitong and Pelyang hill range under Machi police station in Tengenoupal district. The recovered items included two improvised mortars and three wireless communication sets. Authorities said the arrests and recoveries form part of intensified counter-insurgency measures aimed at dismantling militant networks and maintaining peace and security in the state.

A joint security team in Manipur on Friday arrested

a member of the proscribed People's Liberation Army (PLA), the armed wing of the banned Revolutionary People's Front (RPF), police said. The outlawed activist namely Aheibam Amorjit Singh (50 years) of Kongba Kshetri Leikai, Imphal East was arrested by a combined team of the Manipur and central security forces at around 6 am on Friday. Security forces apprehended on Saturday a cadre of the banned Revolutionary People's Front's (RPF) armed wing, in Manipur's Imphal West district.

President Murmu notes pain caused by violence

IMPHAL, DEC 23: President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday said she is aware of the Manipur people's pain because of the ethnic violence, and assured them that the government is committed to strengthen harmony and ensure security.

Describing the state as a land of resilience and courage, Murmu said that the Manipur people have enriched the nation by contributing immensely to the diverse fields of sports, defence, art and culture, and public service. Addressing a gathering at a civic reception programme, she said, "I am aware of the pain that the people of Manipur have gone through following the unfortunate violence. I want to assure you that taking care of their concerns is the highest priority for us."

At least 260 people were killed and thousands homeless in clashes between the valley-based Meiteis and Kuki community of the hills since



May 2023. The state is now under President's Rule. My government stands by every affected family. The Indian government remains fully committed to strengthening harmony, ensuring security, and supporting Manipur in its journey towards stability and prosperity," the President said. She added that the valley and hills of the state were rich in natural beauty.

The people of Manipur are talented and hardworking, Murmu said, expressing confidence that communities from the valley and the hills would remain together with renewed harmony and advance towards greater heights of prosperity and happiness.

"I urge the people of Manipur to continue supporting harmony and development.

Assam Book Fair Returns

GUWAHATI, DEC 23: The Assam Book Fair will return to Guwahati with a larger scale, stronger national reach and an expanded programme from December 24. The Publication Board Assam, in collaboration with the All Assam Book Publishers and Sellers Association, will organise the 14-day fair at the Khanapara Veterinary College playground. Publication Board secretary Pramod Kalita said the organisers advanced the fair this year to allow time for Republic Day preparations. He said they also extended the duration from 12 days to 14 days due to rising participation and crowd response. The organisers will set up 135 stalls. Publishers from Delhi, Haryana, Kolkata, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Assam will participate. Several publishers who took smallstalls sales.

Poppy ban enforced in Manipur

IMPHAL, DEC 23: Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) of Sadar Hills in Kangpokpi district have taken a historic decision to stop poppy cultivation completely from New Year 2026. The unanimous resolution came at a Cabinet Meeting of all CSOs held in Kangpokpi on December 5. The meeting saw participation from the Sadar Hills Chiefs' Association, Kuki Inpi Sadar Hills, tribal bodies, student organisations, women's groups, youth clubs and several community organisations. To turn the decision into action, the CSOs launched a series of district-wide consultations with stakeholders and village authorities. They held a CSO meeting in Kangpokpi on December 10. To turn the decision into action, the CSOs launched a series of district-wide consultations with stakeholders and village authorities. They held a CSO meeting in Kangpokpi on December 10. Manipur's poppy fields are tied to the regional narcotics trade, fueling addiction and cross-border smuggling. -order and social stability issue.

BJP claims madrasas follow foreigners



GUWAHATI, DEC 23: The Assam unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party on December 22 courted controversy after drawing links between madrasa education in the state's riverine char areas and what it described as extremist models in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Speaking at a press conference at the party's state headquarters, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan, BJP state spokesperson Ranjib Kumar Sarmah alleged that some madrasas functioning in Assam's char and chapori regions along the Brahmaputra follow curricula comparable to Qawmi madrasas in Bangladesh and institutions allegedly connected to extremist networks in Pakistan. He claimed such educational models encourage religious radicalism and pose a threat to social cohesion. Sarmah further asserted that what he termed a "Miya Muslim mindset" places religious identity above linguistic and cultural

affiliations. He attempted to draw parallels between incidents of violence during the Assam Movement and recent developments in Bangladesh, citing international media reports to claim that groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Qawmi madrasas have contributed to radicalisation in the neighbouring country. Radicalisation in the neighbouring country described as extremistogies Bora were present briefing. Sixteen projects have already been executed through the National Highways Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) and the state public works department (PWD), resulting in the creation of 383 km of road at a cost of Rs 3,977 crore. Currently, work is underway on 225 km of roads, amounting to Rs 5,057 crore, spread across 15 projects. Sixteen projects have already been executed through the National Highways Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) and the state public works department (PWD), resulting in the creation of 383 km of road at a cost of Rs 3,977 crore. Currently, work is underway on 225 km of roads, amounting to 15 projects.

Tripura CM urges speedy Kaladan project for Northeast connectivity



AGARATALA, DEC, 23: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has called for fast and effective implementation of the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project (KMTTP) to boost connectivity in the Northeast region.

He said the project will play a crucial role in strengthening multimodal corridors linking the Northeast with the rest of India and neighbouring countries. Saha spoke during a meeting of the high-level task force on infrastructure and connectivity in the Northeast. Union DoNER Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia chaired the meeting virtually from Delhi on Monday. Saha said the Northeast holds huge development potential, especially in infrastructure and communication. He stressed the

need for coordinated efforts to resolve challenges in road, rail, air and inland waterway connectivity. He also pointed to gaps in electricity, gas and digital infrastructure that need immediate attention.

The Chief Minister highlighted priority sectors such as regional infrastructure macro-grids, power, oil and natural gas, tourism and border trade. He also submitted a report with proposed strategies for development in these areas. The KMTTP is a key India-Myanmar connectivity project. It aims to link India's Northeast with the sea using sea, river and road routes through Myanmar. The project connects Haldia to Sittwe Port, then moves to Paletwa via the Kaladan river, and finally reaches Zorinpui in

Mizoram by road. The route will help bypass the congested Siliguri Corridor and boost regional trade and growth.

Chief Minister Manik Saha emphasized the need for a four-lane national highway during a review meeting on national highways at Hotel Radisson Blu, Guwahati. He highlighted ongoing projects for 265 km of roads, valued at Rs 4,607 crore, aimed at enhancing road connectivity in the region. The meeting, attended by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister of State Gen (Retd) VK Singh, and representatives from northeastern states, acknowledged the progress made in expanding the state's national highway network from 509 km to 914 km over the past nine years. Furthermore, projects for 265 km of roads, valued at Rs 4,607 crore, are in progress to enhance road connectivity in Tripura. CM Manik Saha also urged for the notification of four in-principle national highways. CM Manik Saha also urged for the notification of four in-principle national highways. The Chief Minister assured full cooperation from the state regarding land acquisition.



Godrej initiative puts focus on contemporary Indian Christmas celebrations

Guwahati: Christmas celebrations in Guwahati are changing, and a new campaign by Godrej Vikhroli Cucina is reflecting that shift. Titled "Jingle Bells Unwrapped," the campaign captures how young Indians are creating their own festive moments, far from the picture-perfect scenes seen in films.

Instead of snow-filled streets and large family dinners, many Guwahati resi-

dents celebrate Christmas with flatmates, friends and colleagues. Shared snacks, video calls with family and small rituals now define the season. The new Christmas track, created with Voctronica and featuring Godrej Yummiez, mirrors this reality.

The campaign also includes well-known chefs Amrita Raichand and Ajay Chopra and focuses on how food plays a quiet but important

role in celebrations. A warm snack or a familiar flavour often becomes the emotional centre of the festival.

Godrej says the idea behind the campaign is to show that festivals today are about personal choices and comfort. In a fast-growing city like Guwahati, where lifestyles are increasingly urban and busy, the message connects with young people balancing work, friendships and festive joy.

Doctors walk for stronger bones: Guwahati community inspired by Milind Soman

Guwahati: A pleasant winter morning turned active at Sarusajai Sports Complex on Thursday as orthopaedic specialists participating in IOACON 2025 joined a walkathon led by fitness icon Milind Soman. Organised by Eris Lifesciences, the event urged citizens to view walking as an accessible step toward better joint and spine health.

Residents of Guwahati increasingly face orthopaedic concerns due to long hours at desks, traffic congestion, and reduced physical movement across urban areas like Ganeshguri, G.S. Road commercial hubs and Basistha residential blocks. Doctors said

early warning signs, such as stiffness and ankle pain, should not be ignored. Participants stressed that bone health begins with awareness, not expensive routines. "Walking is simple and can fit into anyone's daily life," Soman told attendees, encouraging consistency over intensity.

Eris Lifesciences representatives added that spreading preventive awareness is key to reducing the risk of chronic mobility problems later in life. The walkathon concluded with a call for families to prioritise morning exercise and for workplaces to support active breaks during office hours.

IndusInd Bank's CSR push gains spotlight after Women's Blind Cricket World Cup triumph

Guwahati: IndusInd Bank's long-term investment in inclusive sports through its CSR initiatives came into focus after it felicitated the Indian Women's Blind Cricket Team for winning the Women's T20 World Cup for the Blind. The bank, in partnership with the Cricket Association for the Blind in India (CABI), hosted a special ceremony in Mumbai to honour

the team and announced a cash reward for the players. The programme highlighted the role of structured corporate support in building competitive sports platforms for the visually impaired. Bank MD and CEO Rajiv Anand said the partnership with CABI reflects IndusInd Bank's commitment to creating an inclusive ecosystem where talent can grow with

confidence. CABI Chairman Dr. Mahantesh Kivadasannavar credited the bank's decade-long support for helping blind cricketers gain recognition, jobs, and financial security. In Guwahati, banking and CSR experts noted that such initiatives strengthen the bank's brand trust while also delivering real social impact. Several organisations working with persons with disabili-

ties in Assam said the success story could attract more private-sector participation in inclusive sports. Under its "IndusInd Bank Cricket for Blind" programme, the bank supports over 700 blind cricketers nationwide by providing training, equipment, accommodation, counselling, and match support, enabling players to compete successfully at international levels.

TVS Apache RTX Wins IMOTY 2026



Guwahati: TVS Motor Company has strengthened its premium motorcycle portfolio with a major win as the newly launched adventure rally tourer, TVS Apache RTX, was crowned Indian Motorcycle of the Year (IMOTY) 2026 presented by JK Tyre. The award is considered among the most prestigious recognitions in India's two-wheeler industry.

Built ground-up on the RT-XD4 platform with rally DNA, the Apache RTX targets a growing segment of premium riders seeking performance and exploration. The motorcycle was evaluated by a 27-member jury comprising senior automotive journalists from top Indian publications. It emerged victorious from a shortlist of seven motorcycles across diverse segments.

Commenting on the achievement, Vimal Sumbly, Head Business – Premium, TVS Motor Company, said the honour validates "the relentless pursuit of performance" backed by decades of racing and rally experience. He added that the rising customer response highlights demand for performance-led rally touring motorcycles built in India for global markets. The recognition coincides with the Apache brand completing 20 years and a 6.5-million-strong global community. Launched in October 2025, the Apache RTX marks TVS Motor's debut in the rally-touring segment, powered by a new 299.1 cc liquid-cooled engine delivering 36 PS and 28.5 Nm along with advanced rider electronics and a rally-inspired chassis.

Hyundai Motor joins ICC partnership

New Delhi: Hyundai Motor Company on Tuesday announced a global partnership with the International Cricket Council (ICC), becoming a premier partner for six prestigious tournaments from 2026 to 2027. As a premier partner, the South Korean automaker secures exclusive rights and opportunities for the ICC's upcoming international cricket.

Bank of India raises Rs 10,000 crore via long-term infra bonds

Mumbai: Bank of India on Tuesday raised funds through issue of long-term infrastructure bonds of Rs. 10,000 crore at 7.23% per annum, it said in a release. The base issue size was Rs 5,000 crore with green shoe option of Rs 5,000 crore. The bank received total of 83 bids amounting to Rs 15,305 crore out of which the bank accepted 37 bids totalling to Rs 10,000 crore. "The funds



raised through long term bonds will be used for funding long term projects in infrastructure sub-sectors and affordable housing in accordance with RBI guidelines. The funds raised by the bank

through this issue is not meant for financing any particular project," the bank said. According to the bank, proceeds from the bond issue will be deployed towards infrastructure sub-sectors and affordable housing projects, in line with Reserve Bank of India guidelines. The funds are not tied to any specific project but will support long-term financing needs in these critical areas.

KFC Launches Epic Feast Year-End

Mumbai: Year-end celebrations just got even more epic, crispy, and finger lickin' good! KFC has brought an EPIC FEAST for year-end festivities with friends & family. Chicken lovers can enjoy their favourites, such as the signature Hot & Crispy chicken, juicy Boneless Chicken Strips, Fries, chilled Pepsi & a selection of flavorful dips, making it the perfect meal for sharing! Priced starting at just ₹1299, the EPIC FEAST offer is now available in the North-East for dine-in and takeaway till 4th January 2026 only. So what are you waiting for? Make your year-end celebrations absolutely epic with

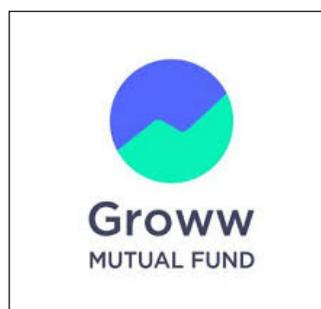


KFC's EPIC FEAST. KFC fans can also pre-order on the KFC app while dining in to skip the wait and get straight to their finger lickin' good food.

Guwahati sees rising interest in Groww Multicap Fund after benchmark outperformance

Guwahati: The Groww Multicap Fund, launched in December 2024, completed one year with 8.01% returns, outperforming its benchmark index, which posted 0.29% returns during the period. The fund's debut year coincided with muted equity performance across indices and heightened volatility triggered by global macro developments. Market data indicated modest gains across larger-cap indices: Nifty 50 returned 4.83% and Nifty 500 rose 0.93%. Midcaps were nearly flat while small-caps corrected

sharply, with the Nifty Smallcap 250 declining 10.99%. Advisors in Guwahati said the multi-cap strategy's diversification acted as a cushion against instability in lower tiers of the market. Investment analysts noted rising demand in Guwahati for funds offering broad-based exposure without requiring investors to constantly



rebalance portfolios. The multi-cap approach, which spans large-, mid- and small-cap equities, aligns with this need. Groww Multicap Fund's portfolio is positioned to benefit from structural shifts in the Indian economy, including infrastructure build-up, rising household consumption, expanding financial services penetration and a revival in private sector capital expenditure. The scheme maintains selective positions in capital goods, auto manufacturers, insurers, banks and NBFCs. The first-year period also witnessed macro drivers such as RBI rate cuts, trade duties on exports and rising geopolitical risks, which placed pressure on market sentiment. Investment consultants in Guwahati said consistent top-quartile placement across multiple observation periods demonstrates disciplined portfolio execution.



Tetley unveils L-Carnitine powered green tea slim care range for New Year wellness push

Guwahati: Tetley has launched a new Slim Care green tea range designed to tap into rising consumer interest in weight management products ahead of the New Year. The green tea blends contain added L-Carnitine, which is known to help reduce body fat when combined with a balanced diet and regular physical activity. The company says switching from regular tea to a daily cup of L-Carnitine-infused green tea may offer a realistic, everyday change to support wellness goals. The Slim Care range combines the natural antioxidants of premium green tea



leaves with L-Carnitine, and comes in two flavours—Lemon & Honey and Ginger Mint Lemon.

The products are available in 25 tea bag packs (MRP ₹195) and 10 tea bag packs

(MRP ₹80). A disclaimer notes that L-Carnitine is only a brand name and does not represent its true nature.

Retailers and distributors in Guwahati expect increased demand for green tea variants

in the January–March period, driven by rising awareness of fitness and mindful consumption among younger buyers. With tea drinking ingrained in Assam’s urban lifestyle, the new Slim Care range could find traction among office-goers and fitness enthusiasts looking for lighter beverage options. The product is now available at Reliance outlets and leading online platforms including Amazon, Blinkit, Zepto, Swiggy and Bigbasket, positioning Tetley to benefit from growing e-commerce adoption in health-focused beverage categories.

ITC’s Sunfeast expands portfolio with Mom’s Magic Ghee Roasted Nuts cookies

Guwahati: ITC Ltd has expanded its Sunfeast Mom’s Magic biscuits portfolio with the nationwide launch of Ghee Roasted Nuts cookies, targeting premium biscuit consumers and festive-season demand. Announced on December 15, 2025, the new variant blends cashews and almonds roasted in ghee, aiming to recreate the aroma and comfort linked to traditional Indian kitchens.

Backed by a TV commercial conceptualized by Ogilvy, the campaign highlights nostalgia-led consumption. The ad shows hostel roommates unwinding after a long day, where one bite transports a consumer back to memories of her mother roasting nuts



Sunfeast Mom’s Magic presents the nostalgic taste of Ghee-Roasted Nuts in its latest ad campaign.

in ghee. The TVC reinforces the emotional pitch with the line, “Maa ki yaad kaise nahi aayegi — ghee-roasted nuts waale Sunfeast Mom’s Magic Cookies.” Commenting on the launch, Kavita Chaturvedi, BU Chief Executive,

Biscuits & Confections, ITC Foods Division, said the product is crafted “just the way moms do,” unlocking familiar warmth and fuller flavour. Ogilvy South Chief Creative Officer Puneet Kapoor added that the creative insight came from how taste triggers memory structures associated with maternal love. In Guwahati, distributors expect demand from urban families and working professionals seeking indulgent yet familiar flavours. Retailers anticipate higher sales traction in winter months, supported by rising consumption of premium packaged foods in the Northeast. The product will be available across physical retail outlets and e-commerce platforms pan-India.

HDFC Life Report Flags Retirement Planning Gap

Shillong: Retirement planning continues to be the biggest financial concern for urban Indians, according to HDFC Life’s ‘Ready for Life’ Index 2025, which points to a sharp mismatch between awareness and actual financial action. The study reveals a 37-point gap between confidence and preparedness when it comes to retirement. Nearly half of urban respondents have not started saving for retirement, while many believe a corpus of ₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore will be sufficient — an estimate experts say may fall short due to inflation and rising living costs. For eastern cities such as Shillong, the report shows a more realistic self-assessment compared to other regions, but also highlights a continued reliance on

traditional savings options like fixed deposits, gold, and endowment insurance plans. Modern protection products such as term insurance and retirement-focused plans remain underused. The study also notes that while health awareness is improving with many people undergoing regular check-ups insurance coverage levels remain low. Emergency savings also remain limited for a large section of households.

HDFC Life said the findings stress the need to shift from family-dependent financial security to independent, long-term planning. The report aims to spark conversations on building structured financial protection across cities and income groups, including emerging markets like Shillong.

Union Bank slashes loan interest rates

Mumbai: Union Bank of India has announced a significant reduction in interest rates on select retail loan products. Effective December 18, 2025, the move makes home loans, vehicle loans, and personal loans more affordable for customers. The bank is among the first in the sector to respond to recent monetary easing by the Reserve Bank of India. Under the new structure, home loan interest rates have been cut by



30 basis points and now start at 7.15 percent per annum, down from 7.45 percent earlier. Vehicle loans have seen a reduction of 40 basis points, now starting at 7.50 percent per annum instead of 7.90 percent.

ICICI Prudential Life announces launch of sector leaders Index Fund under its ULIP portfolio

Imphal: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Limited today announced the launch of the ICICI Pru Sector Leaders Index Fund, expanding its Unit Linked Insurance Plan (ULIP) offerings. The new fund seeks to



provide customers exposure to leading companies across more than 20 key sectors of the Indian economy, offering a rule-based, passive investment route to long-term wealth creation. The fund tracks the BSE India Sector Leaders Index and will invest 95–100% of assets in index constituents, with up to 5% allocated to debt and money market instruments to meet liquidity needs mandated by regulation. The minimum investment amount is ₹1,000 with reinvestment of dividends to enhance fund value over time. ICICI Prudential Life noted that regulatory re-

strictions could lead to tracking error in matching index weights. The launch aligns with the insurer’s silver jubilee milestone. In Imphal, the introduction of a passive equity fund within ULIPs may appeal to retail policyholders seeking diversified exposure without active stock

selection. With rising awareness of structured investment vehicles among middle-income households, regional distributors expect interest from long-horizon investors amid sector-driven market volatility. Chief Investment Officer Manish Kumar said the fund is designed to provide clarity, discipline and consistency, enabling investors to leverage India’s growth potential. The fund is available under select ULIPs including Signature Assure, SmartKid Assure and SIP+, with product details accessible at www.icicprulife.com.

Blenders Pride Fashion Tour Finale Elevates Premium Craft Market

New Delhi: The Blenders Pride Fashion Tour concluded its latest edition in Kolkata, unveiling a disruptive craft-forward fashion narrative positioned as a premium lifestyle and brand value driver. Set against the Howrah Bridge, the finale turned the Hooghly River into a floating runway, with designer Anamika Khanna’s AK|OK label presenting an experimental collection and actor Ishaan Khatter as showstopper. The showcase, hosted in collaboration with the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI), spotlighted craft as a dynamic and evolving economic force in India’s growing luxury and experiential fashion ecosystem. The barge-stage presentation used lasers, scaffolding and light installations to am-



plify movement and energy, culminating in Khatter’s dramatic arrival by speedboat. The Bengal Paddle vessel hosted guests, featuring a Rivierine Museum that served as a curated cultural backdrop, adding experiential value to the showcase. The emphasis on premium craftsmanship aligns with Pernod Ricard India’s strategy of positioning Blenders Pride as a lifestyle

brand associated with culture, creativity and aspiration. Debasree Dasgupta, CMO Pernod Ricard India, said the finale demonstrated how “Future is Crafted,” merging heritage and innovation. Designer Anamika Khanna called the reinterpretation of craft exhilarating, while FDCI Chairman Sunil Sethi said the collaboration signalled the next pace for Indian fashion.



Nissan's all-new game-changing 7-seater B-MPV will be called GRAVITE and will be launched in early 2026

Gurugram: Nissan's all-new game-changing seven-seater B-MPV will be called GRAVITE and will be launched in early 2026. It is the first product to be rolled out under the brand's refreshed and strategically curated line-up for India. Purpose-built for modern Indian families, the GRAVITE delivers exceptional versatility and modularity, redefining convenience for value-conscious households while accelerating the expansion of Nissan's revitalized product portfolio. Announced in July 2024 as the second model in Nissan Motor India's ambitious product offensive, the GRAVITE underscores the company's forward momentum. The product roadmap includes the launch of the GRAVITE in early 2026, followed by the Tekton in mid-2026 and a 7-seater C-SUV in early 2027—reaffirming Nissan's deep and ongoing commitment to diversifying, strengthening, and revitalising its offering for Indian customers. The name "GRAVITE" draws inspiration from the word gravity, signifying balance, inherent stability, and



powerful attraction. Inspired by 1.4 billion Indians and the 19,000 vernaculars and rituals that form the foundation of the nation, the GRAVITE is the perfect companion for the aspirational and versatile Indian. Set for its grand debut in early 2026, the All-New GRAVITE will be manufactured locally in Chennai. Its signature C-shaped front grille—a defining element of Nissan's DNA—ensures instant recognition and a bold on-road presence. The GRAVITE is the only vehicle in its segment to feature distinctive hood branding along with unique rear-door badging—a bold design choice that powerfully amplifies its exclusive identity. Massimiliano Messina, Chairperson, Nissan AMIEO (Af-

rica, Middle East, India, Europe & Oceania), commented: "The reveal of the GRAVITE demonstrates our continued momentum and reinforces our confidence in the road ahead." Saurabh Vatsa, Managing Director, Nissan Motor India, stated: "As the second model in our all-new product line-up, the GRAVITE marks a pivotal step in our transformation journey and reinforces our commitment to delivering vehicles that resonate with the aspirations of Indian consumers." To support this growth, Nissan is fast-tracking the expansion of its nationwide dealership network, ensuring greater accessibility and enhanced customer experience across the country. Please visit www.nissan.in for more information.

Guwahati homes turn to California Almonds for balanced festive eating

Guwahati: Families in Guwahati preparing for Christmas celebrations are increasingly exploring healthier festive cooking and gifting options, with California Almonds promoting the seasonal benefits of almonds for heart health, energy and satiety. The brand said almonds are nutritionally rich, especially during a month filled with social events, travel and indulgent meals. Retail bakers and dessert makers in Guwahati reported rising demand for almonds, as more households add them to homemade cakes, sweets and gifting boxes. Almond-based treats continue to gain popularity among younger consumers who prioritise mindful festive eating without compromising flavour. The release noted that almonds work well across breakfast dishes, baked items and festive desserts due to their versatility and texture. Health experts quoted said eating almonds regularly can help balance festive diets by supporting appetite control and stable energy release throughout the day. Actor Soha Ali Khan shared that almonds are a staple in her family celebrations, providing a blend of indulgence and nourishment. Nutritionists added that almonds may help maintain cholesterol balance and prevent blood sugar spikes, making them a supportive ingredient during holiday feasts. Experts highlighted Ayurvedic guidance linking almonds to enhanced vitality, internal warmth and skin health during winter. Local wellness consultants in Guwahati said



almonds fit well in regional gifting traditions that value meaningful and wholesome offerings.

Truecaller bets big on AI voicemail in India; free device-native service targets spam economy

Guwahati: Truecaller has announced the launch of a free AI-powered voicemail service for Android users in India, positioning the feature as a strategic move to deepen user engagement and strengthen its anti-spam ecosystem. The company said the voicemail will be device-native, with messages stored locally to ensure privacy and user control. The voicemail includes instant AI transcription, smart call categorisation, spam filtering, adjustable playback speed and automatic scam protection. Users can set up unlimited voicemail within the Truecaller app without dialing voicemail numbers or remembering PINs. Transcriptions will be available in 12 Indian languages including Hindi, Bengali, Marathi,



Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Gujarati, Nepali, Punjabi, Sanskrit and Urdu enabling discreet reading of messages when listening is inconvenient. "With Truecaller Voicemail, we are fundamentally rethinking how voice messages fit into everyday life," said Truecaller CEO Rishit Jhunjhunwala, calling it a step toward a more intuitive and trustworthy communication experience. In the Guwahati telecom and smart-

phone market, analysts expect the feature to gain traction amid rising concerns over spam calls and digital fraud. With increasing smartphone penetration and a growing young workforce, local businesses and users in the Northeast rely heavily on mobile communication, creating strong demand for privacy-focused calling features and multilingual accessibility. Industry observers say the move reinforces Truecaller's role as a daily-use communication platform and signals intensified competition in India's anti-fraud solutions space.

STIHL India strengthens Northeast farm equipment sector with Itanagar finale

Itanagar: STIHL India has reinforced its focus on the Northeast farm equipment market by concluding its West-to-East "Parivartan Yatra" with a grand ceremony in Itanagar. The nationwide initiative, which travelled more than 15,000 kilometres across nine states, connected with over 10,000 farmers and showcased mechanised solutions aimed at improving efficiency and reducing dependence on manual labour. The programme featured live demonstrations and direct engagement with farming communities. Company executives present at the Itanagar event said the Northeast, including Arunachal Pradesh, is a key growth area due to its unique agricultural needs. Mechanisation, they



noted, can help farmers handle challenging terrain while improving output and saving time. The yatra also helped strengthen STIHL India's dealer outreach and brand presence in the eastern region. By engaging directly with farmers in places like Itanagar, the company gained insights into local requirements and usage patterns. STIHL India, a sub-

sidiary of the global STIHL Group, said its long-term strategy includes expanding farmer-centric initiatives and building strong regional networks. The successful conclusion of the Parivartan Yatra in Itanagar underlines the company's commitment to supporting agricultural growth while tapping emerging markets in the Northeast.

India's creator economy to shape \$1 trillion consumer spending by 2030

New Delhi: At least 2-2.5 million monetised digital creators in India now influence more than 30 per cent of consumer purchase decisions, a report showed on Tuesday. This fast-scaling creator economy is already shaping an estimated \$350-\$400 billion worth annu-

al consumer spending, and is projected to drive over \$1 trillion in creator-influenced consumption by 2030, according to the report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG). The creator-led commerce has moved from the margins of "influencer campaigns" to the centre of

how Indians discover, evaluate, and buy products across categories from fashion and beauty to electronics and everyday essentials. More than 60 per cent of consumers surveyed report regular exposure to creator content, and over 30 per cent explicitly attribute their



purchase decisions to creators

they follow, underscoring the shift from traditional top-down advertising to trust-based, community-driven discovery, said the report. "India's creator economy has crossed the tipping point — 2-2.5 million creators now shape more than 30 per cent of purchase deci-

sions and influence 350-400 billion dollars of annual spending. For Indian marketers, this is not a side bet anymore; it is a structural shift in how brands are built and how growth will be unlocked over the next decade," said Parul Bajaj, India Leader-Marketing.



Britannia NutriChoice taps Aamir Khan, expands millet portfolio with new Apple Cinnamon cookies

New Delhi: Britannia NutriChoice, one of India's leading biscuit brands, announced a new campaign urging consumers to recognise how one good choice can make the next one easier. Bollywood actor Aamir Khan joins as the face of the campaign, adding humour and relatability to everyday decisions such as skipping sugar in tea. The TVCs – featuring NutriChoice Digestive, NutriChoice 100% Millets, and NutriChoice Oats & Millets – have been conceptualised by Lowe Lintas.



The brand is also expanding its portfolio with the launch of 100% Millets Apple Cinnamon flavoured cookies*,

made with millet flour led by jowar, and containing foxtail and ragi millets. The product contains no added sugar, no

palm oil, and no maida, aligning with its promise of better snacking. The 100g pack is priced at ₹55 and will be available across modern trade and leading quick-commerce platforms in key metros.

Siddharth Gupta, General Manager – Marketing, Britannia Industries, said the idea reflects how small mindful choices can influence broader behaviour. Prateek Bhardwaj, CCO, Lowe Lintas, noted that the campaign aims to encourage consumers to take simple, healthier actions.

Vi, Niyo launch zero-forex cards in 24hrs



Mumbai: Telecom operator Vodafone Idea (Vi) has expanded its international travel offerings by partnering with fintech Niyo to provide Zero Markup Forex Cards for customers travelling abroad this holiday season. Vi said the partnership is the first of its kind by a telecom company and will allow users travelling for holidays, business or higher education to get Niyo Forex Cards delivered to their doorstep within 24 hours.

The move strengthens Vi's travel portfolio, which currently includes Truly Unlimited International Roaming (IR) packs, discounted IR packs for families travelling together, lounge access, travel insurance and baggage protection. Customers can apply for the Niyo card through the Vi app. A Niyo executive will visit for KYC verification, card setup and a trial transaction. Users can check service availability by entering their name and PIN code. Locations outside Niyo Express delivery can activate the card digitally via the Niyo app.

As an introductory offer, Niyo Premium worth ₹999

per year will be free for Vi customers. Benefits include estimated annual travel savings of ₹10,000, zero convenience fees on visa and flight bookings, 10% off international hotels, one free airport lounge access and one free ATM withdrawal every quarter. The Niyo Forex Card, accepted in over 180 countries, processes transactions at base exchange rates, helping users avoid the usual 3–5% mark-up.

The initiative aligns with Vi's focus on strengthening its international roaming proposition, following recent discounts for secondary members on Family Postpaid plans, travel insurance coverage of ₹40 lakh with Aditya Birla Health Insurance for ₹285 with IR packs, and delayed or lost baggage protection through Blue Ribbon Bags with compensation up to ₹19,800 per bag for ₹99. Vi said the partnership builds an end-to-end travel experience offering seamless connectivity, smarter spending and dependable protection for customers from departure to return.

Aditya Birla unveils Vision Retirement

Guwahati: Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance Company Limited (ABSLI), the life insurance arm of Aditya Birla Capital, announced the launch of its ABSLI Vision Retirement Solution—an integrated retirement offering combining guaranteed annuity payouts and equity-linked income potential designed to provide financial security until age 100. The solution merges ABSLI Guaranteed Annuity Plus, a non-linked non-participating general annuity plan promising lifelong guaranteed payouts, with ABSLI Wealth Infinia Plan, a linked non-participating individual life insurance savings plan offering market exposure aimed at beating inflation. Customers can choose premium allocation ratios of 60:40 or 50:50 between guaranteed and market-linked components and select annual, semi-annual, quarterly or monthly payout frequency. A death benefit allows legacy transfer to the next generation. In Guwahati, shifting retirement expectations, and declining dependence on family support are driving growing demand for blended retirement products with predictable income and investment-led upside. Insurance distributors in the city expect the premium entry point of ₹1 lakh to attract both mass affluent and emerging middle-class customers preparing for post-retirement income stability, especially amid fluctuating capital markets. ABSLI's Vision Retirement empowers 40–65 retirees with flexible premiums, balancing guaranteed, market-linked lifelong income.

SSAHE, upGrad forge strategic tech partnership to build industry-ready engineers

Mumbai: Karnataka's Deemed-to-be-University Sri Siddhartha Academy of Higher Education (SSAHE) has partnered with upGrad School of Technology to embed an industry-aligned School of Technology within its existing engineering programmes. The initiative will provide curriculum advisory services and deeper industry integration for India's computer engineering aspirants. Led by CEO Vishwa Mohan and Chief Revenue & Outcome Officer Mehu-IKhandhedha, upGrad School of Technology will introduce AI-first learning technology, personalised pathways, real-time skill progress tracking, build sprints, research exposure and continuous specialisations from Day 1. Students will gain practitioner-led modules across Quantum Computing, AI, ML, Robotics and Full Stack Engineering, with extensive coding practice, project-based learning and structured industry-linked



opportunities. SSAHE Chancellor and Karnataka Home Minister Dr. G. Parameshwara said the partnership marks a transformative moment toward global-standard, innovation-driven education. Advisor Dr. Vivek Veeraiah added that students will graduate as future-ready technologists.

The initiative will provide access to prototyping labs, seed-support channels and masterclasses by global founders and CTOs. Students can expect three tangible outcomes:

opportunities with global tech companies; structured startup support with funding access; and a 360-degree deep-tech research ecosystem.

Phase 1 targets South India before scaling nationally. Concluding the announcement, Ronnie Screwvala said the partnership lays the foundation for India's next generation of innovators and job creators. The inauguration will be held in Bengaluru on December 20. More details available at sot.upgrad.com.

MSDE, Wadhvani Foundation sign MoU to boost life and employability skills for girls under Project NAVYA

Guwahati: In a major step to strengthen future-ready skilling among adolescent girls, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Wadhvani Foundation to deliver comprehensive employability and life-skills modules under Project NAVYA. The programme is jointly implemented by MSDE and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD). The collaboration intends to widen the scope of vocational skilling



by integrating financial literacy, workplace safety and productivity tools into the curriculum. As part of the partnership, the Wadhvani Foundation has developed a common holistic de-

velopment module that will be provided free of cost to all NAVYA beneficiaries. Debashree Mukherjee, Secretary, MSDE, said the initiative reinforces the ministry's goal of empowering

young girls with confidence and capabilities for meaningful economic participation. "By integrating life skills, workplace safety and productivity into the learning journey, we are equipping adolescent girls to succeed," she said. In Guwahati, experts believe the initiative could expand the talent pool for the retail, MSME and services sectors, which are witnessing demand for digitally capable and workplace-aware women employees. Assam girls gain employability, entrepreneurship via 10-hour skills programme.

Tata Motors hits 2.5L EVs

Mumbai: Tata Motors on Tuesday announced that it has crossed a major milestone in India's electric vehicle journey, with more than 2.5 lakh TATA.ev cars now running on Indian roads. The achievement underlines the company's strong leadership in the country's fast-growing electric passenger vehicle market. The milestone comes at a time when electric vehicles are becoming a common choice for Indian consumers, moving beyond early adopters to mainstream buyers.

Organic India pushes health-first festive foods with sugar-free plum cake recipe for Christmas

Guwahati: As part of its festive season outreach, Organic India has introduced a Christmas-themed recipe aimed at promoting healthier indulgence among consumers. The company has shared an eggless plum cake recipe that replaces refined sugar with Organic India Jaggery powder, positioning it as a natural and wholesome alternative for festive desserts. The recipe has been developed by Deepak Gore, who has previously worked with leading food companies such as Venky's India Pvt Ltd and Godrej Tyson Foods Ltd. The formulation uses classic baking ingredients including all-purpose flour, dried fruits



soaked in orange juice, mixed nuts, butter or oil, warming spices like cinnamon and nutmeg, and jaggery powder for sweetness. The company said the recipe aligns with its focus on conscious living, food

safety, and authentic flavours during festive occasions.

Organic India stated that the initiative reflects a broader shift in consumer preferences towards clean-label products and traditional sweeteners, par-

ticularly during high-consumption periods such as Christmas. The use of jaggery instead of sugar is positioned as both a nutritional and cultural choice. In Guwahati, demand for organic jaggery, dry fruits, and home-baking ingredients has been steadily rising ahead of Christmas. Retailers note increased interest from urban households seeking healthier festive options, indicating growing acceptance of sugar-free and naturally sweetened products in the city's evolving food and wellness market. The company expects such initiatives to strengthen its connect with health-conscious festive consumers across India.

HMEL to invest ₹2,600 crore

New Delhi: HPCL Mittal Energy Ltd (HMEL) plans to invest Rs 2,600 crore in its Bathinda refinery for setting up polypropylene downstream industries and new fine chemical projects, the company said on Tuesday. Apart from producing fuels such as petrol, diesel and gas, HMEL is planning to expand industrial activities through fine chemical projects in Bathinda, said Prabh Das, managing director and chief executive officer at HMEL.

Organic India marks Kisan Diwas, celebrates 20-year farmer partnership

Guwahati: Organic India, a brand under Tata Consumer Products Limited, marked Kisan Diwas by honouring the farming communities that have played a central role in building its organic agriculture network over the past two decades.

The company said it has partnered with more than 2,000 organic farmers across different regions of the country, creating a system based on long-term trust, fair engagement and shared growth. These farmers are involved

at every stage of cultivation, from soil preparation to the harvesting of herbs and grains, following organic and regenerative farming practices. Organic India noted that its Kisan Diwas observance is a continuation of its earlier "Hands That Nurture Nature" initiative, which aimed to highlight farmers as key contributors rather than suppliers. According to the company, each product reaching consumers reflects the collective effort, traditional knowledge and resilience of farming

families who have worked with the brand for generations. The company described farmers as custodians of soil health and biodiversity, adding that their role is critical to promoting sustainable and conscious living. Looking ahead, Organic India said it will continue to invest in strengthening its farmer ecosystem, supporting them as entrepreneurs and innovators in organic cultivation while contributing to the growth of regenerative agriculture in India.

Gujarat tops again, 1,543 startups funded

Ahmedabad: A total of 1,543 startups have received financial assistance from the Gujarat government in the last four years under the Student Startup and Innovation Policy (SSIP 2.0), officials said. With several initiatives, Gujarat has emerged as a leading hub of entrepreneurship, securing the top position in the Startup Ranking for the fourth consecutive time. The state has been recognised as the country's Best-Performer State, with around 16,700 startups currently operating across Gujarat, according to an official release. To build a strong foundation for innovation among youth, the state government had announced the five-year SSIP 2.0 policy from 2022 to 2027. Under

SSIP, appropriate guidance, encouragement, and financial support are provided to students from the school level to higher education for nurturing creativity and innovation.

The Gujarat Startup and Innovation Hub (i-Hub) was inaugurated under the SSIP policy in 2023 by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel. The i-Hub is the largest facility in Gujarat dedicated to innovation and entrepreneurship, offering comprehensive support through a single-window system that guides in legal, financial, technical, and operational matters, the release stated. This facility supports early-stage innovators and startups in transforming ideas into successful enterprises, it said.

Nifty Metal extends rally, NMDC-Tata surge

Mumbai: Metal stocks continued to shine on December 23 as the Nifty Metal index closed higher for the fifth consecutive trading session. The index gained 0.54 per cent, or 58.05 points, during the day. Over the past five sessions, the index has risen by nearly 1.93 per cent. Out of the 15 stocks in the index, 13 were trading in the green, showing broad-based buying interest. NMDC emerged as the top performer in the metal pack, rising over 4.28 per cent. Other metal stocks such as Lloyds Metals and SAIL also gained more than 2 per cent. Shares of Hindustan Copper, Jindal Steel, Tata Steel, Welspun Corp and Hindustan Zinc were up by over 1 per cent, adding strength to the overall index. One of the main reasons behind the continued rally is the expectation of interest rate cuts in the United States.

Indian Rupee Starts Week Lower at 89.73 Against US Dollar

Mumbai: The rupee fell 5 paise to 89.73 against the US dollar in early trade on Tuesday amid FII outflows and a weak opening in the domestic equity markets.

However, a weaker greenback and a drop in global crude oil prices prevented sharper losses in the local unit, according to forex traders. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 89.67 against the dollar but lost ground to trade at 89.73, down 5 paise from its previous close. The rupee on Monday pared initial gains to settle slightly down by 1 paise at 89.68 against the US dollar, as the support from positive domestic equities was negated



by a recovery in crude oil prices. "The rupee remains in the range of 89-90 broadly and 89.30-80 a bit narrowly. US weekly employment figures, GDP, consumer confidence data and PCE price index data will be looked into before the Christmas holidays," Anil Kumar Bhanjali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP, said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.20 per cent lower at 98.08. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.12 per cent lower at US\$ 61.99 per barrel in futures trade.

Tata Coffee Grand expands portfolio, blends legacy with innovation in instant coffee segment

Guwahati: Tata Coffee Grand is strengthening its position in India's competitive coffee market by combining its long-standing heritage with product-led innovation. Backed by decades of expertise from the House of Tata, the brand continues to focus on delivering a rich and aromatic coffee experience to consumers across the country. At the core of Tata Coffee Grand's offering is its distinctive blend of fine coffee powder and flavour-locked decoction crystals. This first-of-its-kind formulation is designed to preserve the natural richness and freshness of coffee, closely replicating the taste and aroma of freshly brewed



cups. The innovation reflects the company's strategy to address evolving consumer preferences while maintaining trusted quality standards. In a move

to widen its consumer base, Tata Coffee Grand has expanded beyond instant coffee into the Roast & Ground filter coffee category. This addition allows the brand to cater to traditional coffee drinkers, particularly in southern India, where filter coffee remains deeply rooted in daily consumption habits. The brand's growing portfolio underlines its intent to serve diverse coffee preferences across formats. Tata Coffee Grand is priced at ₹270 for a 90-gram pack and is available through general trade, modern trade, e-commerce and quick-commerce channels, ensuring broad market reach and convenient access for consumers nationwide.

Ujjivan Bank reports 2025 growth on secured lending, deposits

Agartala: Ujjivan Small Finance Bank reported a strong performance through calendar year 2025, aided by a favourable economic environment, improved liquidity conditions and disciplined

execution of its diversified retail strategy. The bank recorded broad-based growth led by steady expansion in secured lending portfolios, consistent deposit mobilisation and continued improvements

in digital and operational efficiency. Growth was seen across secured segments including Affordable Housing, Micro-Mortgages, MSME, Gold Loans, Vehicle Finance and Agri-Banking. The ex-

pansion was supported by stronger distribution, deeper penetration in emerging markets, improved customer segmentation and effective cross-sell, helping maintain a balanced asset mix.

Alexander Isak out indefinitely following ankle, fibula surgery



MANCHESTER: Liverpool striker Alexander Isak will be sidelined indefinitely after undergoing surgery on Monday on a broken ankle and fibula. The British record \$170 million signing was injured in a tackle while scoring the opening goal in Saturday's 2-1 win against Tottenham in the Premier League and limped off.

Isak's absence will not only impact Liverpool's campaign but possibly Sweden's chances of qualifying for the World Cup. Sweden is in the European playoffs in March when it faces Ukraine in the semifinals. "After diagnosis, an operation was completed today on

an ankle injury that included a fibula fracture," Liverpool said in a statement. "Isak's rehabilitation will now continue at the AXA Training Centre, with no timeframe yet placed on his return. Isak's injury is the latest blow in what has been a troubled season for the 26-year-old forward.

A protracted move from Newcastle in the summer meant he eventually arrived at Liverpool in September having not had a full preseason to prepare for the new campaign. He was gradually eased into Arne Slot's team as he regained full sharpness but then a groin injury kept him out of the Liver-

pool lineup for another month. In all, he has made just 10 starts for the Premier League champion and scored three goals. Slot is already without Mohamed Salah, who is at the Africa Cup of Nations and will have to hope Hugo Ekitike can carry the goal-scoring burden in the meantime. The France international, who was another new recruit this season, has 11 goals so far for his new club, including one against Tottenham. He has scored five in his last three league games and has the chance to establish himself at the point of Liverpool's attack.

Liverpool is on a six-game unbeaten streak after the Merseyside club's title defense unraveled from September to the end of November. A remarkable run saw Slot's team lose six out of seven games in the league and tumble down the standings. But after back-to-back wins against Brighton and Tottenham it is up to fifth and level on points with Chelsea in fourth, scoring burden in the meantime of Liverpool's attack.

WTL 2025 gives Indian players global exposure

BENGALURU: 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 of the imminent new season. Apart from the former world No 1 and current No 13 Medvedev, the Indian players are clubbed with world No 23



Denis Shapovalov and No 67 Gael Monfils. Another notable name in the competition is of the temperamental Nick Kyrgios, who is currently ranked 652 in the ATP list. But that's largely because he missed major parts of 2023 and 2024 due to an injury and a subsequent surgery, and his appearances this year too have been very limited.

It will be interesting to see how his ravaged body stands up to the challenge, particularly when he has expressed his desire to play in the Australian Open 2026, his home Grand Slam. If the Aussie can revive some of his sublime shot-making skills, then it will be a treat for fans here. Among the women's names, world No 14 Elina Svitolina, No 25 Paula Badosa, a regular in Grand Slams, and No 26 Marta Kostyuk, two men and two women players each.

Olympic Bronze Appeal

LAUSANNE: American gymnast Jordan Chiles is asking Switzerland's Supreme Court to overturn a ruling by the Court of Arbitration for Sport that stripped Chiles of a bronze medal in floor exercise at the 2024 Olympics. Chiles, with the support of the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee and USA Gymnastics, filed the appeal on Monday, a little over a month after CAS voided an on-floor appeal by Chiles' coach Cecile Landi during the event finals on August 5 that vaulted Chiles from fifth to third. The International Gymnastics Federation complied and the International Olympic Committee ended up awarding bronze to Romanian Ana Barbosu on August 16. Gharaivi, president of the CAS panel, has a conflict of interest due to past legal ties to Romania. The continued pursuit of justice for Jordan Landi called for an inquiry Chiles' score.

Van Doren backs India contenders



NEW DELHI: Belgium defender Arthur Van Doren believes India are strong title contenders in next year's men's hockey World Cup, saying it is "impossible to ignore" the Men in Blue for their consistency over the last few years. India's performance at major tournaments, including successive Olympic medals, have firmly established them among the elite. "It's impossible not to consider them as big contenders," Van Doren told PTI Videos. "They've shown results for a long time now, with two Olympic cycles where they ended up medallists. Ignoring India when talking about the World Cup would not be fair anymore."

The Belgian stalwart, who has close to 300 international caps, praised the balance in the Indian team. "They've got quality in pretty much ev-

ery line. They've got a good coach, quality experience figures and quality youth," he said, adding that the team's overall structure now allows them to compete consistently with the best. Van Doren noted that India's resurgence has not happened overnight, but is the result of sustained planning and exposure system. "What you see now is not a coincidence. They've been building for years, and the results are showing."

However, he also pointed out that the race for the World Cup title is expected to be extremely tight. "The only problem teams like India, Belgium faces is that there are five or six or seven more teams that are just as confident as we are," he said. "That's the beauty of international hockey at this moment it's very close at the top." Van Doren also had high praise for Indian players' technical ability, especially the younger generation coming through the ranks. International caps, praised the balance team. building for years, and the results are showing" sustained planning and esystem.

England cricketers' Ashes drinking habits investigated by touring team official

MELBOURNE: England's managing director of men's cricket Rob Key says he will investigate the drinking habits of the England team following reports that their mid-Ashes beach resort break may have involved over-indulging of alcohol. England lost each of the first three tests to allow Australia to retain the Ashes in just 11 days of on-field action. The England squad visited the resort town of Noosa on the Sunshine Coast north of Brisbane between the second and third tests, a long-planned part of the itinerary designed to help players relax and unwind on the long tour.

Key, who did not join the players in Noosa, said he had no problem with the break, but would not be happy if he found evidence of over-indulging. "If there's things where people are saying that our players went out and drank excessively, then of course we'll be looking into that," he said Tuesday in Melbourne, where the fourth test begins Friday. "Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol for an international cricket team is not



something that I'd expect to see at any stage and it would be a fault not to look into what happened there. From everything that I've heard so far, they actually were pretty well behaved. Very well behaved." He added: "We've got enough ways of finding out exactly what happened and everything that I've heard so far that they sat down, had lunch, had dinner, didn't go out late, all of that, had the odd drink. I don't mind that. If it goes past that, then that's an issue as far as I'm concerned."

Key also said he had previously looked into reports that players had been spotted drinking the night before a match in New Zealand shortly

before the Ashes. A short clip of white-ball captain Harry Brook and Jacob Bethell was shared by a member of the public on social media, said to have been taken while they were out in Wellington before the third one-day international on Nov. 1. "I didn't feel like that was worthy of formal warnings, but it was probably worthy of informal ones," he said. "I think that was a bit of a wake-up call actually for what they're going into. I don't mind players having a glass of wine over dinner. Anything more than that, I think is ridiculous, really."

England cricket's managing director Rob Key has confirmed an investigation into re-

ports of excessive drinking by players during the Ashes tour. Allegations surfaced that several cricketers indulged heavily during a mid-series break in Noosa, raising concerns about discipline and team culture. - Media reports claim some England players were drinking for up to six consecutive days during their holiday in Noosa, Queensland. - Rob Key, England's managing director of men's cricket, said he will probe the matter, stressing that while breaks are acceptable, over-indulgence is not England lost the first three Tests in just 11 days, allowing Australia to retain the Ashes early. - The team's poor performance has intensified scrutiny of off-field behavior. Excessive drinking allegations highlight concerns about England's team culture and preparation during high-stakes tours. -up call actually for what they're going into. I don't mind players having a glass of wine over dinner. Anything more than that, I think is ridiculous, really." New Zealand shortly before the Ashes. that, I think is ridiculous, really."