

Assam: Gogoi Denounces Arson at Iconic Molai Kathoni Forest



GUWAHATI, DEC 30: Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi on Monday condemned the arson attack at Molai Kathoni, the forest developed by environmentalist Jadav Payeng and his daughter Mumuni Payeng, calling for a thorough investigation into the incident. In a statement, Gogoi termed the fire a serious and condemnable act and questioned how such an incident could occur at an ecologically sensitive site. He said the incident should not be treated as an ordinary crime and raised concerns over reported links to illegal sand mining activities in the area. Referring to allegations of a sand mafia nexus, Gogoi said there were reports that the Forest Department had approved sand mining in nearby riverine areas despite oppo-

sition from Payeng. He demanded an immediate review of such approvals and sought cancellation of licences, citing potential environmental risks.

Gogoi also urged the government to conduct a detailed inquiry, identify those responsible, ensure arrests, and take action to curb illegal sand mining operations.

Meanwhile, NSUI state president Kaushik Kashyap met Jadav Payeng and said there were concerns over threats to his life. In a press statement, Kashyap alleged that the forest was set on fire during Payeng's absence and said the incident posed a risk to the ecological balance of the region. Kashyap stated that the student community stood in support of Payeng and called on the government to ensure his security and the protection of the forest.

Amit Shah's Twin Vows: No More Corruption or Infiltration in Bengal

"Identify and Expel": Shah Vows to Drive Out Infiltrators from Bengal

KOLKATA, DEC 30: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday the people of West Bengal to give the BJP a chance to govern the state, asserting that the party would replace "fear, corruption, and misgovernance" with good governance. Shah, while addressing a press conference in Kolkata on the second day of his three-day-long visit to Bengal, confidently claimed that the BJP would form the government in the state in 2026.

Shah also came down heavily on the state Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee, national general secretary of the ruling party in the state, for their appeasement politics.

The Mamata Banerjee government in Bengal was abetting infiltration of Bangladeshis, which has "dangerously altered" the state's demography over the past few years," Shah alleged. "We will not only identify infiltrators, but we'll also drive them out. Bengal will have a new BJP government after April 15, 2026, as people have made up their minds," he said. The Union Minister said the numbers favoured the saffron party. "BJP had 17 per cent vote share in 2014 Lok Sabha elections in Bengal and it came down to 10 per cent in 2016 Assembly polls in the state," Shah told reporters during the press conference. "In 2021 Assembly elections we had won 77 seats with



38 per cent votes. In the last Lok Sabha elections held in 2024 we had bagged 12 seats and vote share was 39 percent in the state. So, this consistency in term of winning seats in both parliamentary and assembly polls as well as growing vote share show that we will form government in Bengal next year," Shah said.

When asked about the allegations of corruption charges brought against the Trinamool Congress government, he slammed Mamata saying, "Hard cash in crores of rupees have been recovered a minister's house. Trinamool leaders like Partha Chatterjee, Anubrata Mondal, Jeebonkrishna Saha, Kunal Ghosh and others have been sent jails and how can one claim that there is no corruption in the state."

Targeting Abhishek he alleged, "In Bengal, Bhaipo (Mamata's nephew) has

absolute monopoly to earn crores through cut-money. No other person has such rights of earning money." "Trinamool Government has ruined industries in the state," he alleged saying, "Form BJP government in the state this time under the leadership of Modiji. You have voted Congress to power, CPI-M for 34 years and lastly Mamataji for 15 years in the state. Now, vote for us and we will build 'sonar Bangla' if BJP comes to power in Bengal," he added.

Political observers felt that Shah's allegations against Mamata Banerjee government on Bangladeshi infiltrations issue is significant amidst the ongoing Special Intensive Revisions (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bengal that has deleted more than 58 lakh dead, duplicate, permanently shifted voters from the voters' list so far in the poll-bound state.

Strict Punishment Must Follow in Angel Chakma's Death: Tripura CM Dr Manik Saha

AGARTALA, DEC 30: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Tuesday conveyed deep sorrow over the death of Angel Chakma, a student from the state who succumbed to injuries after a violent attack in Dehradun, Uttarakhand. He emphasised that the accused must face stringent legal action. Chakma, an MBA student, was assaulted on December 9 by a group of miscreants wielding knives and blunt weapons. He later died during treatment at a Dehradun hospital.

Speaking to ANI, Saha said he had immediately contacted Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami upon learning of the incident. According to him, Dhami strongly condemned the attack and informed that five suspects had been arrested. Saha said he urged his Uttarakhand counterpart to ensure strict punishment for those involved. The Chief Minister also noted that both state governments had extended financial support to the bereaved family. The Tripura government has provided Rs 5 lakh as ex gratia, while the Uttarakhand government has offered nearly Rs 4 lakh. Reaffirming his



government's commitment to the family, Saha said they would continue to receive all necessary assistance. He further accused the Opposition of attempting to politicise the tragedy, asserting that the family was aware that the state government stood firmly beside them.

Naidu: Ministry Analysing Probe Report on Indigo Disruptions

BENGALURU, DEC 30: Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu on Tuesday said the ministry is currently analysing the report submitted by the panel that probed the massive flight disruptions involving IndiGo earlier this month. While speaking to the reporters on the sidelines of an event here, he said, "The report has been submitted to the ministry. We are analysing the report, taking further comments from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), and we will follow up on the action on that". According to officials, the inquiry committee, headed by DGCA Joint Director General Sanjay K Bramhane, was constituted on December 5 to conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the circumstances that led to the massive flight disruptions. The committee had submitted its report on Friday evening. Earlier this month, IndiGo cancelled more than 1,600

flights in a single day, followed by several days of bulk cancellations. The inadequate planning in implementing the revised pilot rest norms was cited as a key reason for the disruptions. Following the disruptions, DGCA



directed IndiGo, the country's largest airline, to reduce its winter schedule by 10 per cent and issued show-cause notices to the airline's CEO, Pieter Elbers, and COO, Isidre Porqueras. In the order dated December 5 on setting up the panel, it said that, prima facie,

the situation indicates deficiencies in internal oversight, operational preparedness, and compliance planning, "warranting an independent examination". As per that DGCA order, the regulator had issued repeated directions and advance instructions from time to time to the airline on timely preparation to implement the provisions related to the FDTL (Flight Duty Time Limitations) norms.



Manipur crisis part of larger plot to disintegrate state: RK Meghen in Tripura



GUWAHATI, DEC 30: Former rebel leader R.K. Meghen on Monday said the over two-year-long crisis in Manipur was not the result of an armed Kuki aggression but part of a larger design by “powerful forces” to disintegrate the state.

Addressing a gathering at Berimura in Tripura during the unveiling of a statue of freedom fighter Bir Tikendrajit, Meghen said Manipur was facing an organised attempt to weaken and destroy it, with the Meitei community being deliberately targeted. The

event marked the 169th birth anniversary of Bir Tikendrajit and commemorated Chahi Taret Khuntakpa. Calling for unity, Meghen said the Meitei community must stand together and draw strength from the courage of their forefathers to confront what he described as a formidable threat. He alleged that democratic values were steadily eroding and that the prevailing system was intentionally undermining the culture, traditions and collective strength of the Meiteis.

Meghen further claimed that electoral politics had

become another instrument to divide people along party lines and affiliations. He said protecting Manipur and safeguarding the community’s future would require unity among Meiteis living both within the state and outside.

The programme was jointly organised by the United Peoples’ Front, Manipur, and the Tripura Manipuri Student-Youth Coordination Committee. Participants paid floral tributes to the statue of Bir Tikendrajit, followed by a public convention at Panichai Mandap in Guchamura.

Kaziranga Sees Record Foreign Tourist Footfall In 2025–26, Says Assam CM

GUWAHATI, DEC 30: Kaziranga National Park in Assam has recorded a 127% increase in foreign tourist arrivals during the ongoing 2025–26 season, according to data shared by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday. The UNESCO World Heritage Site received 6,699 foreign visitors up to December 27 this season, compared to 2,947 foreign tourists in the 2022–23 season. The figures mark the highest-ever foreign tourist footfall recorded at the park. In a post on X, Sarma attributed the rise in international visitors to conservation efforts, protection of biodiversity, and the promotion of tourism involving local communities. Located in Assam, Kaziranga National Park is globally known for its population of one-horned rhinoceroses. The park is also home to elephants, wild water buffaloes, swamp deer, and tigers, and continues to attract wildlife enthusiasts from across the world.



Meghalaya: Ryndia GI tag among Textile Ministry’s top success stories of 2025



GUWAHATI, DEC 30: The Ministry of Textiles has identified the Geographical Indication (GI) tag accorded to Meghalaya’s traditional eri silk fabric, ryndia, as one of the standout achievements of India’s textiles sector in 2025, citing its contribution to rural livelihoods and sustainable production practices.

The ministry highlighted the development during the Year of Textile Reforms, a phase marked by significant expansion in the silk and sericulture segments. India continued to rank as the world’s second-largest producer of silk, with raw silk output increasing to 41,121 metric tonnes in 2024–25 from 26,480 metric tonnes in 2013–14, registering a growth of 55 per cent. Productivity also rose during the period, with yields improving from 96 kg per hectare to 112 kg per hectare. Officials said higher production translated into better returns for farmers, with mulberry cocoon prices climbing 46 per cent—from Rs 384 per kg in 2013–14 to Rs 560 per kg in 2024–25. The sericulture sector also recorded a sharp rise in employment, expanding by nearly 24 per cent from 78 lakh people in 2013–14 to around 98 lakh in 2024–25. The growth reaffirmed the sector’s role in strengthening rural economies and enhancing women’s participation in income-generating activities. According to the ministry, the GI recognition of ryndia played a significant role in driving these outcomes by improving incomes for cocoon farmers, generating rural employment, increasing women’s involvement, and encouraging innovation through GI-based branding. The tag has also promoted environmentally sustainable and eco-friendly silk production.

The ministry said the progress associated with ryndia reflects a broader policy thrust to safeguard traditional textiles, empower local communities, and reinforce India’s position in the global textiles and silk industry.

NHRC Takes Up Angel Chakma Murder in Tripura

AGARTALA, DEC 30: More than three weeks after Tripura student Angel Chakma was fatally attacked in Dehradun, the Uttarakhand Police are still on the lookout for the prime accused, Yagyaraj Awasthi of Nepal’s Kanchanpur district. Despite intensifying the search and announcing a reward of Rs 25,000 for credible information, the police have not yet been able to locate him. The investigation has taken a more serious turn, with the charges now upgraded to murder following Angel’s death on December 26. The student had been battling for his life since the December 9 assault at Selakui market, where he and his younger brother Michael were allegedly confronted by Suraj Khawas and his associates. Police reports confirm that the altercation escalated abruptly into violence, with Angel sustaining grievous

injuries from knives and brass knuckles. What began as a local crime has now drawn national institutional attention. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), taking suo motu cognisance of the killing, has questioned the Uttarakhand government on the safety framework available for students from the Northeastern states. Citing recurring concerns of vulnerability, the Commission has demanded a detailed status report from the state authorities. An NHRC bench led by Member Priyank Kanoongo has sought updates on the action taken against the accused, the progress of the inquiry, and the measures being adopted to prevent similar incidents. It has also directed the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police to prioritise the protection of Northeastern students studying in Uttarakhand.

No evidence of Hadi murder suspects crossing into Meghalaya: BSF

SHILLONG, DEC 30

The Border Security Force (BSF) in Meghalaya, on Sunday, dismissed claims by the Bangladesh Police that the prime suspects of Inquilab Moncho leader, Sharif Osman Hadi, have entered the state. “There is no evidence to suggest that any individual crossed the international border from the Haluaghat sector into Meghalaya. The BSF has neither detected nor received any report of such an incident,” BSF chief in Meghalaya, Inspector General O P Upadhyay, said.

Upadhyay further told the press that the claims being circulated are unfounded and misleading. BSF officials also explained that the personnel deployed along the international border have been kept on a high alert at all times to avert any untoward incident, particularly in view of the unrest and volatile situation prevailing in the neighbouring country. The force reiterated that any attempt at illegal cross-border movement would be promptly detected and dealt with. A senior Meghalaya police officer also added that there was “no input or intelligence to corroborate” the claim of the suspects’



presence in the Garo Hills region.

The officer further added that local police units had not detected any such movement and coordination with central agencies was ongoing. Earlier in the day, a top Dhaka Metropolitan Police officer said that two primary suspects in the Hadi murder case have crossed into Meghalaya via the Haluaghat border “with the help of local associates”. Hadi, 32, was shot in the head on December 12 during an election campaign in Dhaka. He was airlifted to Singapore for advanced treat-

ment but died of his injuries on December 18. Hadi, spokesperson of Inquilab Moncho, was a prominent youth leader during the July-August 2024 mass street protests that led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government last year. He was also a parliamentary candidate for the upcoming February 12 elections. The Garo Hills region falls under Meghalaya’s western sector, which shares an international border with Bangladesh and is guarded by the Border Security Force.



MSDE partners Google, CCS University to build India's first AI-enabled university

Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) on Monday announced a strategic partnership with Google and Chaudhary Charan Singh University (CCS University) to accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence across higher and vocational education. The announcement coincided with the 123rd birth anniversary of former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna Chaudhary Charan Singh.

Under the collaboration, CCS University, Meerut, will be transformed into India's first AI-enabled university, positioning technology as a key driver to democratise education and employment opportunities for youth across Bharat. The initiative aims to address employability challenges by leveraging AI



to bridge the India-Bharat divide, particularly for students from Tier-2 and Tier-3 regions facing language and access barriers.

Speaking at the event, Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Ed-

ucation, said the programme places strong emphasis on vernacular inclusion, enabling learners to study and express themselves in their mother tongue while acquiring global technology skills. He described the CCS University model as a blueprint for AI-driven, merit-based

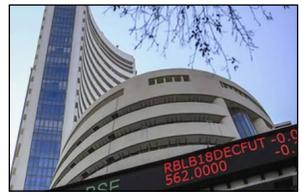
employability.

As per the MoU, CCS University will serve as the pilot institution for developing and implementing an AI Adoption Framework. MSDE Secretary Debashree Mukherjee, CCS University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Sangeeta Shukla, senior MSDE officials and representatives from Google India were present.

Education and skilling stakeholders in Guwahati see the partnership as timely, with rising demand for AI and digital skills in the Northeast. Training institutes and colleges in the city are expected to draw inspiration from the CCS University model, helping local talent tap new-age job opportunities in technology, services and startups without leaving the region.

Year-end lull keeps Dalal Street range-bound at midday

Chennai: Today's Indian equity markets exhibited a cautious and subdued tone at midday as traders grappled with thin year-end volumes and persistent headwinds from foreign fund outflows. After a weak start, both benchmark indices remained under pressure around the middle of the trading session, reflecting investor uncertainty and a lack of strong catalysts. By around noon, the BSE Sensex was trading lower, down modestly from its previous close, while the NSE Nifty hovered just below key psychological levels. Broad market indices also pointed to selling pressure, with mid-cap and small-cap stocks underperforming the frontline indices. The overall mood was one of hesitation rather than active buying, indicative of light participation typical of the final trading days of the calendar year. One of the dominant themes influencing sentiment was continued foreign institutional investor (FII) selling. Foreign funds have been net sellers in recent sessions, contributing to downward pressure on the market and fueling concerns over sustained outflows at a time when global cues remain mixed. Although domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have stepped in to provide some counterbalance through selective purchases, their support has not been sufficient to spark a broad market recovery. Within the market, stock-specific action remained noticeable despite the broader weakness. Certain names, particularly in the commodity and financial segments, drew trading interest. Some mid-to large-cap stocks with recent strong performance continued



to attract attention, while others lagged amid sectoral rotations and profit-booking.

The currency market reflected similar lack of directional conviction. The Indian rupee traded in a narrow range against the US dollar, with modest fluctuations around the 90 level as participants awaited clearer directional cues. Low hedging activity and reduced corporate participation, typical of year-end, contributed to the subdued forex backdrop. Analysts point out that the subdued midday trend is consistent with broader global patterns seen in Asian markets today, where thin volumes and the absence of major news drivers have kept equity trading ranges relatively tight. With 2025 drawing to a close and major economic data sparse, traders appeared to be positioning cautiously ahead of the New Year and the upcoming monthly index expiries. Looking ahead, many market participants are waiting for fresh triggers that could reinvigorate trade activity. Key domestic economic announcements, corporate earnings cues, and any shift in foreign fund flows are likely to be watched closely when volume returns in early January. For now, the lack of conviction in both directions at midday underscores an environment where investors prefer to sit on the sidelines rather than commit to aggressive strategies in thin trade conditions.

IndiGo slapped with Rs 458 crore GST demand



New Delhi: IndiGo has received a tax order from the Additional Commissioner of CGST, Delhi South Commissionerate, raising a GST demand of ₹458.26 crore for multiple financial years. According to an exchange filing by IndiGo, the tax authority has raised the demand, including interest and penalty, on compensation received from a foreign supplier and by disallowing certain input tax credits claimed by the company. The order has been passed under Section 74 of Central Goods and Service Tax Act, 2017 for FY-2018-19 to FY 2022-23. "GST department has passed an order imposing GST demand along with interest and penalty on compensation received from foreign supplier and denial of Input Tax credit. The Company strongly believes that the order passed by the GST department is erroneous and not in accordance with law, backed by advice from external tax advisors," said InterGlobe Aviation Ltd, IndiGo's parent firm. Accordingly, the company said that it will contest the same and shall take appropriate legal remedies against the aforesaid order.

Healthy indulgence drives festive demand: Dark Chocolate Almond Orange Cake trends this New Year

Guwahati: Festive dining is getting a health-focused upgrade this New Year with the launch of a Dark Chocolate Almond Orange Cake recipe crafted by Chef Kabita Singh. The dessert blends almond flour, rich dark chocolate, orange zest, maple syrup, ghee and eggs to create a soft, moist crumb with strong chocolate-citrus notes. Positioned as mindful yet indulgent, the recipe targets consumers seeking premium, nutritious baking options during the festive season.

Health experts say the trend reflects growing awareness around balanced celebrations. "Festive food does not have to mean excess or compromise," said Ritika Samaddar, Regional Head - Dietetics, Max Healthcare. She noted that California Almonds provide protein, fibre, good fats and vitamin E, supporting heart health, sustained energy and satiety — key health advantages during a season of higher indulgence.

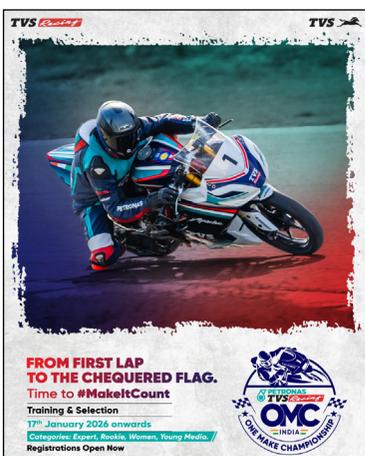
In Guwahati, retailers report rising demand



for almond flour, dark chocolate and premium baking ingredients as urban consumers shift toward healthier desserts. Bakeries and home bakers alike are tapping into this preference, offering innovative recipes that pair taste with nutrition during the holiday period.

With preparation time of around 60 minutes for an eight-inch cake, the Dark Chocolate Almond Orange Cake is being positioned as a modern, easy-to-bake festive option that blends celebration with conscious consumption.

TVS Racing unveils PETRONAS TVS India OMC 2026 to strengthen India's motorsports talent pipeline



Guwahati: TVS Motor Company has announced the PETRONAS TVS India One Make Championship (OMC) 2026 Training and Selection Programme, reinforcing its commitment to building competitive racing talent in India. The nationwide trials will run from January 17 to February 7, 2026 across Bengaluru, Pune, Delhi and Kolkata, followed by final selections at the Madras International Circuit in May 2026. The upcoming season coincides with 20 years of racing-derived engineering for TVS Apache, reflecting the company's 'Track to Road' philosophy.

The program includes Women's, Rookie, RR 310, and Young Media Racer categories with defined eligibility rules and podium-based exclusions for previous champions. Riders will train and compete on race-tuned TVS Apache motorcycles, supported by track-first safety standards such as FIM-certified helmets, Alpinestars airbag jackets and FIM-spec racing suits. TVS Racing, which has prepared over 3,000 riders since 1994, says the aim is to "build racers, not just organise races."

In Guwahati, the announcement is expected to further lift interest in

performance motorcycles and formal racing training in the Northeast, where the TVS Apache brand already enjoys strong youth following and dealership traction. Industry observers say the OMC's disciplined training ecosystem strengthens the value proposition of racing-inspired street motorcycles.

With 43 years of motorsport heritage, TVS Racing continues to invest in grassroots talent through structured learning and high-safety racing environments, positioning the 2026 OMC as a key driver in expanding India's professional motorsports ecosystem.

JSW MG Motor unveils India's first 5-year assured buy-back plan to power EV confidence

Guwahati: JSW MG Motor India has launched an industry-first extended Assured Buy Back Program for its electric vehicles, widening guaranteed resale value coverage from three to up to five years. Under the plan, MG EV owners will receive 40-60% assured resale value, depending on the selected tenure. The initiative — facilitated exclusively by Lockton India Insurance in partnership with Zuno General Insurance — operates independently of loans or finance schemes and also covers commercial MG ZS EV fleets up to three years old or running up to ₹60,000 km annually.

Managing Director Anurag Mehrotra said the program aims to remove one of the biggest barriers to EV adoption



— uncertainty over depreciation — while encouraging long-term trust in electric mobility. Customers may choose to retain, exchange, or return their vehicles at the end of the tenure, improving financial predictability and upgrade

flexibility. Zuno General Insurance and Lockton India said the partnership supports India's transition to sustainable mobility through simple and transparent ownership solutions.

India's industrial output hits two-year high, but tariff impact continues

New Delhi: India's industrial output reached a two-year high as it grew by 6.7% in November primarily driven by the growth in manufacture of basic metals, fabricated metal products, pharmaceuticals and motor vehicles. Thus, industrial activity witnessed a sharp rebound in this month after touching the yearly lowest in October, when the industrial production growth declined to a fourteen-month low to 0.4%. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for sectors like mining and manufacturing for the month of November 2025 stood at 5.4% and 8.0% respectively, revealed the latest data compiled by the government. Growth in the mining sector also rebounded as it grew by 5.4% due to closure of monsoon season and strong growth in metallic minerals, which was previously at 1.8% in October. "Despite the demand boost spurred by GST rationalisation, IIP growth averaged at 3.6% during October-November FY2026, lower than the 4.3% expansion seen in Q2 FY2026, led by a weaker performance of the electricity sector," stated ICRA. Due to

the festive season in October, there was slow down in the industrial activity. Electricity output also recovered slightly, with the decline narrowing to 1.5% from 6.9% a month earlier. For the tariff hit sectors like apparels, textiles leathers, there has been some slow down in production. For the period of April to November in this year, the production declined by 0.6%, 2.3% and 4.3% for textiles, apparels and leather respectively as compared to the period in the previous year. According to ICRA the impact of the US tariffs and penalties is likely to reflect across some of the manufacturing segments, partly offsetting the positive impact of the GST rate rejig.

There has been a growth of 10.3% in consumer durables and 7.3% in consumer non-durables. Infrastructure and construction goods, intermediate goods, and consumer non-durables emerged as the top three drivers of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) growth in November 2025, underscoring steady demand across core, manufacturing-linked and consumption-oriented segments of the economy.

US LPG imports force rethink of cooking gas subsidy formula

Chennai: The government is weighing a revision of the formula used to calculate subsidies on domestic cooking gas as higher-cost imports from the US begin to alter the economics of India's LPG supply chain. The move comes after state-run oil marketing companies signed long-term contracts to source liquefied petroleum gas from the US, marking a significant diversification away from the Middle East, which has traditionally dominated India's LPG imports, reports said quoting official sources. At present, the subsidy payable on domestic LPG is calculated with reference to the Saudi contract price, the long-standing global benchmark that reflects the cost of supplies from the Gulf region. This benchmark has worked reasonably well when most of India's imports came from West Asia and freight costs were relatively stable and low. However, US LPG is priced on a different benchmark and involves much longer shipping routes, resulting in significantly higher freight and logistics costs. Industry executives argue that continuing to rely solely on the Saudi contract price no longer captures the true landed cost of LPG being sold in the domestic market. Under the new supply arrangements, Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation will collectively import around 2.2 million tonnes of LPG annually from the US beginning in 2026. While this accounts for roughly a tenth of India's total LPG imports, it is large enough to materially influence the cost structure of oil marketing companies, especially during periods when global prices are volatile. US LPG is typically economical only when offered at deep discounts to offset the higher trans-Atlantic freight, and these discounts are not always available. When prices rise or discounts narrow, the gap between the benchmark used for subsidy calculations and the actual cost incurred by companies widens.

This mismatch has implications for both government finances and the balance sheets of oil marketing companies. Domestic LPG prices are politically sensitive and have remained largely unchanged for extended periods despite fluctuations in global energy markets. When companies are forced to sell cylinders below cost, they accumulate under-recoveries that are later compensated by the government through budgetary support. A formula that understates

the true cost of imports risks increasing these under-recoveries, eventually translating into larger compensation payouts from the exchequer. Officials familiar with the discussions indicate that any revision of the subsidy formula would aim to better align it with the evolving import mix rather than trigger an immediate increase in consumer prices. The government is keenly aware that LPG affordability is critical for millions of households, particularly beneficiaries of the Ujjwala scheme, for whom even small price increases can affect consumption patterns. As a result, policymakers are likely to tread cautiously, balancing fiscal realism with social considerations. From a broader perspective, the push to import LPG from the US is also tied to India's strategic objective of diversifying energy supplies and deepening trade ties with Washington. US suppliers have abundant LPG availability, and long-term contracts provide a measure of supply security. However, this diversification comes at a cost, and the debate over the subsidy formula underscores the trade-offs involved in reducing dependence on a single region.

For oil marketing companies, a revised formula that factors in alternative benchmarks and higher freight costs would provide greater clarity and reduce uncertainty around future compensation. For the government, it would mean more transparent accounting of subsidy liabilities, even if it results in higher outlays during periods of elevated global prices. The final shape of the revised formula, if approved, will therefore be closely watched by markets, energy companies and consumers alike, as it will signal how India plans to manage the rising complexity of its energy imports while keeping household fuel affordable.



Hyundai forays into commercial mobility segment with the launch of Prime Taxi Range

New Delhi: Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) has entered into the commercial mobility segment with the launch of its dedicated taxi offerings - Prime HB (hatchback) and Prime SD (sedan). The models are offered at a starting price of Rs 599,900 for Prime HB3 and Rs 689,900 for Prime SD4.

The hatchback is essentially the Hyundai Grand i10 Nios while the sedan is the

Aura model. The two models, designed for commercial mobility solutions, will target ride-hailing companies such as Ola, Uber, and Rapido. Customers can book the Hyundai Prime Taxi range by paying a booking amount of Rs 5,000 at any Hyundai showroom across India. Both Prime HB and Prime SD are available with 1.2L Kappa 4-cylinder engine (Petrol + CNG). Hyundai Prime range



offers exceptional fuel efficiency of 28.40 km/kg for Prime SD and 27.32 km/kg

for Prime HB6.

Tarun Garg, Managing Director & CEO designate at

HMIL said, "Fleet operators and taxi drivers look for vehicles that deliver maximum uptime, predictable maintenance and low operating costs, and the Hyundai Prime range has been developed precisely with these priorities in mind. Backed by Hyundai's extensive service network, attractive warranty, maintenance packages, low cost of ownership and flexible finance solutions, Prime HB

and Prime SD will enable our commercial customers to enhance earnings while offering safe and comfortable mobility to passengers."

Both models come with special extended warranty packages of 4th and 5th year / 180,000 KMs (whichever earlier) for high running vehicles, ensuring predictable maintenance and lower total cost of ownership (at 47 paise / km5).



The Hazelnut Effect: Elevate Your Wellness Daily

Homemade juices provide a level of freshness and quality that is frequently absent in store-bought alternatives. If you take pleasure in consuming juice, carrot juice stands out as a superb and adaptable option for this season. Rich in vital nutrients, it is simple to make at home and can be tailored by incorporating different fruits and vegetables to enhance the flavor. Carrots pack a nutritional punch and are loaded with beta-carotene that converts to vitamin A, which supports sharp vision and prevents night blindness. Their high fibre content aids digestion, promotes gut health, and stabilises blood sugar by slowing sugar absorption. It has antioxidants like lutein and zeaxanthin that protect eyes from age-related damage, while vitamin C boosts immunity and collagen for glowing skin. As carrots have potassium, they can help regulate blood pressure, and since they are low in calories with high water, it make them ideal for weight management – curbing hunger without excess energy. Carrots also lower cholesterol, reduce heart disease risk, and fight inflammation with falcarinol. Carrot Juice With Coriander, Mint And A Hint Of Lemon This refreshing carrot juice blends coriander, mint (pudina), and lemon to create a revitalising drink rich in minerals and antioxidants. Start by washing and chopping the carrots, then rinse the coriander and mint leaves. Add all



15:51

the ingredients to a blender or juicer and blend until smooth. Pour the juice into a glass, stir in the lemon juice, and, if desired, sprinkle with black or regular salt for extra flavour. For a chilled treat, add some ice cubes before serving. Carrot-Apple-Ginger Juice It's ideal for a morning boost or midday refreshment. Wash the carrots thoroughly, then peel and cut the apples and carrots into medium-sized pieces. Toss the ingredients into the juicer one by one, and let it run. If you're using a blender, start with half a cup of water, then add the apple, carrots, and ginger. Blend everything until smooth and remove any leftover pieces. Put a strainer or a linen towel over a jar or bowl. Pour the combined mixture onto a cloth or strainer to remove the juice. Discard the remaining pulp and transfer the juice to a glass. Squeeze fresh lemon juice into the juice, mix, and enjoy. Pineapple Carrot Juice Recipe This juice is high in fibre and a healthier alternative to store-bought options. Start by peeling and slicing the carrots into small pieces. Chop the pineapple and set it aside, then cut the lemon in half. If using a blender, add the carrots, pineapple, and half a cup of water to the jar and blend until smooth. Strain the juice through a fine sieve to remove the pulp or extract juice from the mixture. Pour the juice over a few ice cubes in a glass, add lemon juice, stir well, and enjoy the refreshing taste. Spinach Carrot Juice Recipe This juice is the perfect companion to the richness of seasonal vegetables on a sunny winter day. Begin by washing and cleaning the carrots and spinach, then chop them into small pieces and set them aside separately. First, juice the carrots using a blender or juicer. Next, add the spinach and blend or juice again. Strain both juices and combine them using a spoon, discarding the pulp. Pour the fresh juice into a serving glass, then season with lemon juice, a pinch of salt, and black pepper powder to taste. Serve immediately to enjoy its full nutritional benefits.

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These 4 methods for consuming carrot juice can enhance your health during the winter

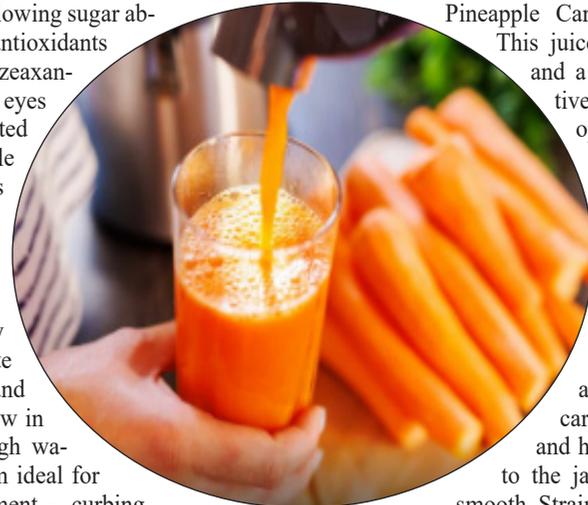
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The Emergence of a New Era for Preventive and Regenerative Health in India

Peptides have become one of the most discussed tools in contemporary health care, spanning from longevity clinics and fitness communities to endocrinology departments. Although social media has increased their prominence, experts suggest that the rising interest signifies a fundamental transformation in medicine – shifting from a focus on treating diseases post-appearance to preventing dysfunction before it manifests. In India, where metabolic diseases, chronic stress, and lifestyle-related issues are prevalent, this dialogue is emerging at a pivotal time. Shruti Maheshwari Baid, a Functional Medicine Specialist and the Founder of Nutrition By Shruti, clarifies that peptides are not a recent medical innovation. “Peptides did not emerge out of nowhere. The difference is that science has finally aligned with the biological processes that have been occurring all along,” she states, characterizing them as small chains of amino acids that the body naturally employs to repair tissue, manage immunity, and enhance metabolism and cognitive function. She points out that peptide-based medicines such as insulin and GLP-1 drugs helped shift perception. “The global success of insulin and GLP-1 medications reminded us that peptide based

therapies are not fringe biohacking tools but highly targeted treatments with measurable impact.” According to her, improved access, better formulations, and the rise of longevity clinics have also contributed, though she cautions that quality and supervision matter. Why Peptides Are Called The ‘Next Chapter’ Peptides are often described as the next phase of preventive and regenerative health because they work with the body rather than overriding it. “Instead of forcing pathways open or closed, many peptides provide gentle instructions that cells recognise,” Baid explains, adding that they can influence repair, inflammation, energy production and cognition through natural signalling mechanisms. Dr. Jatin Kumar Majhi, Associate Consultant – Endocrinology at Manipal Hospital Bhubaneswar, echoes this systems-based view. He says, “The growing interest in peptides signifies a shift in philosophy, in that rather than attempting to manage a patient’s symptoms, health care providers will have an opportunity to collaborate with each patient’s biological systems to restore their individual health.” Their role as precise biological signals is what makes them relevant to prevention, tissue repair and long-term wellness – when used



responsibly. Where India Stands On Awareness And Access India's relationship with peptides is advancing, but unevenly. Baid notes that while interest is rising rapidly in metros, regulation and clinician training lag behind Western markets. “Only a small number of private hospitals and regenerative clinics offer pharmaceutical grade peptides with proper oversight,” she says, warning that inconsistent regulation has allowed poor-quality products to circulate online.



Sahil Sambhi's Latango brings Italian classics and European vibes to Delhi

Delhi's dining scene is vibrant, and now restaurateur Sahil Sambhi of Japonico, Bawri, and Vietnam fame, has unveiled his latest venture, Latango, an all-day European bar in Nehru Place. It is conceived as a space to "bring the essence of Europe to the table", Sambhi says, "We've created a space that feels intimate yet alive, where every element invites you to slow down and stay longer." Designed by Vivek Guha of Orphic Designs, Latango spans two floors with warm copper tones, plush bouclé seating, and Sambhi's signature touch — a sculptural bar crafted from 2,100 stacked glass pieces, and a two-storey show kitchen where chefs fire pizzas in wood ovens.

Latango's offerings spell classy Europe with subtle Japanese inflections. The menu, crafted by Italian chefs Roberto Bonaldi (of Japonico) and Joe Stanchi (of Naples' legendary Starita a Materdei, among the world's finest pizzerias), brings a refined curation of cold cuts, antipasti, pizzas, pastas, and desserts. We were first served house bread and butter. The bread, soft and warm, paired with butter carrying a gentle acidic lift. As sous chef Garvit Dahia explained, the butter was churned with a house-made onion and white wine compote, with lemon zest, or salmon roe for non-vegetarians. We tried the Octopus Salad, featuring Japanese style thinly cut slices of boiled octopus arranged in a roulade, laid over a fresh parsley pesto purée, topped with fried garlic bits and pickled onions — tender without the usual chew of the mollusk. Dahia recommends the beetroot tartare for vegetarians or those avoiding seafood. We moved next to the Crab Tartare — fresh crab on an onion-avocado base, bound with Japanese kewpie mayo, served over green herb oil and topped with crunchy salmon roe. The contrast of soft crab and crisp roe makes it a must-try for any seafood lover in the city. Dahia recommends the Lobster Linguine with fresh lobster paired with house-made linguine cooked perfectly al dente, served in a rich tomato sauce built from lobster shells. Another highlight is the Grilled Chicken Involtini: tender chicken wrapped in bacon, grilled, and filled with cheese and sage butter. The menu also includes dishes outside of Italy, like



the spicy Spanish style, Taco Al Pator. The dish base is baked tortilla bread, topped with chicken, coriander and Mexican Pico de Gallo. Those with a taste for French cuisine can also nibble on the Omelette Café de Paris, a beautiful french style brown seared omelette with sun Dried Tomato Pesto, tangy bell peppers, Garlic Sauce, and herbs.

What's fine dining without a sweet finish? Latango's menu offers a refined selection, from pavlova to Eton mess (berries, meringue, and whipped cream) and even the in-house Japanese mochi ice cream. We, however, settled on the classic rum-based tiramisu. The generous portion served in a caviar tin arrives topped with coffee caviar, a molecular gastronomy twist. Latango also offers a unique cocktail menu titled 'Liquid Letters from Europe' — a picture-card style collection conceptualised by Vikram Achanta and Abhishek Banerjee of Tulleeh, a beverage-industry consultancy, together with Italian mixologists Giovanni and Terry. Each drink is imagined as a letter between a Western and an Asian artist. We try the Pop Punch, a vibrant orange vodka cocktail inspired by Andy Warhol and Takashi Murakami, and the Nudist Picante, a lime-forward tequila with kaffir lime spice. If you're a cocktail enthusiast, a pizza loyalist, or simply someone who enjoys lingering afternoons and spirited evenings, Latango is your spot — whether for a long lunch, a kitty party, or just casual drink-hopping.

Air India adds Malabari chicken curry to new global menu

Air India on Thursday announced the introduction of its new global menu across its fleet. The menu draws inspiration from India's diverse culinary tapestry, from the royal kitchens of Awadh to the coastal flavours of southern India, while incorporating global influences through Pan-Asian, European Bistro, and geo-specific star dishes.

The new menu, which includes Kerala-style Malabari chicken, has been introduced on most international ex-India routes, including flights from Delhi to London Heathrow, New York, Melbourne, Sydney, Toronto and Dubai; from Mumbai and Bengaluru to San Francisco; and from Mumbai to New York, to name a few. It will be progressively rolled out across all international sectors as well as on domestic routes.

"The menu weaves a delicious story that combines the flavours of India with influences from global cuisines. To strike a chord with every traveller, there is a portfolio mix of region-inspired meals and global cuisines such as European bistros and pan-Asian. The region-inspired meals like south-Indian cuisine brings alive the heritage of India giving the travellers an authentic dining experience," the airline said. Guests travelling First Class will enjoy gourmet meals, artisanal breads, signature desserts, and bespoke wine and champagne pairings. Business Class offers multi-course gourmet meals with customisable options and curated beverage pairings, while Premium Economy and Economy feature upgraded meal trays with balanced, wholesome options with familiar regional flavours and enhanced presentation. Signature Indian dishes to be served include Awadhi Paneer Anjeer Pasanda (Veg Awadhi Thali), Murgh Massalam (Non-veg Awadhi Thali), and south Indian platter in First and Business Class



31 Days of Casseroles for December



If there's any month where the comfort and hands-off cooking style of a casserole belongs, it's December. Indeed, in this busy holiday month, casseroles offer nearly effortless ways to make a full meal with minor bits of stirring, stuffing, topping, and baking. In this collection, we gathered 31 casserole recipes that fit perfectly any night this month, and we even offered a few options for the various holidays. Browse here for four weeks of casseroles that are just right for any night of December.

While homemade chiles rellenos would make for a deli-

icious dinner any night of the week, the truth is stuffing the green chiles can be time-consuming. This casserole turns those crave-able flavors into a quick and easy dinner you can make in about an hour. Reviewers suggest you'll get a thicker, more substantial casserole if you cook in a smaller pan (such as a 9x9-inch square pan). This rich and comforting casserole would be ideal if you have leftover turkey. It's familiar as a delicious creamy casserole, but the addition of a few surprise ingredients, like garam masala and tarragon, elevate it to so much more than a way to use up a few leftovers. This kid-friendly hit casserole calls on a handful of pantry and fridge staples: ground beef, potatoes, and a can of cream of mushroom soup. Speed up prep by slicing the potato into rounds of even thickness with a mandoline.

Where exile meets flavour

Pooja stands silently in the corner of Matamaal, her fingers tracing the edge of a faded photograph on the wall. Her eyes glisten as the smell of saffron and walnuts drift through the air. "It feels like home," she says. This is no ordinary restaurant. It has a portal—a place where food, memory, and identity intertwined.

Matamaal—"House of Grandmother"—is the dream of Nalini Moti Sadhu and her husband Surrender. What began as a small effort to serve authentic Kashmiri Pandit cuisine in Delhi has grown into something far deeper: a living archive, a sanctuary for a community scattered since the 1990s exodus. "Our initial idea was simple," Nalini says, "We wanted people to taste authentic Kashmiri food again. But what we've built is so much more. It be-

came a place where people could reconnect with their culture." That longing to preserve culture had always been in her, born in the kitchens of her childhood. "Cooking was

were'n't coming only for the food. "They began talking about their childhoods, their language, their lost homes," Nalini remembers. Surrender adds, "That's when we realised — we

soft lights, and shelves hold handwoven pherans and clay lamps. During Herath, the festival of Lord Shiva's wedding, families fill the restaurant, cracking walnuts, singing hymns, sharing stories. On Navreh, the Kashmiri New Year, laughter and traditional songs echo through the space.

Even people from outside the community now join in, learning, tasting, celebrating. Perhaps Matamaal's greatest legacy lies in the children who never saw Kashmir. "They come here and learn what words like haakh and tchot mean. They begin to know who they are," Nalini says.

Over the years, the Sadhus have served over 10 lakh people—each plate carrying more than flavour. "It's not just about food," Nalini says. "It's about giving identity back to our people."

how we preserved our culture at home. It was never just about food, it was identity."

By 2012, she began taking small food orders through social media from her home in Gurugram. The response was instant, but people

were'n't just running a restaurant. We were giving people a home away from home." Today, Matamaal's warmth spills across Gurugram, Delhi, and Noida. Photographs of Kashmiri festivals line the walls, copper samovars gleam under



BJP-Sena Deal In: 137-90 Split for Mumbai's Richest Civic Body



MUMBAI, DEC 30: After a week of negotiations, the BJP has agreed to offer 90 seats to the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) polls. The BJP will contest in the remaining 137 seats, against the initial plan of contesting 150 seats. The party had initially offered 50 seats to the Shinde-led Shiv Sena, but after final negotiations, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde ensured 90 seats for his party. Mumbai BJP unit president Amit Satam said that according to the seat-sharing pact, BJP and Shiv Sena will allocate some seats from their respective quotas to the MahaYuti allies. "We are confident of coming into power in BMC. The Hindutva flag of MahaYuti will be unfurled. The BMC elections campaign will be done jointly by both

parties. We will not allow to change the colour of Mumbai. Our motto is safety and security of Mumbai. We already agreed on over 200 seats, and only 27 seats remained, and that has also been done amicably. We already informed our candidates to file their nominations as Tuesday is the last day for the nominations," Satam said. However, after the announcement of the seat-sharing plan, a MahaYuti alliance partner -- RPI (A) led by Union Minister of State Ramdas Athawale -- alleged that the BJP "cheated" them. Athawale alleged that the party members were called for seat-sharing talks at 4 pm, but no one held talks with them. "We waited and waited and nothing happened. Therefore, our party workers are very much unhappy, and they decided to take a different stand in BMC elections, and that

decision will be accepted by me as well," Athawale said. Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the alliance is confident that the people of Mumbai will vote for them in the BMC elections. A political observer said the BJP-Shiv Sena seat-sharing pact shows that Eknath Shinde is a good negotiator. "BJP initially offered only 50 seats to Shinde against his demand of 110 seats. Shinde was firm on his demand for seats; therefore BJP, which was adamant over 150 seats, was forced to concede 13 seats from its quota. Besides, the BJP also has to accommodate smaller allies in it," he said. "But in other municipal corporations like Pune, Sambhaji Nagar, Navi Mumbai etc, Shinde has completely failed to get decent numbers of seats in alliance," he added.

Bus falls into gorge in Uttarakhand's Almora, leaving seven dead and 11 injured

DEHRADUN, DEC 30: A passenger bus travelling from Dwarahat to Ramnagar plunged hundreds of feet into a steep ravine in Uttarakhand's Almora district on Tuesday morning, killing seven people. Eleven others were critically injured in the horrific accident. The bus, carrying 19 passengers, went out of control near Salapani in the Bhikiyainsain area. Eyewitnesses reported that the tragedy struck shortly after the vehicle passed Vinayak. Relief and rescue teams, including police and local administration, rushed to the rugged terrain to reach the spot. "The bus slid off the road and disappeared into the gorge within seconds. The sound was terrible," a resident said. Initial reports confirmed that six died at the site. The death toll rose to seven later as rescue operations continued. Local villagers provided immediate assistance in the frantic search for survivors trapped inside the mangled remains of the bus.



Almora SSP Devendra Pincha confirmed the situation: "Rescue teams have been dispatched to the spot. There are reports of some fatalities." Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Bhikiyainsein, Yakshi Aroa, and SHO Bhatrojkhan, Avneesh Kumar, spearheaded the on-site operation,

coordinating with ambulance services. "Many passengers were pinned beneath the twisted metal," an official stated, describing the difficult recovery process. The injured are currently being rushed to Bhikiyainsain Hospital. Authorities are making arrangements to airlift seriously wounded passengers to higher referral centres. The administration has initiated an immediate inquiry into the cause of the accident. Preliminary assumptions suggest that the driver might have lost control on a sharp curve, or a technical fault could be to blame, though the exact cause awaits the official investigation report. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami expressed deep sorrow over the tragedy and assured the affected families of full government support. This is the second major bus tragedy in the Sult area within 14 months. In November 2023, a devastating bus crash near Kupi village in the Sult tehsil claimed the lives of 36 people.

Samples Collected as 32 Fall Sick in Indore Water Scare

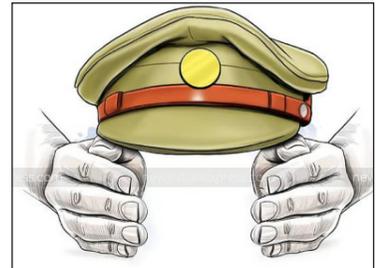
INDORE, DEC 30: At least 32 people have fallen ill due to suspected water contamination in a locality in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city, prompting the administration to collect samples of drinking water for testing, officials said on Tuesday. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav directed the administration of Indore, the cleanest city in the country, to ensure prompt and quality treatment for all patients. Talking to PTI, Indore District Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Dr Madhav Prasad Hasani said that 32 people from the Bhagirathpura area have been admitted to different hospitals in the city over the last few days. "Patients say they suffered vomiting and diarrhoea after drinking contaminated water," he said. Hasani said drinking water samples have been collected for testing from the locality, and reports will arrive in 48 hours. Residents of Bhagirathpura said that they fell ill after consuming water from the Narmada River supplied to homes through municipal tap connections. "We have sent water samples for testing. We can comment on the matter only after the test reports arrive," Indore mayor Pushy-amitra Bhargava said.

Indore relies on the Narmada River for its water needs, and water is brought to the city from Jalud in neighbouring Khargone district, about 80 km away, through pipelines laid by the municipal corporation.

Mumbai Police Ramps Up Security for NYE

MUMBAI, DEC 30: The Mumbai police have deployed more than 17,000 personnel as part of elaborate security arrangements to maintain law and order during the New Year celebrations, an official said on Tuesday. Large gatherings are expected at prominent places in the city, including the Gateway of India, Marine Drive, Girgaon Chowpatty, Bandra Bandstand, Juhu and Versova beaches starting Wednesday evening. The celebrations at various hotels, restaurants and malls are likely to continue till the wee hours of Thursday. In view of the celebrations, the police have made arrangements for a strict vigil to avoid any untoward incident in the city, the official said. Naka-bandi (police checkpoints) will be set up at key locations, important roads, and patrolling on streets will be intensified, he said. "The Mumbai police, along with the traffic wing, have deployed a massive security force comprising 10 Additional Commissioners of Police, 38 Deputy Com-

missioners of Police, 61 Assistant Commissioners of Police, 2,790 police officers and 14,200 police personnel," the official said. In addition, the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) platoons, Quick Response Team (QRT) teams, Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) teams, Home Guards and other forces have been deployed at sensitive



and important locations, according to him. The police will take strict action against those involved in eve-teasing, sale of illicit liquor and drugs, among other things, he said. The police appealed to people to ring in the New Year and enjoy the celebrations in a peaceful manner by following all the rules. Citizens are advised to contact the police helpline numbers 100 or 112 for immediate assistance, the official added.

Adhir Meets PM Over "Infiltrator" Slurs and Attacks on Bengali Migrants

NEW DELHI, DEC 30: Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Tuesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and raised the issue of attacks on Bengali-speaking people, especially in BJP-ruled states. Chowdhury, a former Congress chief in West Bengal, urged the prime minister's intervention in helping stop such attacks, which, he said, could lead to communal tension and possibly violence in the state. "Their only offence is that they speak in Bengali language which are often misunderstood by the concerned administration as persons belonging to neighbouring Bangladesh and treated as infiltrators," Chowdhury said in a letter to Modi. Several parts of West Bengal have a majority Muslim population and share a border with Bangladesh, and communal tension is rising among communities in these areas as a result of such attacks elsewhere in the country, he said. The Con-



gress leader urged the prime minister to "sensitize all the state governments" against discrimination, violence, and persecution of migrant labourers from other parts of the country. A 30-year-old migrant worker, Jewel Rana from the Jangipur region in Murshidabad district in West Bengal, was killed in Sambalpur of Odisha on Wednesday following an altercation over a 'bidi'. Two migrant workers in Mumbai were also arrested in Mumbai on suspicion of being illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. West Bengal Migrants Welfare Board has also said that it received 1,143 complaints of harassment in 10 months, especially in the BJP-ruled states.



Bradman's baggy green from historic home series against India up for auction

SYDNEY, DEC 30: A rare Baggy Green cap worn by the legendary Sir Donald Bradman during a 1947/48 series against India is set to go under the hammer next month. Bradman gifted the cap to Indian all-rounder Sriranga Wasudev Sohoni during the series, which marked India's first international cricket tour as an independent nation.

Unlike most surviving Baggy Green caps from Bradman's era, many of which are preserved in museums or closely held private collections, this cap has never been publicly displayed or offered for sale. It has remained in uninterrupted family ownership for more than 75 years, according to the Australian

Associated Press (AAP). "This is a genuine piece of cricket history that Sir Donald Bradman personally gifted," it one of the most important Bradman-related pieces to come to auction." The Test cricketers of Bradman's era



Lloyds Auctions Lee Hames said. "Its uninterrupted family ownership for 75 years and its direct link to 'The Don' make

wore a different cap for each series. The cap will be offered at a public auction, drawing international interest from private collectors, museums, institutions and fans.

Widely regarded as the greatest batter the game has known, Bradman amassed 715 runs in six innings at an astonishing average of 178.75 during the 1947/48 Test series, which Australia won 4-0. His tally included three centuries and a double hundred. Bradman, who died aged 92 in 2001, averaged an astounding 99.94 runs per Test innings. The bidding for his cap at Lloyds Auctions will open at one Australian dollar. The process will be closed on January 26. It's not the first of Bradman's caps to be sold as a baggy green from the same India series fetched a staggering Rs 2.63 crore last year.

Root: 'Silly' to Axe Management After Ashes Defeat



MELBOURNE, DEC 30: Veteran England batsman Joe Root has said it would be "silly" to change England's management team after losing the Ashes, with players "absolutely committed" to the current set-up. England meekly surrendered the famous urn after just 11 days of play with back-to-back eight-wicket defeats in Perth and Brisbane and an 82-run loss at Adelaide. Their capitulation was compounded by criticism of their low-key preparations and allegations of excessive drinking during a mid-series beach break in Noosa. The team restored some pride with a frantic four-wicket win in Melbourne, snapping an 18-match winless streak on Australian soil. It relieved pressure on coach Brendon McCullum, skipper Ben Stokes and cricket chief Rob Key, who have all indicated they want to stay in their roles. "In terms of the playing group, we're absolutely committed to the management," Root, England's all-time leading Test run-scorer and a former captain, told English media in Melbourne. "Yes, we can be better and there are certain areas that we'll continue to keep working at, but the management work extremely hard. "They might do things in a slightly different way, but I think we've made great strides as a group and a big reason for it is because of the guys we have behind us."

Management's case to stay on would be strengthened by another win in the fifth Test in Sydney starting Sunday. Root was captain on England's last tour of Australia in 2021-22 when they were crushed 4-0, costing coach Chris Silverwood and cricket director Ashley Giles their jobs. But Root said a lot of progress had been made since under the current regime. "You look at the group of players we've got and you look at the guys that were involved in the team when I was captain, four years ago, and you look at their records individually, and every single one of them has improved as a player," he said.

"This team has improved. I think it would be silly (to consider change) for the amount of hard work and things that have been done." Victory in Melbourne was Root's first in Australia in more than a decade of trying and he said it "would be better if we win next week as well". "If we can build on it and do it again next time it's momentum in the right direction for the next tour here (in 2029-30)," he added.

World Blitz: Erigaisi stuns Carlsen to emerge joint leader on day one; Humpy, Deshmukh slip

DOHA, DEC 30: Top Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi demonstrated strong endgame technique and quick calculation to stun Magnus Carlsen and emerge joint leader, with the Norwegian world No.1 slamming the table in frustration, on day one of the World Blitz Championships here. Erigaisi then went on to defeat another top GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan and drew three other games to emerge joint leader late on Monday. With Erigaisi -- who ended day one on 10 points from 13 games and was tied for the top spot with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana -- in menacing form, it was Carlsen who lost a tense endgame in Round 9. Erigaisi had just nine seconds on his clock while Carlsen was down to three. Just as the Norwegian -- who had also slammed the table after losing to India's D. Gukesh in Norway Chess earlier this year -- was about to make a queen move, it slipped from

his hand and flew off the table. Alexander Grischuk, who happened to be passing by at that moment, jumped and tried to move out of the way quickly. By the time Carlsen picked up his queen and put it back on the board, his time had already run out. The Norwegian couldn't hide his anger and slammed his fist on the table to give it a mighty tremor, though Erigaisi remained unruffled by the drama. The leaders are trailed by six players on 9.5 points. The co-champions in the 2024 edition of World Blitz, Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi, sit on 9/13. Dutchman Jorden van Foreest emerged as the first sole leader in the 'Open' section after Round 6. The 26-year-old, who won the Dutch championship this year, defeated the likes of Alireza Firouzja and Erigaisi, who suffered his only loss on Monday to the Dutch player. However in Round 7, van Foreest fell to Abdusattorov, who briefly joined a six-way tie for the lead at 6/7. But things didn't go well for them af-



ter that, and both finished the day on 8/13. By the end of Round 10, Erigaisi stood alone at the top with 8.5/10, having drawn only once (with Firouzja) and lost once (to van Foreest). Entering the final round of the day, three players were tied at 9.5/12. Carlsen finished on 9/13, suffering a second setback on the day against Caruana after overlooking a rook. Six more rounds will be played on Tuesday to reach the semifinals, followed by the final. Carlsen, who is aiming for his ninth World Blitz title to go with his sixth Rapid crown he won on Sunday, would be keen to overcome the setbacks with his never-say-die attitude.

FIFA Chief: '300 Years of Demand' Justifies Record World Cup Costs

Infantino breaks silence on the "astronomical" pricing furor, citing record demand as his defense

DUBAI, DEC 30: FIFA President Gianni Infantino on Monday defended controversial ticket prices for the 2026 World Cup, revealing that organisers had received a record 150 million requests for tickets in the past two weeks. Speaking at the World Sports Summit in Dubai, Infantino stressed that all revenues from next year's tournament in the United States, Mexico and Canada would be pumped back into football around the world. Infantino's comments were his first pub-

lic remarks since the ticketing furor erupted earlier this month, with fan groups branding ticket prices as "extortionate" and "astronomical." FIFA later responded to the criticism by announcing that a sliver of tickets on sale would be priced at \$60. "In the last few days, you've probably seen there is a lot of debate about ticketing and ticket prices," Infantino told the Dubai conference on Monday. "We have six, seven million tickets on sale and we started two weeks



ago. I can tell you in two weeks, 15 days, we received 150 million ticket requests. This shows how powerful the

World Cup is."

Infantino said the majority of ticket requests had come from the United States, fol-

lowed by requests from Germany and Britain. "If you think that in 100 years of history of the World Cup, FIFA has sold 44 million tickets in total, so in two weeks for the next World Cup, we could have filled 300 years of World Cups," Infantino said. "This is absolutely crazy." "And what is important, what is crucial is that the revenues that are generated from this are going back to the game all over the world and FIFA is the only organisation in the world...that finances football

in the entire world. Without FIFA there will be no football in 150 countries in the world. There is football thanks to these revenues that we generate from the World Cup which we reinvest all over the world," he claimed.

Fan group Football Supporters Europe (FSE) had been among the most prominent critics of FIFA's pricing strategy for 2026. The group said earlier this month tickets would cost almost five times more than tickets for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

