

Dima Hasao Leader Bir Bhadra Hagjer Dies at 75



GUWAHATI, JAN 13: Former Assam MLA and retired IAS officer Bir Bhadra Hagjer passed away at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) on Tuesday. He was 75.

Hagjer was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 2016 from the Haflong constituency in Dima Hasao district. As a legislator, he was known for his commitment to public service and the welfare of the people of the hill district. He began his political career with the Congress party and later joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). A retired IAS officer, Hagjer had earlier served the state in various administrative capacities before entering active politics. He was the eldest son of late Jaybhadra Hagjer, a senior politician and noted intellectual from the Bodo-origin Dimasa community. Jaybhadra Hagjer was also the founder president of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, which was established on November 16, 1952, at Basugaon.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed deep sorrow over the demise of Bir Bhadra Hagjer, describing him as a respected public servant from Dima Hasao. The Chief Minister conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul. Union Minister and former Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal also condoled Hagjer's death. In a message, Sonowal said, "Deeply saddened to learn about the demise of Bir Bhadra Hagjer, distinguished retired IAS officer and former MLA of Haflong. A veteran voice for Dima Hasao, he contributed significantly to the region's development, first as a bureaucrat and later as a legislator. My heartfelt condolences to his family and followers in this hour of grief. Om Shanti."

The BJP's Dima Hasao district unit also expressed deep condolences, describing Hagjer as a distinguished public servant whose contributions to administration and public life earned him widespread respect across the region.

Govt Evaluating High Court Order Abolishing Fixed-Pay: CM Manik Saha

AGARTALA, JAN 13: Tripura Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha on Tuesday said the state government has not taken any decision yet on the recent Tripura High Court ruling that struck down the five-year fixed pay tenure for government employees as unconstitutional. The court directed that employees must receive regular pay scale benefits from the first day of service and ordered arrears to be cleared within a stipulated period. Responding to media queries, Dr. Saha stated that discussions are underway at the "appropriate levels" with ministers and senior officials to determine the next course of action. He clarified that the current government did not introduce the fixed pay system, which was implemented by the previous regime. "It has both advantages and disadvantages.



Nothing was done without reason, and there must have been some justification

behind adopting such a method," he remarked. On whether the state is considering filing a Special Leave Petition (SLP) in the Supreme Court against the verdict, the Chief Minister said, "It is yet to be decided."

Addressing demands from SSA teachers to withdraw the SLP already filed by the government, Dr. Saha stressed that the matter is complex and cannot be resolved through unilateral decisions. "States like ours face perennial resource constraints. Any hasty move could prove detrimental. The government also has to survive," he cautioned. The remarks come in the backdrop of the High Court division bench's order that abolished the fixed pay system for newly recruited employees and mandated immediate implementation of regular pay scales.

Fatal Food Poisoning: Abandoned Sweets Kill Two in Chhindwara

BHOPAL, JAN 13: Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district has reported two deaths caused by the consumption of mysterious peda (sweet) in a span of three days. According to Junnardeo police station in-charge Rakesh Singh Baghel, a bag containing raw vegetables and a box full of sweets were found abandoned outside the PHED office on January 9. The bag was spotted and checked by the on-duty chowkidar Dasaru Yaduvanshi (50). He ended up tasting the pedas from the box.

On the late night of January 10, Yaduvanshi, was rushed to the Junnardeo health centre following diarrhoea and vomiting. He was later referred to the Chhindwara District Hospital, from where his family took

him to a private hospital. He, however, died on January 11. "His family was not ready to get the autopsy done, so his mortal remains were cremated without



the post-mortem examination," a health department official in Chhindwara said. The sweet box with what was left of the sweets was taken home by the family of

a man running a tea stall near the place where the box was abandoned.

The four members of the family were rushed to the Junnardeo health centre on January 11 following diarrhoea. A 72-year-old Sunder Lal Kathuria died during the course of treatment on January 13. "It still remains a mystery as to what was in the peda which actually caused food poisoning like symptoms and resulted in the two deaths. Kathuria's autopsy report has been inconclusive after which the viscera has been preserved and sent along with samples of the sweets to the forensic science lab. Samples of the same sweets have also been sent to the food testing lab to find out whether it was contaminated or poisonous," the Junnardeo police station in-charge added.

BRICS 2026: India Launches Official Logo and Website



NEW DELHI, JAN 13: New Delhi, Jan 13: India has launched the website, theme, and logo for BRICS 2026, scheduled to take place under India's chairship. Speaking at the launch, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said that India is approaching its BRICS chairship with humanity and a people-centric approach, which will seek to bring together the collective potential of

member countries for greater global welfare. "India's BRICS Chairship is guided by the theme 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability', reflecting a people-centric and humanity-first approach articulated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister at the 2025 Rio Summit," an official statement noted. External Affairs Minister mentioned that the theme demonstrates the importance of strengthening capacities, promoting innovation, and ensuring sustainable development for the greater good of all. The website aims to provide a platform to receive updates regarding BRICS initiatives and events that will be held under India's Presidency, while the BRICS logo ends tradition with modernity.

"Complementing this visual identity are the three core pillars of BRICS—Political; Security cooperation, Economic; Financial partnership, and People-to-People exchanges—all subtly represented through the logo's message of inclusivity, dialogue, and shared growth. Together, the design reflects the broader BRICS vision of cooperation, sustainable development, and global harmony," the statement continued. Extending Makar Sankranti, Lohri, Magh Bihu and Pongal greetings, the EAM expressed, "Just as these festivals symbolise hope, renewal, and goodwill, India's BRICS chairship will seek to bring together the collective potential of BRICS countries for greater global welfare.

When India prepares to assume the BRICS chairship in 2026, we do so at an important moment in the grouping's journey." In 2026, he said that BRICS will complete 20 years since its inception, during which it has steadily evolved into a "significant platform for cooperation among emerging markets and developing economies". "The current global environment presents complex and interconnected challenges, geopolitical uncertainties, complicated economic landscapes, climate-related risks, technological changes, and persistent development gaps continuing to affect countries across regions," he added. Highlighting India's approach for its BRICS chairship, EAM Jaishankar said, "In this

context, BRICS remains an important forum that encourages dialogue and cooperation and practical responses taking into account national priorities at different stages of development. India approaches its chairship with a humanity-first and a people-centric approach inspired by the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi." BRICS brings together eleven major emerging markets and developing countries of the world - Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates. BRIC was formalised at the first meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York in 2006.



Meghalaya govt plans new Christmas tourism policy with special focus on Garo Hills

SHILLONG, JAN 12: The Meghalaya government is preparing a pioneering 'Christmas Tourism Policy' to turn the state's indigenous festive celebrations into an organised global attraction, with special attention on the Garo Hills. Tourism Minister Timothy D. Shira said on Saturday that the policy aims to leverage the significant tourist influx seen during the Christmas and New Year period, ensuring a more structured approach to festive tourism. According to the minister, last year's festive season was highly successful, with multiple events held across the state drawing large crowds. With several tourism projects and destinations nearing com-



pletion, the government anticipates even higher tourist arrivals in 2026.

The proposed policy is designed to reinforce Meghalaya's reputation as a top destination for Christmas celebrations, focusing on enhanced

promotion and better management of visitors during peak holiday periods. Shira added that tourist interest is gradually spreading to the Garo Hills, aided by improvements in infrastructure. Destinations in the region that were previously dif-

ficult to reach are now attracting more visitors. To further boost tourism in the Garo Hills, the government is prioritising upgrades to road networks and communication facilities, addressing the poor connectivity that had previously deterred travellers. Improved roads will make key sites in the region more accessible.

The government also plans to offer easier access to loans for individuals building homestays, which will increase accommodation options and support the growth of tourism in the area. The initiatives aim to ensure steady growth in Meghalaya's tourism industry and help spread economic gains to more regions of the state.



Assam CM Honors BJP Legend Purkayastha

GUWAHATI, JAN 13: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma visited the residence of veteran BJP leader and former Union Minister Kabindra Purkayastha in Silchar on Tuesday to pay respects and offer condolences to the bereaved family. Purkayastha, aged 94, passed away on January 7 at Silchar Medical College and Hospital due to age-related ailments.

In a post on X, Sarma said, "Visited the residence of Late Kabindra Purkayastha in Silchar to pay my obeisance to the departed soul, who made rich contributions to Assam's society and polity. His ideals will always guide us." He added, "My thoughts are with Kanad Purkayastha and the family in this hour of grief." Purkayastha is survived by his son, Kanad Purkayastha, a BJP Rajya Sabha MP from Assam, and a daughter. His wife had predeceased him. A prominent BJP figure, he represented the Silchar Lok Sabha constituency three times in 1991, 1998, and 2009 and served as Union Minister of State for Communications.

Namsai Duo to Attend R-Day Parade



ITANAGAR, JAN 13: Two Class 12 students from a remote school in Namsai district, Arunachal Pradesh, have been invited to attend the Republic Day parade in New Delhi for their innovative project on plastic waste management. Nang Sujata Jenow and Kusum Kumari Mishra, studying science at Government Higher Secondary School in Chongkham, excelled in the national School Innovation Marathon (SIM) organized under NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM). Their project presented practical solutions for managing plastic waste, aiming to contribute to a plastic-free future, and impressed national evaluators with its scientific approach and innovation.

Guided by teacher Moirangtham Surchand Singh, the students' work aligns with India's sustainability goals. School principal Toni Pertin praised their achievement, saying, "Their stewardship and hard work not only brought laurels to our institution but have also proven that our youth are the key to achieving a sustainable India."

Musician Samar Hazarika Passes Away in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, JAN 13: Renowned Assamese singer and composer Samar Hazarika passed away at his residence in Guwahati on Tuesday morning. He was 75. The youngest brother of music icon Sudhakantha Dr Bhupen Hazarika, Samar Hazarika breathed his last around 8.45 am at his home in Nizarapar after a brief illness. He had been unwell for some time and was discharged from hospital about a fortnight ago following treatment. He is survived by his wife Sobha Hazarika and son Dawor Hazarika, daughter Namrata Hazarika and a host of relatives and well-wishers. A revered figure in Assam's cultural landscape, Samar Hazarika carved out a distinct identity of his own—quiet, deeply rooted, and profoundly Assamese. The youngest of ten siblings, he remained closely associated with music for decades, contributing as a singer and composer across radio, albums, and Assamese cinema. His works reflected a deep commitment to themes of humanity, patriotism, and universal brotherhood—values that defined the artistic ethos of the Hazarika family. Samar Hazarika began his musical journey in 1960. His first album, "Uttar Konwar Pratima Barua Devi," was released in 1968. Over the years, he created several timeless songs, earning widespread popularity with numbers such as "Prothom Morome Jodi Sohari Napai." He also lent his voice to numerous Assamese films. He made his playback singing debut in December 1977 with the film Upapath, directed by Hemanta Dutta. Thereafter, he went on to sing for more than twenty Assamese films, including Bijuli, Bowari, Ghar Sansar, Sonmoina, Bohagor Duporiya, Chiraj, Ranganadi, Ashanta Prahar, and Protishodh, among others. Apart from films, more than 70 solo and duet audio cassettes featuring his voice were released over the years, most of which gained wide popularity among music lovers. Though he largely shunned the limelight, Samar Hazarika played a vital role in carrying forward the musical and cultural legacy of his eldest brother, Dr Bhupen Hazarika. He was closely associated with initiatives commemorating the life and work of the legendary



artiste, including programmes linked to Bhupen Hazarika's birth centenary celebrations. Recalling him as gentle and unassuming, his sister-in-law Monisha Hazarika said the family was unprepared for the loss. She noted that Samar Hazarika had received an award just a day earlier and had responded with his characteristic simplicity, offering only a soft "thank you." Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed deep anguish over the passing of the artiste. "His soulful voice lit up every occasion, and he made indelible contributions to Assam's cultural landscape. He carried forward the rich legacy of Sudhakantha Dr Bhupen Hazarika," the Chief Minister said, adding that Assam had lost "another golden voice." Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal also condoled the death, calling it particularly painful that the artiste passed away on Uruka. "He captured the heart and soul of the people with his mellifluous voice. His contribution to Assamese music will be eternal," Sonowal said. With his passing, Assam loses not just a singer and composer, but a custodian of melody, memory, and meaning—a voice that chose depth over display and legacy over limelight.

Samar Hazarika was cremated with full state honours at the Navagraha Crematorium in Guwahati.

15,000 Organic Lemons Flagged Off from Tripura

AGARTALA, JAN 13: Tripura Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Monday evening flagged off a consignment of 15,000 aromatic lemons from Agartala railway station to Kolkata, marking a significant step in the state's organic farming and agri-export initiatives. The shipment, jointly facilitated by the Tripura State Organic Farming Development Agency and Baramura Organic Producer Company Limited, is being hailed as a milestone in the state's efforts to promote organic produce beyond its borders.

Speaking to the media, Minister Nath noted that while Tripura has previously exported aromatic lemons, this is the first time such a large consignment is being dispatched in a single batch. The lemons were cultivated by around 80 farmers across 100 hectares in South Hadrai and Hawaii Bari areas of Khowai district. The initiative, he said, was inspired by the 'Prabasi Tripura' programme led by Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha. Agartala resident Saurav Gupta played a key role in facilitating the export. "Farmers are our providers, akin to deities. Agriculture is the backbone of our

nation. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasized, strengthening agriculture is essential to strengthening India," Nath said. "Agriculture remains our top priority, followed by tourism and other sectors."

He also announced that another consignment of 15,000 lemons will soon be sent outside the state. Highlighting the growth of organic farming in Tripura, Nath said the area



under organic cultivation has expanded tenfold—from just 2,000 hectares in 2018 to over 20,000 hectares today. The government aims to double farmers' income and is committed to supporting them through Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) to ensure fair market access and pricing. The flag-off ceremony was attended by Chief Whip and MLA Kalyani Saha Roy, Agriculture Secretary Apurba Roy, and other dignitaries.



Shyam Steel Names Harmanpreet Kaur as Brand Ambassador



Guwahati: Shyam Steel, a leading Indian TMT bar manufacturer, has appointed Indian Women's Cricket Team Captain Harmanpreet Kaur as its brand ambassador.

The partnership supports the company's campaign "Strong Woman. Strong Steel. Strong India," recognizing women's growing role in home-building and construction deci-

sions. Kaur will also promote Shyam Steel's ApnaGhar App, a digital platform guiding homeowners through the construction process from planning to completion.

"This partnership represents shared values of discipline, determination, and reliability," said Director Lalit Beriwal. Director Megha Beriwal Gupta noted that women are now key decision-makers in home construction, making Kaur's leadership qualities a natural fit for the brand.

Kaur said she's proud to support an initiative helping families make informed building decisions. The partnership was facilitated by KPRD Fiberboard Advertising.

Shyam Steel operates across multiple Indian states including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and regions in North, Northeast, and South India.

Tata AIA AURA bets on young talent to build India's next wave of insurance entrepreneurs

Aizawl: Tata AIA Life Insurance has launched Tata AIA AURA, a dedicated platform aimed at reshaping the insurance advisory profession by positioning advisors as full-fledged entrepreneurs in a rapidly evolving financial services market.

India has over 31.5 lakh life insurance advisors, yet life insurance penetration remains low at about 3.7 per cent of GDP in FY24. Tata AIA said AURA is designed to unlock this untapped potential by equipping advisors with digital tools, structured training, mentorship and strategic guidance, especially to drive awareness and coverage in underserved regions. The initiative also aligns with the national vision of achieving "Insurance for All by 2047."

Amit Dave, Head of Advisor Distribution at Tata AIA, said the company views advisors as entrepreneurs who build relationships and secure long-term financial futures, rather than

merely selling policies. He added that AURA helps advisors grow sustainable businesses while keeping customer needs at the core.

The profession has also gained momentum following the introduction of 0 per cent GST on life insurance, making policies more affordable and strengthening demand across segments.

In Aizawl, rising financial awareness and steady income growth are creating new opportunities for life insurance advisors. Industry players believe platforms like AURA can help local advisors scale operations, reach first-time buyers and deepen insurance penetration across Mizoram's urban and semi-urban markets. Tata AIA, ranked No. 1 in retail sum assured and reporting a 99.4 per cent claim settlement ratio in FY25, said AURA reinforces its long-term commitment to building a strong, future-ready advisory ecosystem across India.

Blenders Pride Fashion Tour 2025 Wraps Multi-City Showcase



New Delhi: The Blenders Pride Fashion Tour 2025 concluded in January with immersive fashion experiences across Gurugram, Jaipur, and Kolkata, drawing over 2,100 attendees. Gurugram featured Falguni and Shane Peacock's "The Futureverse of Fashion," combining haute couture with holographic technology and humanoid robots, with Shahid Kapoor and Tamannaah Bhatia walking the runway. Jaipur presented "High Octane Couture" by Namrata Joshipura and Abhishek Patni, incorporating motorsport aesthetics and chrome-wrapped supercars, featuring Harnaaz Sandhu and Raftaar. The Kolkata finale showcased Anamika Khanna's "Future Is Crafted" against the Howrah Bridge backdrop, with Ishaan Khatter as showstopper.

"Blenders Pride Fashion Tour powered by FDCI has been Indian fashion's most iconic stage," said Debasree Dasgupta, CMO of Pernod Ricard India. The tour, organized in collaboration with the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI), aimed to redefine fashion experiences through technology, cultural storytelling, and innovative design.

India-Bhutan sports partnership powers high-performance shooting camp in Siliguri

Guwahati: Thirteen national shooters from Bhutan have begun a two-week high-performance training camp in Siliguri, West Bengal, under the India-Bhutan cooperation framework. The programme, scheduled from January 7 to 20 at Olympian Jitu Rai's Shooting Academy, is being seen as a strategic investment in sporting excellence, aimed at improving Bhutan's competitive standing at the international level. The initiative is funded through the Indo-Bhutan Partnership Programme, reinforcing New

Delhi's Neighbourhood First policy, which extends support across infrastructure, education, health, and sports.

The Indian Embassy in Bhutan said the collaboration reflects strong bilateral engagement in youth and sports development. The Bhutan Shooting Federation confirmed that five rifle shooters, eight pistol shooters, and two coaches are attending the camp to enhance technical skills, competition preparedness, and global exposure. The Federation also expressed gratitude to the Government of India

for continued developmental support.

In Guwahati, increasing sports-related exchanges in the Northeast could stimulate regional investment in training infrastructure, hospitality, logistics, and sports tourism. The trend is expected to benefit local businesses while positioning the Northeast as a preferred hub for cross-border sports development. The camp is expected to significantly strengthen Bhutan's talent pipeline while deepening long-term sporting cooperation between the two nations.

California Almonds strengthen festive nutrition push ahead of Makar Sankranti 2026

Guwahati: As Makar Sankranti 2026 ushers in the harvest season and longer days, California Almonds are being positioned as a key ingredient combining festive tradition with modern nutrition. Celebrated across India as Pongal, Lohri, Uttarayan and MaghBihu, the festival drives high seasonal consumption of sweets and traditional foods, making it an important period for nutrition-focused food brands.

Health experts associated with the initiative highlighted almonds' strong nutritional profile, including protein, healthy fats and antioxidants, which help support immunity, sustained energy and blood sugar management. Ritika Samaddar, Regional Head - Dietetics at Max Healthcare, said that mindful ingredient choices during festivals can help consumers balance indulgence with health, noting that almonds are naturally satiating and versatile for both sweet and savoury dishes.

From an Ayurveda standpoint, Dr. Madhumitha Krishnan described almonds as "balya" or strength-enhancing, particularly beneficial during winter for improving digestion,



vitality and immunity. Nutrition and wellness consultant Sheela Krishnaswamy added that almonds enhance texture and nourishment in festive recipes without excessive sugar or refined fats.

Bollywood actress Soha Ali Khan shared that California Almonds have been a staple in her family kitchen, helping maintain a balance between celebration and well-being.

The initiative is supported by the Almond Board of California, a non-profit representing over 7,600 almond growers and processors, reinforcing almonds' positioning as a premium, wholesome food choice during India's festive season.

TallyPrime 7.0 debuts with deeper bank integrations, stronger data security for MSMEs

Guwahati: Tally Solutions Pvt Ltd on Tuesday announced the launch of TallyPrime Release 7.0, marking five years of the TallyPrime platform and reinforcing its focus on connected, secure, and simplified digitisation for India's MSMEs. The latest release brings deeper banking integrations, smarter automation, and enhanced data-protection features into a more unified business management experience.

Since its launch, TallyPrime has helped businesses adapt to India's fast-evolving digital ecosystem, supporting e-invoicing, e-way bills, GST compliance, and day-to-day financial operations. Features such as Connected Banking and cloud access have enabled MSMEs to work remotely while maintaining secure links with external systems.

Release 7.0 strengthens this approach with deeper integrations with State Bank of India and Axis Bank, allowing users to manage payments, access real-time balances and statements, and complete instant reconciliation without leaving the TallyPrime platform. The company has also expanded its partnership with NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd through Bharat Connect for Business, enabling automated invoice exchange and linked pay-

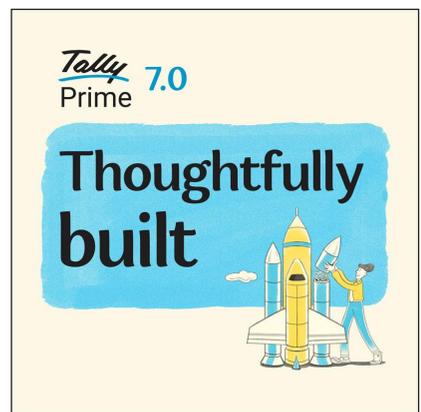
ments between buyers and sellers.

Data security has been enhanced through an upgraded TallyDrive, featuring stronger encryption and integrity checks to ensure business data remains protected and fully under user control.

Commenting on the milestone, Tejas Goenka, Managing Director, Tally Solutions, said the release focuses on connected digitisation without complexity, helping busi-

nesses operate with greater transparency and confidence.

In Guwahati, where MSMEs form the backbone of trade and services, TallyPrime 7.0 is expected to aid faster digital adoption by simplifying GST compliance and banking-linked operations. Improved real-time reconciliation and automated workflows could help local businesses streamline finances and respond more efficiently to growing regional demand. TallyPrime Release 7.0 will be available to all existing customers with an active licence.



Ananya Panday's simple New Year message boosts spotlight on everyday wellness habits



Guwahati: Actor Ananya Panday has kicked off 2026 with a grounded and relatable message, choosing simple daily habits over ambitious New Year resolutions. In a new Instagram reel, shared in association with California Almonds, the actor speaks candidly about the pressure that often comes with the start of a new year.

In the video, Ananya is seen standing in front of a mirror, talking herself through how quickly time passes and how the idea of "new year, new me" can sometimes lead to anxiety. Instead of chasing unrealistic goals, she stresses the importance of small, sustainable habits. These include getting better sleep, staying hydrated, exercising regularly, and maintaining consistency rather than aiming for perfection.

She also highlights a simple habit that is part of her morning routine—starting the day with a handful of California Almonds. Describing them as a natural source of energy, Ananya notes that almonds help fuel her day and contain healthy fats and vitamin E, which have been shown to offer anti-ageing properties that may support skin health.

In Guwahati, retailers say there is growing interest in everyday wellness products such as nuts and dry fruits. Traders note that urban consumers are increasingly prioritising easy, nutritious additions to their daily diet, reflecting a wider shift toward mindful and balanced living. Ending her reel on a warm note, Ananya wished everyone a happy new year, setting a positive and realistic tone for 2026.

Royal Enfield rolls out 2026 Goan Classic 350, bets on lifestyle riders to drive growth



New Delhi: Royal Enfield, the global leader in the mid-size motorcycle segment (250–750 cc), has launched the 2026 edition of the Goan Classic 350, strengthening its lifestyle motorcycle portfolio with a set of rider-focused upgrades. The bobber-inspired model continues to target riders seeking individuality, relaxed performance and distinctive design, while adding features aimed at improving everyday usability.

The 2026 Goan Classic 350 is now equipped with an assist-and-slipper clutch, offering smoother gear changes, lighter clutch action and improved control during downshifts. The USB Type-C charging port has also been upgraded to support faster charging, reflecting growing demand for connected riding. At its core remains the proven 349cc air-oil-cooled, sin-

gle-cylinder engine producing 20.2 bhp and 27 Nm of torque, paired with a 5-speed gearbox tuned for unhurried cruising across urban roads and highways.

Design remains a key differentiator, with the motorcycle retaining its single-seat bobber silhouette, floating rider seat, whitewall aluminium tubeless spoke wheels, chopper-style fenders, slash-cut exhaust and mid-ape handlebars, reinforcing Royal Enfield's focus on self-expression and custom culture.

The model is priced at Rs. 2,19,787 (ex-showroom) for Shack Black and Purple Haze, and Rs. 2,22,593 for Trip Teal Green and Rave Red, and will be sold through Royal Enfield's extensive network of over 2,000 stores across India, supported by its global operations under Eicher Motors Limited.

Aviva India unveils 'Smart Vitals', blend critical illness cover with wellness rewards

Guwahati: Aviva India has launched Aviva Smart Vitals, a new fixed benefit health insurance plan aimed at combining financial protection with proactive wellness. The individual, non-linked and non-participating pure risk plan offers coverage against 49 critical illnesses and procedures, with a base sum insured starting at Rs 10 lakh and options of Rs 15 lakh and Rs 20 lakh.

A key differentiator of Smart Vitals is its wellness-linked reward structure. Policyholders can enhance their coverage up to two times the base sum assured through quarterly wellness additions of 2.5%, 5% or 7.5%, depending on their

average daily steps tracked via Aviva's Wellness360 App. The plan provides a lump-sum payout on first diagnosis of any covered critical illness after a 90-day waiting period and a 15-day survival clause. Customers opting for Rs 15 lakh or Rs 20 lakh cover also receive a Loop by CarePlix X Smart Ring at no extra cost.

Commenting on the launch, AsitRath, CEO and MD, said the product reflects a shift towards combining insurance protection with healthier lifestyles. Ajai Kumar Tripathi said the plan was designed to meet evolving customer needs by integrating wellness with financial se-

curity. CarePlix Founder Subhbrata Paul highlighted the role of real-time health insights in preventive care.

In Guwahati, insurance distributors note rising interest in critical illness and fixed benefit plans as urban consumers become more health-aware. Wellness-linked products are attracting young professionals and middle-income families in Guwahati seeking predictable premiums, tax benefits and flexible payouts beyond hospital reimbursements.

The launch aligns with Aviva India's focus on customer-centric innovation and supports IRDAI's vision of 'Insurance for All by 2047'.

Airbnb reports surge in music-led travel as Gen Z turns concerts into key travel drivers

Mumbai: Airbnb today announced new findings from its Experience-Led Travel Insights report, revealing that music is becoming a major catalyst for travel among India's Gen Z. The study shows that 62% of Gen Z travelers plan to travel for concerts and music festivals in 2026, with 36% beginning trip planning as soon as events are announced. Music is also reshaping destination discovery, with 76% of respondents visiting a city for the first time because of a concert or festival. Over 40% said they would travel internationally for such events, with the US, Europe and Asia featuring prominently among preferred destinations.

The report highlights strong economic spillover,

with 65% opting to stay near event venues and 53% extending their trips to explore local cafés, nightlife, gigs and cultural spaces. Six in ten Gen Z travelers allocate 21–40% of their monthly income to music-led travel, and the average spend per trip is reported at ₹51,000. Seventy percent attend events with friends or in groups.

Amanpreet Singh Bajaj, Airbnb's Country Head for India and Southeast Asia, said music is opening new destinations to young travelers. Airbnb has partnered with Lollapalooza India 2026 in Mumbai as part of its first global live music partnership. The report is based on a YouGov survey of 1,102 Gen Z respondents across 10 cities.

MG Windsor becomes India's No. 1 selling EV of 2025 with 46,735 units sold

Guwahati: JSW MG Motor India has announced that the MG Windsor has emerged as India's No. 1 selling electric vehicle in 2025, clocking sales of over 46,735 units during the calendar year. The company is the first OEM in the country to achieve such volumes with a single EV model. The Windsor also recorded the highest month-on-month EV sales through 2025, averaging nearly 4,000 units per month. Overall, JSW MG Motor India posted 19% growth for the year, while its EV sales surged by 111% compared to 2024. Windsor sales also grew by more than 20% in Q4 2025 over the same period in 2024.

The MG Windsor has positioned itself strongly among family buyers with its spacious interiors, comfort features and modern design. Calling the Windsor a "contemporary automotive marvel," Anurag Mehrotra, Managing Director, JSW MG Motor India, said the model has helped accelerate EV adoption by converting first-time buyers to the electric segment.

In Guwahati, the Windsor's success reflects a steady rise in EV interest across Assam and the Northeast, supported by expanding charging networks and growing awareness of long-term cost benefits. Urban buyers, particularly families, are emerging as key adopters. Billed as India's first intelligent CUV, the Windsor offers up to 449 km range, a 15.6-inch touch display, business-class seating and a flexible battery-as-a-service pricing option starting at ₹9.99 lakh plus usage charges.

Amway India ramps up logistics network, halves delivery time as coverage expands to 90% of India

New Delhi: Amway India has strengthened its position in the health and wellbeing market by announcing major upgrades to its Home Delivery operations, sharply improving speed, reach and customer experience. The company has doubled its service footprint over the past five years from 8,000 to more than 17,500 pincodes, now covering over 90% of India. Average delivery time has been cut by 48% from 3.1 days to 1.6 days while next-day delivery has risen from 29% to over 55%.

Managing Director Rajneesh Chopra said Home Delivery is now a strategic pillar supported by digital investments, agile supply chains and stronger logistics partnerships. Senior Vice President Sanjeev Suri added that analytics-led planning and national carrier tie-ups are helping convert delivery networks into value-driven ecosystems.

The company operates 23 warehouses, including Pick-to-Light enabled facilities, and fulfills over 2 lakh home-delivery orders monthly with a 99.2% Perfect Delivery Rate. Real-time tracking via SMS, email and website, combined with a 30-day return policy and doorstep pickup across 1,900 pincodes, underpins the service model. Amway is also focusing on premium and sustainable packaging to enhance the doorstep and unboxing experience as part of its future-ready delivery strategy.



Renault's new Duster completes 1 million Km global testing ahead of India comeback

Guwahati: Renault India has announced a major development milestone for the upcoming new Renault Duster, confirming that the SUV has completed more than 1 million kilometres of testing across three continents. The company said the vehicle underwent trials in extreme temperatures ranging from -23°C to 55°C, covering dust tunnels, water-wading tracks, steep inclines, sub-zero terrain and bumper-to-bumper city roads. The Duster also successfully completed a high-altitude endurance run in Leh-Ladakh, reaching Khardung La at 18,379 feet.



Testing was carried out not only on public roads but also at facilities including NATRAX, ARAI, GARC and ICAT in India. Global tuning drives were organised in Brazil, Romania,

France, China and the Czech Republic to refine handling and driving dynamics. Renault Group India CEO Stephane Deblaise said the scale of testing reflects the brand's commitment to performance, safety and durability for Indian conditions.

In Guwahati, dealers say anticipation for the new Duster is strong as the earlier generation had firm demand in Assam and the Northeast. Customers in the region prefer durable SUVs with good ground clearance, and the new model's rugged positioning may attract both city and inter-district highway users.

Renault said the new Duster will balance modern handling with tough-road capability. The SUV will be officially unveiled in India on January 26, 2026.

Groww Mutual Fund launches true-to-label Small Cap Fund, NFO opens January 8

Guwahati: Groww Mutual Fund has announced the launch of the Groww Small Cap Fund, an open-ended equity scheme that will invest predominantly in small cap stocks, aiming to generate long-term capital appreciation. The New Fund Offer (NFO) will be open from January 8 to January 22, 2026, the fund house said in a statement issued from Bengaluru on January 7.

The scheme follows a disciplined bottom-up investment approach and is guided by Groww Mutual Fund's QG-aRP framework—Quality and Growth at a Reasonable Price. It will focus on identifying high-quality, scalable small cap companies with strong fundamentals, sustainable growth drivers, and reason-

able valuations. The fund will maintain a true-to-label mandate with zero large-cap exposure and will avoid macro-led or thematic investment calls.

Groww Mutual Fund highlighted that India's economy is undergoing a broad-based transformation, with rising infrastructure spending, deeper capital markets, improved access to formal credit, and population-scale digital platforms reducing historical disadvantages faced by smaller companies. While small caps have historically shown the potential for higher long-term returns, the fund house cautioned that they also come with higher interim volatility. After a phase of relative underperformance, valuations in parts of the small cap segment have moderated, even as

fundamentals have improved, widening opportunities for research-led investors.

In Guwahati, interest in small cap mutual funds is gradually increasing, driven by higher retail participation and growing awareness of long-term investing. Financial advisors in the city note that investors are showing greater willingness to allocate a portion of their portfolios to small caps, though they continue to stress the importance of a long investment horizon and risk assessment.

The scheme will be benchmarked against the Nifty Smallcap 250 TRI, managed by Anupam Tiwari, with a minimum investment of ₹500. Investors have been advised to read scheme documents carefully before investing.

Nissan recasts AMIEO leadership, brings India under Thierry Sabbagh as growth push accelerates

Guwahati: Nissan has announced senior management changes across its Africa, Middle East, India, Europe and Oceania (AMIEO) region to sharpen execution of its Re:Nissan transformation plan and improve operational speed and customer focus. Effective January 1, 2026, Thierry Sabbagh has assumed an expanded role as Divisional Vice President and President, Middle East, KSA, CIS and India – Nissan and Infiniti, bringing India directly under his remit.

The move underlines India's strategic priority in 2026 as Nissan steps up its market resurgence. The company plans to introduce three new models over the next 14–16 months—GRAVITE,



TEKTON and a 7-seater C-SUV—while expanding its dealer footprint to 250 customer touchpoints nationwide. Massimiliano Messina, Chairperson, Nissan AMIEO, said empowering regional leadership would make the organisation more agile and

competitive. Sabbagh said the Middle East and India offer significant growth opportunities and pledged to accelerate value delivery for customers.

Welcoming the appointment, Saurabh Vatsa, Managing Director, Nissan Motor India, said the move strengthens

leadership as the company shifts from transformation to execution, with a clear focus on products and sustainable growth.

In Guwahati, auto dealers and analysts see Nissan's upcoming launches especially in the compact and mid-size SUV spaces timely, given rising demand in Assam and the wider Northeast. An expanded dealer network and stronger leadership focus are expected to improve after-sales reach and gradually lift Nissan's competitiveness in the region.

Nissan also announced the departure of Leon Dorssers, Senior Vice President and Chief of Commercial Operations, concluding a career that began in Nissan Europe in 1992.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas highlights diaspora's economic impact, remittances power India's growth



Guwahati: Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) was celebrated with enthusiasm across India and abroad on January 9, highlighting the growing economic and strategic role of the Indian diaspora in India's development. Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended greetings to Indians living overseas, stating that they act as a strong bridge between India and the world, strengthening global ties and economic engagement.

Indian missions worldwide marked the occasion through business-focused and community events. India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva hosted a large gathering of people of Indian origin. In China, the Consulate General of India in Shanghai highlighted Indian entrepreneurship. Consul General Pratik Mathur visited Hangzhou's regional tourism facilities and emerging AI hub, interacting with Indian professionals and diaspora youth working in next-generation AI startups. He appreciated their contribution to innovation and "Made in India, Made for the World" technology solutions.

The Indian Embassy in Bhutan said PBD is a key occasion to renew bonds and honour the diaspora's role in national development. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also greeted nearly 35 million NRIs and people of Indian origin, praising their contribution to global influence, innovation and progress.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa on January 9, 1915. According to Reserve Bank of India, remittances from overseas Indians stood at about USD 130 billion, accounting for over three per cent of India's GDP. In Guwahati, traders and real estate players say steady remittance inflows from overseas Assamese and North East diaspora are supporting housing demand, retail consumption, education spending and small business investments. Market participants note that this external income stream provides stability to local trade and services, reinforcing Guwahati's role as a key commercial hub in the region.

CVL crosses 10 crore KYC records, strengthens India's securities market infrastructure

Guwahati: CDSL Ventures Limited (CVL), India's first and largest KYC Registration Agency (KRA), has crossed a major milestone by surpassing 10 crore KYC records, reinforcing its leadership position in the country's financial market ecosystem. The achievement highlights the scale, efficiency and reliability of CVL's operations, as well as its pivotal role in strengthening the KYC framework of India's securities market.

The expanding KYC base reflects rising investor participation and the con-

tinued push towards digitisation and compliance across capital markets. As a critical market intermediary, CVL supports seamless onboarding and verification processes for investors and market participants, helping improve transparency, reduce duplication and enhance regulatory compliance. The milestone also underlines the trust placed by intermediaries and institutions in CVL's robust KYC infrastructure.

In Guwahati, the development is being viewed as a positive enabler for the

growing investor base in Assam and the Northeast. Market participants in Guwahati note that efficient and centralised KYC systems have helped brokers and financial service providers onboard new clients faster, especially first-time retail investors. With increasing financial awareness and access to digital platforms in the region, CVL's expanding KYC footprint is expected to support smoother market participation and stronger integration of Guwahati's capital market activity with national trends.



Life insurance market outlook turns strong for 2026, says IAC-Life Chairperson Kamlesh Rao

Guwahati: The life insurance market is expected to record steady and broad-based growth through 2026, supported by regulatory reforms, rising customer awareness and product innovation, according to Kamlesh Rao, Chairperson of the Insurance Awareness Committee (IAC-Life).

Rao said 2025 proved to be a landmark year for the sector, with policy measures fo-

cused on improving customer value and strengthening the role of insurance in social welfare delivery. Key developments included revised surrender value norms, GST exemption on select policies and the rollout of the Bima Sugam portal. These moves are expected to enhance product appeal and improve accessibility across consumer segments.

Market demand continues

to be driven by protection, annuity and savings-linked products, reflecting a shift toward household financial security and retirement planning. Rao said this momentum is likely to push insurers to introduce stronger, more customer-centric product offerings through 2026.

The outlook also factors in potential expansion by foreign insurers, encouraged by relaxed FDI norms. Increased

participation is expected to improve competition, efficiency and technological adoption across the market.

Supported by a favourable regulatory environment, ongoing digital transformation and higher consumer awareness, Rao said the life insurance industry is positioned for sustained and healthy growth in 2026, reinforcing its role in long-term financial protection.

Term Insurance positioned as core pillar of financial security for Indian households

Guwahati: Term life insurance is being underscored as a vital component of long-term financial planning for Indian families, particularly in a fast-developing economy where financial responsibilities continue to rise. Industry stakeholders emphasise that term insurance provides crucial financial protection to dependents in the unfortunate event of the untimely demise of the family's earning member.

Term insurance offers substantial life cover at relatively affordable premiums, making it one of the most accessible protection tools available. For example, a healthy 30-year-old non-smoker with no pre-existing medical conditions can secure a ₹1 crore life cover for a 30-year tenure by paying a monthly premium of close to ₹1,000. In the event of a claim, the policy proceeds can help families meet immediate expenses, repay outstanding home or education loans, support children's education, and sustain their standard of living.

Industry guidance suggests that the appropriate cover

and tenure should be decided after assessing current expenses, existing and potential liabilities, dependents' education, marriage and health-care needs, and the long-term impact of inflation. While a common benchmark is coverage of 10–15 times annual income, policies aligned with the working lifespan—generally up to 60–65 years—are considered most effective. Individuals in their 30s are increasingly opting for 30–40 year policies to balance affordability with extended protection.

Addressing concerns about the absence of maturity benefits, insurers reiterate that term insurance is designed primarily for risk protection. Return of Premium plans, however, are available for those seeking a refund of premiums on survival, subject to conditions. A member of the Insurance Awareness Committee (IAC-Life) of the Life Insurance Council said term insurance has become a necessity rather than a choice, urging households to secure the lives of their earning members without delay.

Elmac scales up North East push with high-visibility outdoor campaign to drive festive demand

Guwahati: Elmac Agro, the Kolkata-born sauces and condiments brand owned by Desai Foods Private Limited, is betting big on rising consumption in the North East with a high-impact outdoor advertising campaign rolled out during the peak festive and year-end season. Best known for its sharp and flavour-rich Kasundi, Elmac also has a strong portfolio of Chinese sauces, including Green Chilli Sauce, Red Chilli Sauce and Soya Bean Sauce, which enjoy wide acceptance across Eastern and North-Eastern India.

The campaign, running from December 15, 2025 to the first week of January 2026, spans key cities such as Guwahati, Shillong, Aizawl, Imphal, Agartala and Dimapur. Designed around the theme "Celebrate with the flavours you love," the outdoor creatives showcase food-led moments of togetherness, positioning Elmac as an everyday companion for cooking, finishing and serving meals. Large-format product visuals supported by appetising food imagery aim to drive instant recall and reinforce the brand's strong lo-



cal connect.

Sanjana Desai, Executive Director, DFPL, said the initiative reflects Elmac's long-standing relationship with the region's bold food culture and its focus on stay-

ing close to everyday kitchens. The campaign also builds on the brand's broader progression, which includes sauces, Kasundi, Lime Juice Cordial and Mango Panna as table staples across occasions.

Vibrant Gujarat momentum grows as Marwadi University proposes Rs 1,000 cr investment ahead of regional conference



Mumbai: Market watchers see renewed optimism in

Gujarat's education and innovation ecosystem as Marwadi

University prepares to host the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conferences (VGRC) from January 11–12, 2026. Organised by the Government of Gujarat, the event is expected to strengthen investor confidence and position the state as a global education and investment hub.

In a major development, the university has submitted a proposal for a ₹1,000 crore MoU to the Education De-

partment, Government of Gujarat. The investment aims to build state-of-the-art academic infrastructure, advanced laboratories, modern sports complexes, upgraded hostels, and a 10,000 sq ft innovation and start-up centre. A separate continuing education block will also target working professionals and entrepreneurs, signalling strong growth potential in the professional learning market.

The conference will run under the "Vocal for Local" theme across four Gujarat zones, with international participation expected from Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, the Netherlands, and organisations including JETRO, ICBC, USISPF, World Bank, and the Russian Federation.

Trustee Dhruv Marwadi and Provost R.B. Jadeja said the initiative aligns with Viksit Bharat@2047 and

Viksit Gujarat@2047, with key focus areas including MSMEs, start-ups, AI, digital marketing, sustainability, tourism, culture, and food processing.

With seminars, exhibitions, B2B-B2G meetings, MoU signings, and vendor development programmes scheduled, analysts say VGRC is set to reinforce Gujarat's trajectory as a high-growth investment destination.

Mother's Recipe targets high-growth North East market with outdoor push for ready-to-cook spice mixes

Aizawl: Mother's Recipe is sharpening its North East market strategy with a focused outdoor campaign to boost awareness and adoption of its Ready to Cook spice mixes during the festive and year-end period. The legacy Indian brand is betting on a strong shift in consumer behaviour, where households are increasingly preparing flavour-rich favourites at home while prioritising authenticity, convenience and health. The company's Ready to Cook range highlights all-natural ingredients and no added preservatives, positioning it as a quality-led solution for everyday cooking.

The campaign runs from December 20, 2025 to the first week of January 2026, deploying high-impact hoardings across Agartala, Imphal, Dimapur, Aizawl and Shillong. The creatives feature restaurant-style dishes, strong appetite cues and clear product visibility to drive recall among families, working professionals and young consumers. Mother's Recipe views the North East as a key strategic region, citing its vibrant food culture and openness to experimenting with flavours. Commenting on the rollout, Executive Director Sanjana Desai said the brand is "bringing restaurant style flavours into everyday home cooking," aligning with changing lifestyles.

The campaign aims to accelerate trials, deepen brand connect and strengthen top-of-mind recall reinforcing the core proposition that restaurant-style taste can now be created easily at home.



MHA Crackdown: Pakistan's New Bid to Lure J&K Youth Foiled

MHA Directs J&K Security Establishment to Closely Monitor Movement Across Union Territory Borders

NEW DELHI, JAN 12: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has recently received a report from the intelligence agencies suggesting a renewed attempt by Pakistan-based handlers to lure young residents of Jammu and Kashmir into crossing over to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan, sources said on Monday. The sources said the intelligence agencies have raised concerns over a possible



attempt to revive terrorism in the Union Territory, which it witnessed in the 1990s, as the trend, which had in the recent past completely subsided, appeared to regain momentum.

The sources said, following the report instructions have passed on to the security establishment in J&K to launch a crackdown on such incidents and keep a close eye on the movement of people to and from the Union Territory. Giving examples establishing the trend, in the report the intelligence agencies said that the recent attachment action by the Poonch Police of the properties belonging to Pakistan-based terror handlers Rafiq Nai and

Jamal Lone, both accused of facilitating infiltration and encouraging locals to cross over to PoK, which is indicative of such movements.

It is learnt that Lone had himself crossed over into PoK earlier and has since then been involved in anti-India activities, the sources said, adding that Pakistan's security establishment has again been seeking to increase the crossing over by the J&K youth, who are in turn trained and engaged in a range of illegal activities. "These individuals are being used for narcotics smuggling, counterfeiting and to assist terrorist groups by becoming guides for them in the Union Territory," a source said, adding that Pakistan's state and non-state actors are actively looking for terrain-savvy locals to support their nefarious design. According to the sources, many of those, who crossed over in earlier years, later regretted the decision and sought assistance from Indian authorities to return and in several cases India facilitated their return and placed them in rehabilitation camps before reintegrating them into mainstream society. It is also learnt that the intelligence agencies have cautioned the government that if such elements are left unchecked, the renewed drive to rope in J&K youth could pose serious security threat, as unlike earlier instances, which mostly driven by economic consideration, the present trend is relying more on propaganda and radicalization by engaging vulnerable through social media outreach.

Budget session begins Jan 28; FM Sitharaman to present Budget on Feb 1

NEW DELHI, JAN 12: In a first, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the general budget in Parliament on February 1, a Sunday, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla announced on Monday. This will be Sitharaman's ninth budget presentation, one short of the record 10 budgets presented by the then finance minister Morarji Desai. The Budget session of Parliament begins on January 28 with President Droupadi Murmu addressing the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha members assembled in the Lok Sabha chamber. Sitharaman is likely to present the Economic Survey in both the Houses of Parliament after the President's address. The finance minister will present the General Budget on February 1, which has been designated as the Budget Day by the government. Earlier, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju had said the Budget session will begin on January 28 and continue till April 2.

The first part of the session will conclude on February



13 and reconvene on March 9, allowing time for scrutiny of Budget proposals by parliamentary committees. Meanwhile, the Congress, on Monday, hoped that the forthcoming Union Budget will take meaningful steps to address the challenges of sluggish private corporate investment and disparities in income as higher GDP growth rates in actuality will simply not be sustainable.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said household savings rates have declined considerably, and wealth, income, and consumption inequalities con-

tinue to deepen. Ramesh said it remains to be seen if the forthcoming Union Budget boldly comes out of the comfort zone of statistical illusions, acknowledges realities and challenges, and takes meaningful steps to deal with them. "It will no doubt reflect the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission that had submitted its report on November 17, 2025. These recommendations, covering the period 2026/27- 2031/32, relate to the sharing of tax revenues between the Centre and States and the distribution of these revenues among the States themselves," he said in a social media post.

PM Modi, German Chancellor Merz blend diplomacy with tradition at kite festival

AHMEDABAD, JAN 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Monday, inaugurated the International Kite Festival-2026 at Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad and later enjoyed kite flying with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

After paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at the Sabarmati Ashram, PM Modi and Chancellor Merz went to the Sabarmati Riverfront, where the state government has organised the kite festival. At the venue, Modi and Merz interacted with women artisans and understood the process of making kites. After the inauguration, both the leaders took a ride in an open vehicle and also tried their hands at flying kites.

As many as 135 kitists from 50 countries and nearly 1,000 kite enthusiasts from India are participating in the International Kite Festival-2026 in Ahmedabad, according to a Gujarat government release. As part of the festival, the kitists have already visited places like Rajkot, Surat, Dholavira (in Kutch) and Statue of Unity (Narmada) during the last two days and enthralled the visitors, it said, adding that the festival in Ahmedabad will continue till January 14. Last year, the festival attracted more than 3.83 lakh visitors across Gujarat. Through the International Kite Festival, Gujarat Tourism is attracting visitors to leading cultural and tourist desti-

nations, such as Dholavira and the Statue of Unity. More than five lakh tourists are expected to visit Gujarat to witness the International Kite Festival this year, the release added. Later, they are expected to engage in bilateral engagements at Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre in Gandhinagar, where both leaders will review the progress made in the India-Germany strategic partnership, which has recently completed 25 years. In the evening, Modi will join delegation-level talks between the two countries at Mahatma Mandir, followed by a joint press statement, officials said. The MEA had earlier said Prime Minister Modi and Chancellor Merz will also



engage with business and industry leaders and exchange views on is-

ssues of regional and global importance.

MP Startup Summit 2026: CM Yadav hails India's science, innovation drive

BHOPAL, JAN 12: Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav on Monday emphasised India's rich legacy of innovation while underscoring the pivotal role of startups in propelling the nation towards becoming the world's top economy. Addressing the Madhya Pradesh Startup Summit & Ecosystem Awards 2026 at Ravindra Bhavan, Bhopal, he highlighted forgotten contributions of Indian scientists and praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts in fostering research and entrepreneurship. Dr Yadav recalled the ground-breaking work of Sir Jagdish Chandra



Bose, who in the late 19th century demonstrated that plants have life, sensitivity, and reactions to stimuli -- experiments now validated by mod-

ern "gastography" showing 10,000 times higher frequency in plant responses. He also noted Bose's 1895 demonstration of microwaves in Kolkata, later adopted by Marconi for the Nobel Prize, and early semiconductor ideas, lamenting that post-Independence governments overlooked these due to resource constraints. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country is changing," Dr Yadav said, calling for applause for the PM's initiatives in promoting re-

search and startups, including a 2022 programme launched from Indore. He showcased innovative startups, such as one developing a low-cost machine that harvests one acre of crops for just Rs 10 in an hour via a TV-screen-operated mini-tractor, addressing environmental and agricultural needs. Dr Yadav expressed confidence that India, now the fourth-largest economy, will soon rank third and eventually first. Chief Secretary Anurag Jain, addressing the gathering, commended the state's proactive policies and ecosystem building, noting, "Madhya Pradesh's

focus on innovation, ease of doing business, and inclusive growth is positioning it as a key player in India's startup journey." MSME Minister Chetanya Kahsya praised the summit's interactive platform, stating, "Such events foster collaboration between government, entrepreneurs, and investors, accelerating Madhya Pradesh's emergence as a startup hub." The two-day summit, powered by the Madhya Pradesh Startup Policy 2025, has brought together innovators, investors, and ecosystem leaders to drive inclusive, future-ready growth.



Kohli Hits 28k: Fastest in History



VADODARA, JAN 12: India batting stalwart Virat Kohli on Sunday became the fastest player to reach 28,000 runs across formats in international cricket and the second most prolific scorer behind Sachin Tendulkar during the first ODI against

New Zealand here. Playing in his 624th innings, Kohli got to the milestone by hitting a four off New Zealand leg-spinner Adithya Ashok. Tendulkar had reached the landmark during his 644th innings, while Sri Lankan legend Kumar Sangakkara,

only the third player in the 28000-run club, crossed the feat in his 666th innings. The 37-year-old Kohli had come into the match with 27975 runs across formats in international cricket. Tendulkar scored 34357 runs from 782 innings, while Sangakkara made 28016 runs from 666 innings. In February 2023, Kohli had become the fastest batter to reach 25,000 runs, achieving the mark in 549 innings, 28 innings quicker than Tendulkar.

In October 2023, Kohli went past 26,000 runs as the quickest to the landmark. A year later, in September 2024, he reached 27,000 runs in his 594th innings.

Nikhat, Lovlina win gold at senior nationals

CHENNAI, JAN 11: The final in the 50-55kg weight category had its share of hype before the starting bell. In the end though it was up and coming star Jadumani Singh who got the better of the Pawan Bartwal 5-0 to clinch his maiden Senior Boxing National title at the Gautam Buddha University in Greater Noida. Telangana's two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen packed off Nitu of Haryana by an identical margin in the women's 48-51kg final. Even Lovlina Borgohain was champ in her category. SSCB topped the overall standings with 12 gold medals in the Elite Men and Women National Boxing Championships with easy wins at Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida on Saturday. SSCB won nine of them in men and three in women category.

This was the first time that the men and women National Championships are being held simultaneously at the same venue.

A few minutes later SSCB's Aditya Pratap (men's 60-65kg) got the better of Abhinash Jamwal of Himachal 3:2 while Ankush (men's



75-80kg) defeated Malsawmtluanga to bag their maiden senior national titles.

In the women's section, SSCB's Preeti (51-54kg) and Pranjal Yadav (60-65kg) and Railway's Priya (57-60kg) and Alfian Khan (80+kg) bagged their first-ever senior national gold medals. Meanwhile, world champion Minakshi established her supremacy on the women's 45-48kg weight category with a 5:0 win over Manju Rani of RSPB. Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain (women's 70-75kg) defeated Sanamacha Chanu Thokchom of Railways to win the gold medal.

Sourav Ganguly's Pretoria Coaching Journey



PAARL, JAN 11: Donning multiple hats is not new to former India captain Sourav Ganguly. He has captained the national team, IPL franchises, mentored teams and has been Director of Cricket for JSW Sports. However, for the first time in his career, Ganguly is now head coach of a team — Pretoria Capitals in SA20. And it has been a rollercoaster of a start for him and the Capitals in the ongoing season. After seven matches, Capitals have three wins, including the close finish against the Paarl Royals at Boland Park on Saturday. Speaking on the sidelines of the match in a select media interaction, Ganguly said he is still learning as a coach. "I am also learning. I may have played any number of matches, captained any number of matches, but this is different. I am coaching, and I am doing this to learn and understand," he said. Capitals got off to a rough start, losing their first two games, and despite the win against MI Cape Town, they once again went down to the Sunrisers Eastern Cape. Just when it seemed like they were down and out, the Capitals eked out a win against Durban's Super Giants before beating Paarl Royals. Ganguly hoped that consecutive wins would give them the momentum to get back on the play-off race. "When you play any big tournament, whether it's a World Cup, IPL or SA20, the back-end gets very tight and competitive, and that's where you need to be at your best. If you look at our last four games (one no result excluded) we have won three. The beginning of this year, when I came, was a bit rough. We fancied ourselves in Pretoria," he said, before adding, "It's a very important point. These sorts of wins, when you defend one side, actually give you a lot of confidence. Hopefully it will do that."

Recalling the fond memories of the 2003 World Cup, where he led India to the final before losing to Australia, Ganguly said, "This has been a great place for us. I have come so many times, World Cup Finals, 2003. We lost, but we are exceptional in the tournament. It's a place for cricket. You can see how good the tournament is. Stands are full, even on a weekday; people come and watch. Everywhere, whether it's Cape Town, whether it's Pretoria, whether it's Paarl, it's a cricketing country, it's been a great tournament."

Pipers Slay Tigers in Shootout for WHIL Glory



RANCHI, JAN 10: It was eventually Sofie Gierts' coaching tour de force that saw SG Pipers pull the rabbit out of the hat. For it won the one penalty shootout that mattered. In the Women's Hockey India League final at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Stadium here on Saturday, the game trickled down to the third sudden-death of the season between Pipers and Shraichi Bengal Tigers. The Bengal franchise had won the last two.

Unstoppable: Kim & Seo's Service Magic



CHENNAI, JAN 12: There's an air of inevitability when Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae, men's doubles World No 1, take the court at the moment. The Korean pair, the gold standard in the category, always seem to be a step or two ahead of their rivals. Their skills, in-game intelligence, versatility, exceptional chemistry have made them an all-weather duo, something that helped them amass 11 titles last year, tying the record for most men's doubles titles in a single year (BWF World Tour era). Many rivals have tried to solve the Kim and Seo puzzle but to no avail. On Sunday, Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik threw the kitchen sink, even managing to win a game against the Korean duo. But it was a bridge too far for the Malaysian duo as Kim and Seo eventually added to their record run by capturing the Malaysian Open title — a BWF World Tour Super 1000 event — in Kuala Lumpur.

The Korean pair won 21-15, 12-21, 21-18 in 66 minutes. That was their 20th consecutive win, a run that has resulted in four titles. Such dominance is mighty impressive given the competition at the elite level of the sport. Now, they'll have their eyes on the India Open, an event where they had finished as second-best last year.

Brahim Díaz scores in fifth straight game as Morocco joins Senegal in Africa Cup semifinals

Morocco next plays Nigeria or Algeria on Wednesday

RABAT, JAN 12: Brahim Díaz scored again and host Morocco joined Senegal in the semifinals of the Africa Cup of Nations with a 2-0 win over Cameroon on Friday. Díaz extended his Moroccan record by scoring in a fifth straight game at the tournament when he ushered in with his groin Ayoub El Kaabi's header from a corner in the 27th minute. Díaz ran to the corner and shrugged as if to say he didn't know how he scored again. Ismael Saibari sealed the win in the 74th with a low shot inside the far post after a corner, just minutes after Cameroon substitute Georges-Kévin Nkoudou went close at the other end.

That proved to be five-time champion Cameroon's only real chance as the Indomitable Lions succumbed to the Atlas Lions for the first time in five meetings at an Africa Cup. "It wasn't a perfect



match because in the second half we allowed Cameroon to gain confidence again," Morocco coach Walid Regragui said. "We spent a lot of energy in the first half, we were all over the field. But in the second half we fell back, so there are things that can be improved. At the end of the day we're in the

semifinals." Morocco next plays Nigeria or Algeria on Wednesday. Cameroon players danced their way to the locker room before the game but when they took to the field they were greeted by deafening whistles at the near 70,000-capacity Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium. Morocco will have the fans' support there in the semifinals, also, and the final on Jan. 18 should it progress.

The Atlas Lions might have won by more but for Cameroon captain Nouhou Tolo's spectacular clearance early on and Samuel Kotto's goal-line clearance in the second half. Abdessamad Ezzalzouli fired just wide and El Kaabi hit the side netting in the first half, then Ezzalzouli headed over in the second. The tireless Díaz went off to ovations in the final minute. He'll have an extra day's rest over the team's next opponents.

