

## NSCN/GPRN Claims Changlang Attack Responsibility



**Dibrugarh, Jan 27:** The NSCN/GPRN has claimed responsibility for the attack on Ranglom village in Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh. In a statement, the group said its Naga Army tactical unit targeted the 4th Assam Rifles camp at around 8 AM on Monday. The outfit added that casualties could not be confirmed due to an area lockdown imposed by security forces.

The group termed the attack a “necessary step” and accused Indian security forces of harassing civilians, asserting that it would continue operations to “defend the Naga homeland.” The camp, located near the Myanmar border about 10 kilometers from the district headquarters, was reportedly targeted by what is believed to be a joint operation by cadres of ULFA-Independent and NSCN (K-YA). Sources said the attack occurred around 8:45 AM. The Assam Rifles responded promptly with a counter-attack. No casualties have been reported so far.

Following the incident, security has been reinforced in the border area, and a joint operation involving security forces has been launched to secure the region.

## PM Modi Extends Birthday Greetings To Meghalaya CM Conrad Sangma

**Meghalaya, Jan 27:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday wished Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on his birthday, appreciating his efforts to fulfill the aspirations of the state’s people. In a post on X, Modi wrote, “Birthday wishes to Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma Ji. His efforts to fulfil the aspirations of Meghalaya’s people are noteworthy. I pray for his long life and good health. @SangmaConrad.”

Sangma expressed gratitude in response, saying, “Thank you Prime Minister @narendramodi ji for your blessings. May God bless you.”



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis also conveyed his greetings, posting, “Heartiest birthday greetings to Meghalaya CM Conrad K Sangma ji! Wishing you a long life and good health!” Assam Chief Minister Hi-

manta Biswa Sarma praised Sangma’s leadership, stating, “Birthday greetings to Chief Minister of Meghalaya Shri @SangmaConrad. Under his guidance, the state is scaling new heights of progress and prosperity. Prayers to Maa

Kamakhya and Srimanta Sankardev for his good health and long life.”

Sangma, president of the National People’s Party (NPP), assumed office for a second consecutive term in March 2023, with Deputy Chief Ministers Prestone Tynsong and Sniawbhalang Dhar. The NPP-led alliance, backed by 45 MLAs including two from the BJP, formed the government after securing 26 seats in the assembly elections. Sangma retained the South Tura constituency by 5,016 votes against BJP’s Bernard N. Marak, according to Election Commission data from March 2, 2025.

## Manipur Strike: Para SF Soldier Hurt During Air-Drop

**Imphal, Jan 27:** Elite Para Special Forces (Para SF) and Assam Rifles personnel launched a massive counter-insurgency operation in Manipur’s Kangpokpi and Imphal West districts on Tuesday. The operation involved coordinated air-drops via military helicopters. Officials reported that an Indian Army para trooper injured his hand after a bad fall during the mission. He was immediately airlifted to the Leimakhaong Military Hospital, about 20 km from Imphal. The security forces focused on the Koutruk Ching hill range. A dozen para troopers and Assam

Rifles personnel were deployed after being airlifted from the Leimakhaong Military Base Camp.

They targeted areas containing abandoned bunkers set up by Kuki militants. Several bunkers were dismantled, but officials confirmed that no arrests were made. The operation comes amid rising tensions in Manipur. Authorities intensified security after recent reports of drones being used to drop bombs. In September 2024, suspected Kuki militants reportedly dropped bombs in Koutruk using weaponized drones,



injuring three Meitei residents, including a young girl. The heliborne mission started at 7:00 AM and ended at 1:30 PM. Officials said the operation aimed to tack-

le “Anti-National Elements” (ANEs) and armed militant groups. It specifically targeted insurgent hideouts to maintain peace in this sensitive border state.

## In Brief

### Elephant Kills Elderly Woman in West Karbi Anglong

**Diphu, Jan 27:** A 70-year-old woman was killed after being trampled by a wild elephant in West Karbi Anglong district of Assam on Tuesday, police said. The incident occurred at Hijunglangsang village under the jurisdiction of Jirikideng police station. The victim, identified as Kasang Kropi, was returning from a religious programme along with a group of women when they encountered a herd of wild elephants.

According to police, one of the elephants attacked and trampled the woman, while the others in the group managed to flee to safety. She died on the spot due to the injuries sustained in the attack. Further details are awaited.

### Nituparna Rajbongshi: Jan 25 Cartoon



**Guwahati, Jan 27:** Treat your eyes to the insightful satire of Assam’s celebrated cartoonist, Nituparna Rajbongshi, in today’s visual commentary for Sunday, January 25, 2026. Northeast Now presents this weekly dose of Rajbongshi’s unique perspective on the Northeast’s current events and pressing concerns.

His distinct artistic style transforms everyday nuances into powerful visual narratives, revealing the absurdities and contradictions that often escape notice. With a keen eye for observation and a talent for visual storytelling, Rajbongshi’s cartoons serve as a mirror to the region’s realities, prompting reflection on critical issues and fostering a more informed and engaged community by sparking conversations and encouraging critical thinking.

## Manik Saha: Party Acts Against Lawbreakers

**Agartala, Jan 27:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday warned Bharatiya Janata Party workers that any involvement in illegal or unlawful activities would invite strict action, asserting that indiscipline would not be tolerated within the party. Speaking to reporters, Saha said there was no place for unlawful conduct in the BJP and that directions had been issued to take stern action against those found violating party discipline. He said some party workers were not fully aware of the party’s functioning and needed to understand the expectations of the organisation and its leadership.

The Chief Minister said the image and reputation of the BJP would not be allowed to be tarnished by the actions of a few individuals. He added that the party would act firmly against

those whose conduct violated the law or party norms. Saha’s remarks came a day after a BJP leader was arrested in connection with alleged criminal activities. The ruling BJP on Sunday suspended Rajib Saha, president of the Barjala Mandal Committee under the Barjala Assembly constituency, with immediate effect. In an official order, state BJP general secretary Amit Rakshit said that, as per the direction of the state president of the Tripura Pradesh BJP, Rajib Bhattacharjee, MP (Rajya Sabha), Rajib Saha had been placed under suspension following his alleged involvement in criminal activities and his arrest by police on January 24. Sources said multiple complaints had been lodged against Rajib Saha for allegedly illegally collecting money from people, including those purchasing land in the Barjala

area on the outskirts of Agartala.

Police said the BJP leader was arrested after a case was registered on the basis of a complaint filed by the bodyguard of a judicial officer. Last week, Rajib Saha allegedly misbehaved with Tripura High Court Registrar (Administration, Planning and Head of Office) Sankar Lal Dutta and assaulted his bodyguard when the judicial officer visited the Barjala area to inspect a plot of land intended for purchase. Dutta had earlier served as the District and Sessions Judge of Gomati district. The incident triggered political reactions in the state, with opposition parties criticising the ruling BJP over the matter. Meanwhile, earlier this month, the Tripura BJP state committee cautioned its members against misrepresenting the party’s views or positions. Without



naming any individual, the party said it had come to its notice that a person was falsely introducing himself as a prospective state BJP president and visiting various districts and mandals to establish contact with party workers, thereby creating confusion and misinformation. The party said steps were being taken to prevent such activities and to maintain organisational discipline.



# Assam's MES NCC Cadets Deliver Stellar Performance at R-Day Parade

Guwahati, Jan 26: Modern English School (MES) marked a proud milestone during the 77th Republic Day celebrations at the Assam Legislative Assembly, where 30 NCC cadets from the school took part in the Republic Day Parade in the presence of the Chief Guest, Biswajit Daimary, Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly. While MES has previously participated in Republic Day events at Judges Field, this year was sig-



nificant as the school's NCC cadets represented MES for the first time. The cadets marched with precision and discipline under the guidance

of the Drill Instructors (PI Officers) of the 1 Assam Battalion NCC. Leading the MES contingent, Cadet Ranakravit Gogoi served as Platoon Commander, demonstrating exemplary leadership, dedication, and commitment.

The participation of the NCC cadets showcased the school's emphasis on discipline, patriotism, and holistic development, making the occasion a moment of pride for the entire Modern English School community.



## Assam CM: Choose Progress Over Vote Bank Politics

Dibrugarh, Jan 26: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday urged citizens to decide between "vote bank politics" and the development initiatives pursued by his government over the past five years, as the state heads toward upcoming elections. Speaking at the Republic Day function in Dibrugarh after unfurling the national flag, Sarma contrasted Assam's current development with the violence and insurgency that marked past Republic and Independence Days. He emphasized his government's efforts to protect land, culture, and identity, stating that encroachments are being cleared and steps taken to safeguard the state's heritage.

Sarma highlighted infrastructure, education, health, agriculture, industry, and social sector progress achieved over the last five years. He said, "Development without securing identity remains in-

complete," citing projections that indicate a growing Muslim population in Assam from East Bengal (Bangladesh) and land encroachments that previous governments had not addressed. He noted that the Supreme Court recently approved provisions under the Immigration (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, enabling district commissioners to deport foreigners within 24 hours.

The CM also honored the Assam Movement of 1979-1985, during which 860 lives were lost, and credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for establishing the Swahid Smarak (Martyrs' Column) in Guwahati. He highlighted recent government actions against child marriage and polygamy and emphasized initiatives for indigenous groups, including tea tribes and Adivasis, such as land rights, one-time grants, job reservations, improved infrastructure, skill centers, and health facilities.

## Arunachal: Assam Rifles Camp Targeted by Suspected Militants



Dibrugarh, Jan 26: Amid Republic Day celebrations, an Assam Rifles camp in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district came under attack by suspected militants on Monday morning. According to sources, the attack occurred around 8:45 a.m. at the Ranglum Assam Rifles camp, located near the Myanmar border, approximately 10 kilometres from the Changlang district headquarters. Officials suspect a joint operation by cadres of ULFA-Independent and NSCN (K-YA) was responsible for the assault.

Following the attack, Assam Rifles personnel launched a prompt counter-operation. No casualties or injuries have been reported so far. In response, security has been significantly reinforced across the border region. A coordinated joint operation involving security forces has been initiated to track and neutralise the militants.

The incident comes amid heightened vigilance in the Northeast during national celebrations, underscoring the persistent threat posed by insurgent groups along the Assam-Arunachal-Myanmar frontier.

## Mizoram: ₹816Cr Drug Seizures Reported

Aizawl, Jan 26: Mizoram Governor Gen (Dr) Vijay Kumar Singh (Rtd) on Monday said the state police have intensified action against narcotic trafficking and organised crime, leading to the seizure of drugs and related substances worth Rs 816 crore since April 2025. Addressing the 77th Republic Day celebrations in Aizawl after unfurling the national flag, the governor said 338 people were arrested in 217 cases linked to drug trafficking. He also informed that smuggled Burmese areca nuts valued at Rs 17.8 crore were confiscated during the same period.

Singh said the police seized 42 arms along with ammunition and magazines, leading to multiple arrests and registration of cases. He added that strong enforcement against the illegal liquor trade, despite Mizoram being a dry state since 2019, resulted in the seizure of local spirits, Indian Made Foreign Liquor, foreign liquor and beer. A total of 82 cases were registered and 99 people arrested in connection with liquor-related offences. The governor said the Excise and Narcotics department seized 475 kg of drugs and arrested 611 offenders during the 2025-26 financial year, generating over Rs 1.69 crore in revenue,



which exceeded the annual target. He also said the home department has set up a Directorate of Prosecution. On development initiatives, Singh said the state government has launched Phase-II of the 'Bana Kaih' (Hand Holding) scheme with an allocation of Rs 350 crore for 2025-26 to support beneficiaries through loans and financial assistance. He further announced the launch of the Mizoram Universal Health Care Scheme, under which beneficiaries will be eligible for cashless treatment of up to Rs 5 lakh at empanelled hospitals within and outside Mizoram, including government hospitals, private hospitals and day-care centres.

## Nagaland: CM inaugurates state's first Drone School

Dimapur, Jan 26: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Monday inaugurated the State's first Drone School and Drone Centre of Excellence at the Nagaland GIS and Remote Sensing Centre (NGISRSC) in Kohima, marking a significant step towards integrating advanced technology into governance and skill development. The inauguration formed part of the 77th Republic Day celebrations. The state-of-the-art facility is a pioneering initiative of the Nagaland GIS and Remote Sensing Centre under the Planning and Transformation Department. It aims to equip young people with specialised drone technology skills while promoting innovation-led employment opportunities across the State. Describing the initiative as a forward-looking investment, Rio said the Drone School would play a crucial role in harnessing modern technology for governance, development, and public service delivery. He commended the department for taking the



lead in introducing emerging technologies in Nagaland.

Observing that drone technology has undergone a significant transformation globally, the Chief Minister said drones, once associated primarily with warfare, are now increasingly being used for constructive and developmental purposes, including

surveying, mapping, disaster management, agriculture, and infrastructure monitoring. Rio said the Drone School would function as a hub for innovation and capacity building, facilitating the transfer of technical knowledge to districts and interior areas. This, he added, would help ensure that the benefits of technological

advancement reach the last mile.

He further noted that the initiative would strengthen Nagaland's preparedness for future challenges and position the State as a leader in the effective and responsible use of drone technology. The Chief Minister also unveiled a commemorative plaque for the Drone School and Drone Centre of Excellence in the presence of Deputy Chief Ministers T.R. Zeliang and Y. Patton. According to officials, the Drone School will offer DGCA-compliant Remote Pilot Certificate (RPC) courses, along with short-term non-DGCA programmes in FPV flying, drone repair and maintenance, and drone data analysis and mapping.

The first batch of 50 trainees, sponsored by the Nagaland Skill and Entrepreneurship Development Mission (NSEDMD), will commence training from January 27. The trainees will receive free instruction across multiple specialisations, along with placement assistance and industry linkages.



## Advanced radiation systems launched at BBCI, mark major boost to cancer care in Northeast

**Guwahati:** In a step towards strengthening cancer treatment infrastructure in Northeast India, Dr. B. Borooah Cancer Institute (BBCI) on Thursday unveiled a suite of advanced radiation therapy and diagnostic systems, enhancing precision and safety in oncology care.

The newly introduced facilities include a CT Simulator, a TLD Reader, an upgraded Elekta Synergy Linear Accelerator, and a Surface Guided Radiotherapy (SGRT) system. The upgrades have been supported under the CSR initiative of SBI Funds Management Limited, reinforcing its commitment to improving healthcare infrastructure in the region.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Nand Kishore, Managing Director and CEO of SBI Funds Management Limited, along with senior officials, clinicians, faculty members, and other dignitaries. Addressing the gathering, Kishore said the initiative reflects SBI-FML's belief that robust healthcare systems are vital for building resilient communities, particularly in regions with limited access to advanced care.

Notably, the TLD Reader, first of its kind in the Northeast for clinical hospital use will aid accurate radiation dose monitoring during Bone Marrow Transplant procedures. The CT Simulator will strengthen radiotherapy planning, while the SGRT system will enable re-



al-time patient positioning, reducing errors. The linear accelerator upgrade has extended its operational life by five years.

In Guwahati, the upgrade further cements the city's role as the region's primary healthcare hub. Enhanced cancer care facilities are expected to reduce patient outflow to metro cities, boost medical services demand, and support the growth of allied healthcare services in the local market.

## Skill India push gets global focus as Jayant Chaudhary reviews SIIC at IIE Guwahati

**Guwahati:** Jayant Chaudhary, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education, visited the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) in Guwahati during his two-day tour of Assam, underscoring the government's focus on building glob-



ally employable talent from the North Eastern Region.

During the visit, the Minister reviewed the newly operationalised Skill India International Centre (SIIC), a flagship initiative aimed at aligning Indian youth with international skill standards and overseas job markets. He said India's growth will increasingly be driven by skilled and adaptable youth, and noted that in-

stitutions like IIE and SIIC are helping bridge local talent with global opportunities through language training and entrepreneurship development.

The SIIC currently houses language classrooms, an IT laboratory and a skill lab, and is training two batches under the Japanese Language programme aligned to JLPT N5/JFT-equivalent standards. Plans are underway to introduce higher-level Japanese courses and English language training. Hostel facilities at the IIE campus are also available to trainees.

The Minister interacted with candidates preparing for employment opportunities in Japan and reviewed facilities such as the Mountaineering Sports Arena, Apparel Incubation Centre and the TRISSAM outlet showcasing indigenous products. He also met a woman entrepreneur from Morigaon engaged in mushroom-based value-added products and planted a sapling on the campus.

The visit concluded with discussions with stakeholders and Assam government officials on strengthening skilling, entrepreneurship and employability, with emphasis on nurturing youth as job creators and drivers of sustainable economic growth.

## Medanta empanels with Mizoram government to offer cashless care for MUHCS beneficiaries

**Aizawl:** Medanta, one of India's largest private multi-specialty tertiary care providers, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Government of Mizoram to extend cashless treatment facilities to beneficiaries under the Mizoram Universal Health Care Scheme (MUHCS). With this empanelment, eligible beneficiaries can avail advanced medical treatment across all six Medanta hospitals located in Gurugram, Noida, Lucknow, Patna, Indore and Ranchi.

The agreement is aimed at improving access to specialised and tertiary healthcare for residents of Mizoram, while significantly reducing out-of-pocket expenses. Medanta Chairman and Managing Director Naresh Trehan said the initiative aligns with the group's philosophy that

quality healthcare should be accessible to all, particularly in regions that have historically been underserved. He added that the partnership would help ease the financial burden on patients while ensuring dignified and timely treatment.

Mizoram faces persistent healthcare challenges, including limited availability of specialised services and the highest cancer incidence rate in the country, as indicated by long-term studies. Geographic and infrastructural constraints have also contributed to low cancer screening rates, highlighting the need for improved access to advanced care.

Welcoming the development, Lalhriatuzali Ralte, CEO of the Mizoram State Health Care Society and State Health Agency, said the tie-up creates a structured referral

pathway, enabling patients to access world-class facilities while reducing delays and uncertainty in treatment.

Mizoram represents a high-potential but under-served market, with growing demand for oncology and super-specialty services. The MUHCS-Medanta partnership is expected to strengthen organised healthcare penetration by enabling patient mobility to established tertiary centres, improving treatment outcomes and boosting confidence in institutional healthcare solutions.

Reinforcing its long-term focus on the North-East, Medanta has announced plans to develop a 400-plus bed super-specialty hospital in Guwahati and has launched a dedicated helpline (8904395588) for patients across the region.

## Mahindra upgrades Bolero Camper, Bolero Pik-Up range, strengthens position in pickup vehicle market

**Mumbai:** Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. has announced the launch of refreshed versions of its Bolero Camper and Bolero Pik-Up range, a move aimed at reinforcing its leadership in India's pickup vehicle market through improved styling, technology and comfort features.

In the Bolero Camper segment, the company has introduced the advanced iMAXX telematics solution on select variants. The connected technology offers real-time vehicle data, helping operators improve efficiency and manage fleets more effectively. The Camper range has also received exterior updates such as new decals, body-coloured ORVMs and door handles. Comfort and convenience have been enhanced with rear-seat head-



rests, air conditioning, heater and a Bluetooth-enabled music system. Mahindra has further standardised features like a recliner driver's seat with headrest, wider co-driver seat, central locking and rear seat belts across all variants. The Bolero Pik-Up range now features a new front design along with a reclining driver's seat and wider co-driver seat. Heating and air-conditioning systems have been introduced to im-

prove usability in all weather conditions.

The Bolero Camper range is priced between ₹9.85 lakh and ₹10.49 lakh (ex-showroom), while the Bolero Pik-Up range spans ₹9.19 lakh to ₹9.99 lakh, depending on variant and drivetrain. Mahindra said the upgrades target customers who rely on these vehicles for daily commercial operations, underlining its continued focus on the pickup segment.

## Honda steps up road safety investment, engages 2,400 students in Guwahati

**Guwahati:** Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) strengthened its long-term social responsibility strategy by extending its nationwide road safety awareness initiative to Guwahati, engaging over 2,400 students from Army Public School. The programme reflects the company's continued focus on safety education as a key pillar alongside its core two-wheeler business in India.

The awareness campaign centred on structured and interactive learning sessions that explained safe riding practices, traffic discipline and responsible road behaviour. Participants were introduced to road safety as a daily habit rather than a rule-based activity, highlighting its impact on individual and collective well-being. Safety riding theory sessions formed the base of the programme, supported by practical learning tools such as virtual riding simulators, danger prediction training (KikenYosoku

Training), and skill-honing activities for existing riders.

The initiative is part of HMSI's wider CSR commitment to road safety. In line with Honda's global vision of achieving zero traffic collision fatalities involving Honda vehicles by 2050, HMSI is working towards supporting India's target of reducing road fatalities by half by 2030. The company has already reached over 10 million people through its traffic train-

ing parks and safety driving education centres.

In Guwahati, where two-wheelers remain a vital mode of transport, rising vehicle usage has increased the importance of road safety awareness. From a business standpoint, HMSI's early engagement with students and young riders helps build long-term trust and brand goodwill, while also contributing to safer commuting conditions in the city's growing two-wheeler market.



## ICICI Prudential unveils Smart Insurance Plan Plus to help young India build long-term wealth

**Imphal:** As India stands at a crucial demographic and economic phase, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Limited has rolled out ICICI Pru Smart Insurance Plan Plus, a market-linked life insurance product aimed at meeting the long-term financial goals of the country's young population. With nearly 65 per cent of Indians below the age of 35, as per the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), disciplined savings

and long-term financial planning are seen as essential for turning aspirations into reality.

Designed for young earners, first-time investors, and professionals, the plan combines wealth creation with life insurance protection. Premiums start at ₹1,000 per month, making it an affordable entry point for those looking to begin early and stay invested to benefit from India's growth story. The plan offers 25 fund options and four portfolio

strategies, allowing customers to choose asset allocation based on their risk appetite. It also allows partial withdrawals for immediate financial needs and includes a 'Waiver of Premium' add-on to protect family goals in case of unforeseen events.

Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer at ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Limited, said the product is cost-effective, with the entire premium invested as per the customer's chosen strategy.

In Imphal, financial planners note a growing interest among salaried youth and small entrepreneurs in structured, long-term investment products. With rising awareness about financial security and future planning in Manipur, ULIPs are increasingly being viewed as suitable tools for disciplined savings, especially as India is expected to become the world's third-largest economy by 2028, according to Morgan Stanley.

## Zuventus Healthcare counters market misinformation, signals operational stability and sector confidence

**Mumbai:** Zuventus Healthcare Limited has issued a formal clarification to counter false and misleading communications circulating in the market, a move seen as important for maintaining stakeholder confidence in a competitive pharmaceutical landscape.

The company categorically denied rumours of closure or rebranding, stating that there has been no suspension, shutdown, or transfer of business assets. From an economic standpoint, Zuventus' assertion that its field force contin-

ues to operate at full strength across India indicates continuity in sales, distribution, and engagement with healthcare providers—key drivers of revenue stability in the branded generics segment.

Zuventus also clarified that it has no association or affiliation with any entity named Zorvia Healthcare Limited, describing such claims as inaccurate and potentially disruptive. Analysts note that misinformation of this nature can affect business sentiment, partner confidence, and workforce morale, particularly in

sectors dependent on trust and long-term relationships.

Founded in 2002, Zuventus is a subsidiary of Emcure Pharmaceuticals, which is listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange. Its linkage to a listed parent adds an additional layer of financial credibility and governance oversight.

The company reiterated its commitment to developing, manufacturing, and marketing high-quality, affordable medicines; an area of sustained demand in India's

healthcare economy. It also said it is pursuing appropriate legal remedies to protect its goodwill, a step that reflects efforts to safeguard intangible assets such as brand value.

With a diversified portfolio across cardiology, diabetology, gastroenterology, orthopaedics, pain management, and nutraceuticals, and supported by robust manufacturing standards and a growing field force, Zuventus signalled that its long-term fundamentals remain intact despite short-term market noise.

## Blenders Pride unveils Zenith Black Edition, rolls out one million bottles nationwide

**Shillong:** Blenders Pride, a leading player in India's premium whisky segment, has announced the launch of the Blenders Pride Zenith Black Edition, a limited-edition release capped at one million bottles. The new edition combines the brand's iconic whisky blend with a bold black design, aimed at strengthening its presence in the premium and luxury whisky space.

Encased in a striking black bottle, the Zenith Black Edition is positioned as a symbol of elevated luxury and distinction. The company said the design reflects sophistication, power, and aspiration—values that have long been associated with the Blenders Pride brand. The limited release is targeted at discerning whisky consumers and collectors, described by the brand as "the One in a Million."

According to the company, the Zenith Black Edition is more than a packaging update. It represents a new design language that redefines premium whisky aesthet-



ics while staying rooted in Blenders Pride's heritage and craftsmanship.

Commenting on the launch, Debashree Dasgupta, Chief Marketing Officer at Pernod Ricard India, said the Zenith Black Edition is the brand's most refined expression so far. She noted that the release brings Blenders Pride's core values of aspiration and excellence to life through a bold visual identity.

The Blenders Pride Zenith Black Edition is planned for a pan-India launch and is currently available at select exclusive retail stores across the country.

## Amway India taps rising beauty-from-within demand with Nutrilite Biotin C Plus launch

**New Delhi:** Amway India has strengthened its nutraceutical portfolio with the launch of Nutrilite™ Biotin C Plus (with Zinc & Beta Carotene), targeting the fast-growing beauty-from-within segment. The launch comes amid rising consumer concern over hair, skin and nail health, driven by stressful lifestyles, late nights and nutrient-depleted diets.

Positioned as a "beyond biotin" formulation, the product delivers 100 per cent of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of three essential nutrients—Biotin, Vitamin C and Zinc—along with Beta Carotene. Developed using Nutrilite's 90+ years of nutrition expertise, the formulation reflects Amway's focus on science-backed, plant-forward everyday nutrition aligned with recommended dietary standards.

Commenting on the mar-

ket opportunity, Rajneesh Chopra said consumers are increasingly linking overall wellbeing with external appearance. He noted that the new product strengthens Amway's beauty-from-within portfolio while supporting an innovation-led pipeline designed to help individuals take charge of their health.

The formulation combines Biotin for hair growth and follicle health, Zinc to support nail strength and skin health, and Vitamin C to aid collagen production and provide antioxidant protection. Beta Carotene, sourced from algae, helps reduce the impact of UV exposure and supports photoprotection against skin redness.

Nutrilite™ Biotin C Plus is intended for adults aged 18 and above and is available through Amway Business Owners, Amway stores across India and online at amway.in.

## Godrej Agrovet-MSRLM MoU to empower 5,000+ women farmers, boost sustainable agriculture in Maharashtra



**Guwahati:** Godrej Agrovet Limited on January 19 announced a three-year strategic partnership with the Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM-UMED) to empower over 5,000 women farmers across nine cotton-growing districts of Maharashtra. The collaboration aligns with the United Nations' declaration of 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer, highlighting the role of women

in strengthening agrifood systems and rural livelihoods.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding, Godrej Agrovet Limited will work with Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission to promote Good Agricultural Practices, Integrated Pest Management and farm safety. In the first year, the programme will cover Nagpur, Amravati, Yavatmal, Washim, Parbhani, Jalgaon, Beed, Akola and Nanded, span-

ning more than 50,000 acres and engaging 100 self-help groups per district. Over three years, it aims to reach more than 5,000 SHGs across Maharashtra, with plans to expand beyond cotton to maize and other crops.

MSRLM-UMED CEO Nilesh Sagar said the initiative would equip women farmers with scientific crop management skills to improve livelihoods. Godrej Agrovet CEO and MD Sunil Kataria described women farmers as central to sustainable and inclusive agricultural growth. Rajavelu NK, CEO of Godrej Agrovet's Crop Protection Business, said the programme would create a science-led, scalable crop protection model, while Godrej Industries Group's Rakesh Swami highlighted its long-term social impact.

Traders in Guwahati note that improved cotton productivity and quality from Maharashtra could support steadier raw material flows and pricing stability, indirectly benefiting textile-linked trade and allied markets in the Northeast.



## Axis Max Life hosts Arunachal Pradesh's first state insurance plan workshop in Itanagar

**Itanagar:** Axis Max Life Insurance Limited, formerly known as Max Life Insurance Company Limited, on Wednesday hosted the first-ever state-level workshop on the State Insurance Plan (SIP) in Arunachal Pradesh, marking a key step towards expanding insurance awareness and coverage in the state. Appointed by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) as the Lead Insurer (Life) for Arunachal Pradesh, the company is leading efforts to strengthen insurance penetration across the region.

The workshop, held in Itanagar, was attended by Shri Satyajit Tripathi, Member (Distribution), IRDAI, along with senior officials of the Arunachal Pradesh government, including Shri Karluk Ronya, Director, Accounts & Treasuries, and Shri Nabam Rajesh, Deputy Director of Panchayati Raj. Senior leadership from Axis Max Life Insurance Limited, including Managing Director and CEO Mr. Sumit Madan, also participated.

Addressing the gathering, Madan said the initiative aligns with IRDAI's vision of "Insurance for All by 2047", focusing on simplifying insurance and building long-term financial security at the household level. The event also saw the unveiling of the State Insurance Plan Report 2025, outlining a roadmap for universal insurance coverage.

The workshop highlighted the implementation of the Bima Trinity—Bima Sugam, Bima Vistar and Bima Vahak—to ensure last-mile delivery of insurance services, especially in remote areas.

In Itanagar, the rollout of the State Insurance Plan is expected to boost awareness among small traders, salaried professionals and self-employed individuals, creating fresh demand for affordable life and composite insurance products. Increased institutional engagement is also likely to strengthen trust in formal financial services, gradually expanding the city's insurance and financial protection ecosystem.

## Axis Mutual Fund unveils BSE India Sector Leaders Index Fund, NFO opens January 23

**Guwahati:** Axis Mutual Fund, one of India's leading asset management companies, on Thursday announced the launch of the Axis BSE India Sector Leaders Index Fund, an open-ended index fund that will track the BSE India Sector Leaders Index. The new fund offer (NFO) will open for subscription on January 23, 2026, and close on February 6, 2026.

The scheme aims to provide long-term wealth creation by offering broad-based exposure to India's sector-leading companies. The fund will invest in the top three companies from

each of the 21 sectors represented in the BSE 500 Index, selected based on average six-month daily total market capitalisation. This structure allows investors access to established leaders as well as niche and emerging sectors of the Indian economy.

The fund will be managed by Karthik Kumar and comes with a minimum investment amount of ₹100. It offers diversified exposure across large-, mid- and small-cap stocks, with minimum and maximum stock weights capped at 1% and 5%, respectively, and reset quarterly. The

index will be reconstituted on a semi-annual basis.

Commenting on the launch, Axis AMC MD & CEO B. Gopkumar said sector leaders often demonstrate strong fundamentals and resilience, making them attractive for long-term investors. Chief Investment Officer Ashish Gupta added that the fund follows a transparent, rules-based passive strategy designed to capture the breadth of the Indian market.

Axis AMC clarified that the fund does not guarantee returns and investments are subject to market risks.

## Škoda bets on 'Easy to Love' Kushaq to drive growth with new automatics and premium features



**Guwahati:** Škoda Auto India has unveiled the new Kushaq in India, reinforcing its business strategy of democratising European technology for Indian consumers. Pre-bookings for the updated compact SUV have opened at ₹15,000, with deliveries slated to begin by the end of March 2026. The Kushaq

remains a cornerstone of the company's India 2.0 programme and has been a key contributor to its recent sales growth.

The new Kushaq brings several segment-first offerings aimed at strengthening its value proposition. These include an all-new eight-speed torque converter auto-

matic paired with the 1.0 TSI engine, a six-speed manual option, and the seven-speed DSG with the more powerful 1.5 TSI. Feature upgrades include a panoramic sunroof, rear seat massage function, digital cockpit, AI-powered voice assistant, and a wide range of comfort and convenience features offered as standard across variants.

Safety continues to be a major selling point, with the SUV retaining its five-star Global NCAP rating and offering six airbags and over 25 safety features as standard. Ownership costs are addressed through the Škoda Super Care package, which includes a four-year warranty, roadside assistance and labour-free services.

## Tetley bets on everyday wellness with slim care green tea range powered by L-carnitine

**Guwahati:** Tata Consumer Products-owned Tetley has expanded its wellness portfolio with the launch of Tetley Green Tea Slim Care, a range fortified with added L-Carnitine, targeting consumers seeking realistic and sustainable weight-management habits. The company said the product is designed to support reduction of body fat when combined with a balanced diet and regular physical activity, underlining that "Slim Care" is a brand name and does not represent the product's standalone nature.

The new range blends antioxidants from premium green tea leaves with L-Carnitine and is positioned as an easy-to-adopt daily beverage. It is available in two flavours—Lemon & Honey and Ginger, Mint & Lemon—aimed at different consumption occasions. While Lemon & Honey is pitched as a mid-morning or afternoon alternative to sugary snacks or excess coffee, Ginger, Mint & Lemon is positioned for post-meal or evening consumption to support mindful routines, hydration, and light activity such as yoga or brisk walks.



Retailers in Guwahati report rising interest in functional beverages as urban consumers shift towards affordable, science-backed wellness products for everyday use. Green tea variants, in particular, are gaining traction among working professionals and fitness-conscious buyers, making the Slim Care range relevant for the city's expanding wellness market.

Tetley Green Tea Slim Care is priced at ₹195 for 25 tea bags and ₹80 for 10 tea bags in both flavours and is now available across retail stores and e-commerce platforms.

## Tata AIA Life boost savings portfolio with premium offset, 'Power of 6' as market seeks certainty

**Mumbai:** In a market environment marked by rising household costs and demand for predictable returns, Tata AIA Life Insurance has enhanced its long-term savings plan, Fortune Guarantee Supreme, to address affordability and income certainty concerns among consumers.

A key feature of the enhanced plan is the 'Premium Offset' proposition. Under this structure, customers pay premiums only for the first six years of a 12-year premium-paying term, with the income benefit from the policy used to offset the remaining six years. This reduces long-term cash outflow while helping policyholders remain in-

vested over the full term.

The plan also offers the 'Power of 6' option, providing guaranteed income and benefits with an Internal Rate of Return (IRR) of over 6 per cent, subject to policy terms and conditions. The option is positioned for individuals seeking steady future income for retirement, children's education and long-term financial stability, combining assured returns with life insurance protection.

Commenting on the move, Amit Dave, President and Chief Distribution Officer – Proprietary Business and Allied Channels, said the enhanced plan offers guaranteed benefits, income visibility and

life cover, enabling families to plan key milestones without straining daily finances.

Fortune Guarantee Supreme is a non-linked, non-participating savings plan offering guaranteed benefits and life cover throughout the policy term. Premiums qualify for tax benefits under Section 80C, while maturity and death benefits are exempt under Section 10(10D), subject to prevailing laws.

Tata AIA, a joint venture between Tata Sons and AIA Group, reported total premium income of ₹31,484 crore in FY25, ranking among the top private life insurers with strong persistency performance.

## Ai+ Enters Wearables Market with Fashion-Led NovaWatch Series

**Guwahati:** Ai+ Smartphone has announced its entry into the fast-growing wearables segment with the launch of NovaWatch, a smartwatch lineup that blends safety, health tracking, and fashion-forward design. Scheduled for a nationwide rollout in Q1 2026, the series marks a strategic expansion of the brand's connected device portfolio under its "Add A Plus" vision.

The NovaWatch range includes Active, designed for everyday users seeking accessible wellness metrics; Wearbuds, a hybrid smartwatch with integrated Bluetooth earphones combining audio and timekeeping; Kids Geo Fencing 4G Watch, focused on fam-

ily safety and simple connectivity; and Rotatecam 4G LTE Watch, an industry-first wearable with a rotating camera positioned for creators and style-conscious users.



Commenting on the launch, Madhav Sheth, CEO of Ai+ Smartphone and founder of NextQuantum Shift Technologies, said the lineup was built around real-world usage, emphasizing that wearables must

feel natural, personal, and relevant to daily routines. Pricing and detailed specifications will be revealed closer to launch. NovaWatch will debut alongside Novapods on Flipkart and through select offline partners in Q1 2026.



## Alter Your Hair Combing Practices for Enhanced Strength and Thickness

The health of your hair is not solely determined by the use of shampoo and conditioner; it is also influenced by your daily combing practices. Minor errors can compromise the roots, whereas employing the correct technique can enhance both strength and shine. Brushing your hair is an integral aspect of your daily regimen; however, improper techniques can compromise the roots and result in heightened hair loss. Aggressively combing wet hair, utilizing an inappropriate comb, or hastily addressing tangles may appear innocuous, yet these minor errors can cumulatively harm hair health.

To achieve thick, robust, and healthy hair, it is crucial to steer clear of these frequent combing mistakes. Wet hair is extremely fragile and breaks easily. Combing it aggressively or carelessly can strain the roots and worsen hair fall. After washing, allow your hair to dry slightly before



combing, and always use a wide-toothed comb to reduce breakage. Every hair type has different needs. Avoid hard brushes on fine or weak hair, and steer clear of fine-toothed combs if you have curly hair. A wide-toothed wooden comb is often the safest choice, as it is gentle and suitable for most hair types. Many people make the mistake of combing straight from the roots to the ends, which increases tangling and breakage. Instead, gently detangle the ends first and then

slowly work your way upwards to keep your hair healthy and strong. Combing your hair too frequently can also make it dry and lifeless. More than two or three times a day may do more harm than good. Gentle, mindful combing is far more beneficial. Keeping your brush and comb clean is just as important. Dirty tools can cause dandruff and scalp issues, so regular cleaning helps protect your hair. Above all, always comb gently to maintain healthy roots and strands.

## Why Walking is the Secret Weapon for Fat Loss After 50

Excess abdominal fat after the age of 50 is a prevalent issue, and it is not solely due to aesthetic considerations. As individuals age, alterations in metabolism, muscle mass, hormonal levels, and stress responses frequently result in fat accumulation in the abdominal area. This specific type of fat, especially visceral fat that encases internal organs, is significantly associated with insulin resistance, cardiovascular diseases, and type 2 diabetes. Although rigorous exercise routines may seem intimidating or impractical during this phase of life, studies are increasingly suggesting a more straightforward and attainable alternative: walking. Why Belly Fat Increases With Age "As individuals attain the age of 50 or older, there may be an increase in abdominal fat even if they remain physically active," states Dr. Narendra K. Shetty, Chief Wellness Officer at Kshemavana Naturopathy and Yoga Centre in Bengaluru. He points out that the aging process inherently results in muscle deterioration, a decrease in metabolic rate, and a rise in fat accumulation, which is frequently localized in the abdominal area. Furthermore, he mentions that studies indicate women may possess nearly four times the amount of visceral fat by the time they reach their 60s in com-

parison to their younger years. After the age of 50, abdominal fat increases due to metabolic slowdown, hormonal changes, reduced muscle mass, digestive inefficiencies, and prolonged stress. Belly fat comes in two forms: visceral fat, which surrounds vital organs and poses the greatest health risk, and subcutaneous fat, which sits just under the skin and affects waist size. aerobic exercise like walking helps reduce both types. "Significantly, walking has been found to decrease visceral fat, even without extreme weight loss," making it particularly valuable for people over 50 who may struggle with aggressive workout regimens. What Research Says About Walking After 50 Clinical studies reinforce walking's effectiveness in older adults. Dr. Shetty points to trials in postmenopausal women showing improvements in body weight, BMI, body fat percentage, and inflammation markers linked to cardiovascular risk. Long-term studies also reveal a clear dose-response effect: the more consistently people walk, and the greater the distance covered, the greater the reduction in abdominal fat and enhances hormonal responses such as growth hormone and leptin sensitivity, all of which support fat loss.



## Low Parity Linked to Higher Osteoporosis Risk in Menopausal Women

Recent findings are transforming clinicians' perspectives on women's bone health post-menopause. A new influx of observational data indicates that women who have experienced infertility, recurrent miscarriages, stillbirths, or low parity are at a markedly increased risk of developing osteoporosis upon reaching natural menopause. Interestingly, the age at which menopause occurs, previously regarded as a key factor in bone loss, seems to exert minimal impact on these relationships.

Indeed, the research underscores that reproductive history may serve as a significant predictor of long-term skeletal health. Dr. Sandhya Mishra, Consultant in Reproductive Medicine, Obstetrics, and Gynaecology at Milann Fertility Hospital in Bengaluru, states, "For many years, menopause has been regarded as a critical juncture for the decrease in bone density due to lower oestrogen levels. Nevertheless, the patterns of fertility throughout a woman's life may provide even more profound understanding. Issues such as recurrent pregnancy loss, challenges in conceiving, or having fewer children than biologically possible are frequently linked to underlying hormonal, metabolic, or autoimmune issues. These same issues may also weaken bone strength over time. Importance of reproductive history for bone health Women who face infertility often have hormonal irregularities, which include low oestrogen, thyroid disorders, polycystic ovarian syndrome



(PCOS), or diminished ovarian reserve, each of which plays a crucial role in regulating bone turnover. When oestrogen levels remain suboptimal for years, bones tend to become porous long before menopause begins, explains Dr Sandhya Mishra. Similarly, recurrent miscarriages and stillbirths, although caused by diverse factors, are frequently linked to chronic inflammation, autoimmune disorders, and coagulation abnormalities.

Many of these conditions subtly alter calcium metabolism or increase bone resorption, contributing to reduced bone density later in life. Low parity, which is defined as having fewer pregnancies carried to a viable gestational age, has also been identified as a risk marker. Each full-term pregnancy creates a surge of oestrogen that temporarily protects bone mass. Dr Sandhya Mishra says, "Women who do not experience these protective phases may have comparatively lower cumulative oestrogen exposure across their lifetime." Age at menopause is not the full story. Traditionally, early meno-

pause is considered a strong predictor of osteoporosis. While this remains true, recent insights reveal that irrespective of when menopause occurs, a woman's reproductive journey, fertility challenges, pregnancy outcomes, breastfeeding patterns, and parity, may independently shape her bone health trajectory. Dr Sandhya Mishra says, "This is particularly important for Indian women, who often delay fertility for education and career or face silent reproductive disorders that go undiagnosed for years. By the time they reach menopause, many of these women have never been evaluated for underlying endocrine or metabolic issues that could have been managed early." Also, most women always put family responsibilities first over their personal health, making conditions like low bone density go unnoticed until a fracture occurs. Why fertility-bone health integration should be prioritised Reproductive health is not confined to the years of attempting conception. Instead, it forms the foundation for lifelong metabolic and skeletal well-being.

## black coffee may offer more benefits than milk or black tea

While tea is a beloved morning ritual, black coffee is increasingly recognized by nutritionists for its superior health profile. The primary distinction lies in its caffeine density—roughly 90–100mg per cup—which provides a more significant boost to mental alertness and focus than tea.

Metabolically, black coffee is a powerhouse; it is nat-



urally low in calories and stimulates fat burning while increasing adrenaline for better physical performance. It is also exceptionally rich in antioxidants like chlorogenic acid, which helps

reduce inflammation and lowers the risk of chronic conditions like heart disease. Furthermore, studies suggest that regular consumption can enhance memory and protect against neurodegenerative diseases. To maximize these benefits, enjoy it unsweetened and brewed from fresh beans. While tea remains a healthy choice, black coffee offers a more concentrated punch for longevity.



## President Murmu, PM Modi send greetings on UP foundation day



**New Delhi, Jan 25:** President of India Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday extended warm greetings to the people of Uttar Pradesh on the occasion of the state's foundation day. President Droupadi Murmu took to social media platform X to convey her wishes, highlighting the historical and cultural significance of the state. She wrote, "My best wishes to the people of Uttar Pradesh on the occasion of Uttar Pradesh Day. This land, with its glorious history and rich culture, has been a strong pillar in India's journey of development. I am confident that Uttar Pradesh will continue to progress on the path of development. I wish a bright future for the hardworking and talented people of this state"

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also shared his message on X, congratulating the people of Uttar Pradesh for their contributions to the nation. He said, "Heartiest congratulations to all my family members in Uttar Pradesh who have made invaluable contributions to the prosperity of Indian culture and heritage on the state's foundation day. With the participation of our double-engine government and its people dedicated to development, our state has transformed from a sick state to an exceptional one in the last nine years. I firmly believe that Uttar Pradesh's potential will be crucial in keeping the country's progress moving forward."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also extended his greetings on the occasion. Taking to X, he said, "Heartfelt greetings to all my brothers and sisters in Uttar Pradesh on the state's foundation day. Uttar Pradesh, nurtured by the invaluable heritage of Sanatan culture and blessed by the sacred and fertile lands of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, is the land that has always guided the nation on the path of culture, spirituality, strength, and resolve. Today, under the double-engine government, Uttar Pradesh is setting new benchmarks in development and world-class infrastructure. I wish the state continued progress and prosperity."

## Pro-Pakistan Slogans: Bihar Government Teacher Arrested on Republic Day

**Patna, Jan 26:** A government school teacher was arrested from Bihar's Supaul district on Monday for allegedly raising slogans in favour of Pakistan's founder and first Governor General, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, during the celebration of the 77th Republic Day. The accused, Mansoor Alam, an assistant teacher at Model Upgraded Middle School in Abhur under Kishunpur block of Supaul district, allegedly began raising slogans such as "Mohammed Jinnah Amar Rahen" (Long live Mohammed Jinnah) immediately after the national anthem ended following the hoisting of the national flag. Students who were reciting the national anthem reportedly followed Alam as he shouted the slogan at the top of his voice. Other teachers and local residents present on the school premises for the Republic Day celebrations were stunned by his behaviour.

Agitated residents demanded disciplinary action, accusing Alam of acting against the Indian Constitution and insulting the national anthem. As the situation worsened due to protests, headmaster Dhananjay Tiwary sought immediate police intervention. More residents joined the protest after a video of the incident went viral on social media. Protesters demanded that the accused be handed over to them. A police team led by station house officer Gyan

Ranjan Kumar reached the spot, pacified the crowd, and brought the situation under control. Alam was taken to the police station under police protection. A formal complaint was later registered based on the headmaster's statement. He is currently being questioned by senior police officials in custody. Students later told the investigating officer that Alam used to describe Pakistan as 'Jannat' (heaven) and had attempted to influence some children. "Police have recorded the statements of students, and his antecedents are being verified," a teacher said. An investigating officer said Alam may have earlier attempted to radicalise children under the influence of some "unscrupulous elements." His antecedents are being verified, and he will be produced before a court. Police officials said this was not an isolated incident. In the past, there have been instances of Pakistani national flags being unfurled and anti-national slogans being raised during Independence Day or Republic Day celebrations in different districts of Bihar. In 2016, Pakistan's national flag was hoisted at a house in Kharadi Colony of Biharsharif town in Nalanda district, which was later seized by police. Three people were arrested in that case. In 2023, Pakistani flags were found in a house in the Sipahi Tola area of Madhubani in Purnea district.

## Assam showcases Asharikandi terracotta craft village at Republic Day parade



**New Delhi, Jan 26:** The northeastern state of Assam on Monday showcased its famed terracotta craft village of Asharikandi at the Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path. The state's tableau depicted Asharikandi village in Dhubri district -- India's largest and most renowned cluster of traditional Assamese terracotta artisans. For more than a century, generations of artisan families here have preserved the timeless art of clay craftsmanship, reflecting simplicity, refined aesthetics and deep cultural meaning while sustaining livelihoods through indigenous skill. At the front of the tableau stood an imposing terracotta doll holding earthen lamps arranged in a circular pattern, forming a powerful visual centrepiece. The tractor portion was adorned with bamboo fencing, symbolising Assam's rich bamboo heritage and its important role in the state's rural economy and sustainable development.

The trailer was designed as a graceful Moyurponkhi boat, evoking Assam's riverine identity. Artisans were shown shaping Hiramati (clay) into divine figures of gods and goddesses, highlighting the creative process and spiritual essence of the craft. A traditional pall (sail canvas) at the rear enhanced the authenticity of the boat and recalled the historic waterways that nurtured Assam's culture and trade. Accompanying the tableau were women artisans dressed in traditional Mekhela Chador, moving rhythmically and singing verses that express pride in their soil and creations. Their song conveyed the confidence of a community whose heritage-driven craftsmanship is gaining global recognition, symbolising the onward journey of Asharikandi towards self-reliance.

## Allahabad HC: Outdated Laws in Live-in Relationships Causing "Suffering" for Men

### 2021 Case of Alleged Abduction of Dalit Minor by OBC Youth

**Allahabad, Jan 26:** While setting the conviction of a man aside in a case of abduction for marriage and rape of his live-in partner, the Allahabad court expressed that men faced FIRs and get convicted after live-in relations fail, as the laws favour women since they were framed when the live-in relationship concept did not exist. The court was hearing a criminal appeal against the Special Judge, Exclusive Court (Pocso Act), Maharajganj district court, order passed on March 6, 2024, against the appellant, who faced trial in a case lodged in August 2021.

The court in the judgment stated, "In view of the consideration of the evidence and arguments, the Judgment and Order passed by the learned Maharajganj trial court cannot be sustained and is hereby set aside. The appellant is in jail; he is directed to be set free if not wanted in any other case." The case against the appellant was filed under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 323 (assault), 363 and 366 (abducting while enticing away woman with intention to marry), 376 (punishment for rape), 506 (criminal intimidation), Section 6 of the POCSO Act (aggravated penetrative assault on minor) and Section-3(2)(V) of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The Maharajganj court convicted and sentenced the appellant under all sections, including awarding seven years imprisonment, besides fines under IPC sections 363 and 366, one year under section 323, 20 years under POCSO Act and life



imprisonment under SC/ST Act. However, hearing the appeal of the convict, the High Court division bench comprising Justice Siddharth and Justice Prashant Mishra, said: "We find that this case is an example of increasing tendency of the youth living together without solemnisation of marriage under the influence of western ideas and the concept of live-in. After such relationships fail, FIR is lodged and the laws being in favour of women, the boys/men get convicted relying upon the laws which were made when the concept of live-in was nowhere in existence." According to the prosecution's case, a youth, belonging to an OBC community, allegedly enticed away a Dalit girl from his village in February 2021. The girl returned to her parents' home in August in the same year. Her mother alleged that her daughter informed that the youth took her away, promising mar-

riage, but did not fulfil the commitment and turned her out of his house.

She could not approach the police earlier because of shame. While complaining, her DoB as per the Aadhar Card was January 1, 2003. The man, during examination before the local court, claimed the allegations against him were wrong and that the girl's mother is a habitual litigant and extracts money by lodging false cases against different persons. The case against him was lodged with the intention to get compensation of Rs. 8,25,000 from the Social Welfare Department, claimed the appellant. The division bench stated in the order that the trial court had not considered the age certificate of the prosecution witness (PW 2) (the victim), issued by CMO Maharajganj, which proved her age to be about 20 years on August 19, 2021.

## Kylian Mbappé's brace at Villarreal lifts Real Madrid into La Liga lead

**Barcelona, Jan 25:** Despite a coaching change and some poor play that irked its fans, Real Madrid returned to the top of La Liga after Klyian Mbappé scored a brace in a 2-0 win at Villarreal on Saturday. Mbappé scored early in the second half and added an injury-time penalty to ensure Madrid rose two points

executives and supporters.

The club fired coach Xabi Alonso after it lost to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final two weeks ago, only for the team to also endure an embarrassing exit to a second-tier team in the Copa del Rey in the debut of his replacement, Álvaro Arbeloa. The sudden coaching change and poor play

and fellow forward Vinicius Júnior, whose incisive play with the ball helped set up both goals. Vinicius received the worst of the jeers in the Santiago Bernabeu this week. "They are two of the best players in the world, they break down defenses and we try to get them as many touches as we can," Arbeloa said. "Winning at this ground has a lot of merit and it is thanks to the work of all my players."

Villarreal still has one more game to play but it fell into fourth place at 10 points behind Madrid. Senegal hero back for Villarreal Pape Gueye, the hero of Senegal thanks to his extra-time goal to beat Morocco in the Africa Cup of Nations final last week, was back in Villarreal's starting lineup. Gueye's long strike from outside the area just missed in the host's best chance in the first half.

Morocco forward Brahim Díaz, who missed a penalty that could have given Morocco a lead late in stoppage time, went on as a second-half substitute for Madrid.



above Barcelona, which will need to beat bottom side Real Oviedo at home on Sunday to reclaim first place. Those were Mbappé's La Liga-leading 20th and 21st goals in 20 appearances by the France star. Madrid has stayed close to Barcelona even though it has not been playing up to the standards of its demanding club

sparked fan protests during Madrid's last two home games, a pair of wins in La Liga and the Champions League. But a loss by Barcelona at Real Sociedad last weekend opened the door for Madrid to slip ahead at Villarreal. And now Arbeloa has overseen three comfortable victories in a row. Arbeloa praised Mbappé

## Billiards: Aanya to take on Afeefa in jr national final



**Bahadurgarh (Haryana), Jan 26:** Gujarat's Aanya Patel edged Shruthi L of Tamil Nadu to enter the summit clash of the junior girls' billiards competition at the National Championships on Monday. The 19-year-old's 167-157 verdict helped her set up a meeting with promising Afeefa Thabassam of Tamil Nadu in the title round. Afeefa, the sub-junior champion, stunned last year's runner-up, Sanvi Shah, 115-62 in the one-hour contest later in the day. In a match of fluctuating fortunes, Aanya played the big points well to keep the Tamil Nadu cueist at bay in the one-hour semifinal. Shruthi did get a few chances to turn things around, but she failed to make good her chances. The other semifinal may have bordered on mediocrity, but Afeefa took the chances that came her way to put it past her formidable rival, who had a poor day in the office. The Chennai cueist, who had earlier beaten Leisha Reddy in the quarters, will look to complete a billiards double.

Results: Junior girls: Billiards: Semis: Aanya Patel (Guj) bt Shruthi L (TN) 167-157; Afeefa Thabassam (TN) bt Sanvi Shah (MP) 115-62.

Quarters: Aanya bt Jiya Sehgal (Pun) 127-53; Shruthi bt Mokshita Balasaria (Tel) 232-70; Afeefa bt Leisha Reddy (Tel) 113-72; Sanvi bt Angel Kamboj (Har) 101-77.

## Former BCCI president IS Bindra passes away at 84



**New Delhi, Jan 26:** Former BCCI president Inderjit Singh Bindra, who played a major role in ushering in a new era of cricket marketing, passed away here on Sunday. He was 84. He is survived by a son and daughter. Bindra served as the board president from 1993 to 1996, and was also the president of the Punjab Cricket Association from 1978 to 2014.

In 2015, the PCA stadium was renamed as IS Bindra Stadium as a tribute to his inspiring work as an administrator. Jay Shah, chairman of the International Cricket Council, wrote on his 'X' account: "Deepest condolences on the passing of Mr. I S Bindra, former BCCI president and a stalwart of Indian cricket administration. May his legacy inspire future generations. Om Shanti." As Shah mentioned, Bindra was indeed a stalwart of Indian cricket administration, having started the association with the game as an official in 1975.

He was best remembered for his role in organising the 1987 World Cup — then known as the Reliance Cup — in India and it was the first time the global event was moved out of England after the 1975, 1979 and 1983 editions. He managed the coup in the company of his close friend late Jagmohan Dalmiya and then BCCI chief NKP Salve, and it opened the Indian television market to the new possibilities of cricket marketing. Bindra, who retired from cricket administration in 2014, also worked as the principal advisor of the International Cricket Council when Sharad Pawar held the president's post.

Before that in 1994, Bindra had approached the Supreme Court of India to break the monopoly of Doordarshan in cricket broadcasting. A favourable verdict from the apex court helped Bindra and his team bring global companies like ESPN and TWI to the Indian market, which soon expanded to be the biggest in the world. However, his official life was not without its share of bitter moments as the support he gave to Lalit Modi after the spot-fixing saga in the IPL earned him his share of brickbats.

Bindra also played a pivotal role in the appointment of Haroon Lorgat as the Cricket South Africa CEO, and that move too did not win him many friends. But overall, Bindra remained one of the architects of modern Indian cricket from a commercial perspective.

## Bhambri Out: India's Run Ends at Australian Open

**Melbourne, Jan 26:** India's challenge at the Australian Open came to an end on Sunday after Yuki Bhambri and his Swedish partner Andre Goransson bowed out in the third round of the men's doubles, here. Bhambri and Goransson went down 6-7(7), 3-6 to Brazil's unseeded pairing of Orlando Luz and Rafael Matos in a closely contested match that lasted just over an hour. The Indo-Swedish combination fought hard in the opening set but failed to capitalise in the tie-break, and the Brazilians maintained their composure to seal the second set without much trouble.

With Bhambri's exit, India's campaign at the season's first Grand Slam has concluded. Bhambri had already made an earlier exit from

the mixed doubles, while N Sriram Balaji had bowed out previously from the men's doubles. Maaya Rajeshwaran and Arnav Paparkar exited the junior Australian Open on Saturday with first round exits.



## Augsburg Stun Bayern Munich With Historic First League Defeat

**Berlin, Jan 25:** The best team in Germany is not necessarily the best in Bavaria. Bayern Munich slumped to its first Bundesliga defeat of the season by 2-1 at home to Bavarian rival Augsburg on Saturday, when Bayern star Michael Olise struck the crossbar with the last kick of the game. It's the first time Bayern has failed to gather at least a point in the league since March 8 in a 3-2 defeat at home to Bochum. "I wouldn't say the defeat was absolutely deserved. That might be too much but it also wouldn't have been deserved if we had won," Bayern midfielder Joshua Kimmich said. "So in a way, it's acceptable, even though it's extremely annoying for us to have lost a Bundesliga match. The crucial thing will be our reaction to it."

Augsburg ended Bayern's record 53-game unbeaten run in the Bundesliga in April 2014, and on Saturday the same club also ended Bay-

ern's next longest unbeaten run at 27 games. With 50 points and a goal difference of plus-57, Bayern had already made the best ever start to the Bundesliga after 18 rounds. Augsburg, only three points from the relegation zone before the match, hadn't won a game since early December. And Manuel Baum's team had to come from behind in Munich after Hiroki Ito opened the scoring with a header to Olise's corner in the 23rd minute. "We spoke all week about we had to believe in ourselves because no one else did, perhaps justifiably so," Augsburg midfielder Robin Fellhauer said. "We thought of a plan and it actually worked. We wanted to be well positioned, not allow much, have a bit of luck now and then, and then keep making moves forward." Bayern missed further good chances and the first half ended with Fellhauer striking the crossbar for Augsburg. The visitors pushed hard for an equalizer in the second half

and Arthur Chaves duly got it with the back of his head to a corner that Bayern goalkeeper Jonas Urbig failed to reach in the 75th.

Han-Noah Massengo scored what proved to be the winner six minutes later when Dimitrios Giannoulis surged down the left and crossed into the middle to pick him out. "Unbelievable. There's still a bit of disbelief in the locker room because nobody really knows what just happened and that we actually did it," Fellhauer said. Dortmund chips at Bayern's lead Borussia Dortmund capitalized on Bayern's loss with a 3-0 win at Union Berlin that cut the leader's comfortable advantage to eight points with 15 rounds remaining. Emre Can tucked away an early penalty, Nico Schlotterbeck headed the second goal from a corner early in the second half, and Maximilian Beier sealed the win late with a low shot inside the far post. Eintracht Frankfurt's habit of conceding three goals



continued in a 3-1 loss at home to high-flying Hoffenheim. Frankfurt, which fired coach Dino Toppmöller last weekend, has conceded three goals in all five games it has played in 2026. Former Real Madrid star Lucas Vázquez scored his first goal for Leverkusen to prevail 1-0 over Werder Bremen. It snapped Leverkusen's three-game losing streak across all competitions.

