

- Nagaland's helpline 1930, operational 24/7 in Guwahati, has successfully frozen Rs. 1.20cr in all 2006 accounts after receiving 943 complaints since Feb 2022.
- Meghalaya CM Conrad K. Sangma established Greater Tura Urban Water Supply Scheme, Rs 398.48cr Indian initiative, to address water constraints in Tura.
- Hemolota Handique Trust initiated the "My School Trees" initiative at Kandhulimari Lower Primary School, educating children about wildlife protection and climate risk through native tree planting.

# NEWS BEARER

NEWS FROM NEAR & FAR

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## Helpline for Nagaland in cases of cyber fraud, numbers dating back to 1930 freeze Rs. 1.20 cr

**Kohima, Jan 28:** In Nagaland, the helpline 1930 has been available to victims of financial cybercrime since February 1, 2022. Victims can call 1930 to report the fraud and provide details about the transaction, the amount lost, and the account numbers involved. After receiving a report, the helpdesk can quickly block the scammers' e-wallets

or bank accounts to prevent additional losses. Legal action to recover the money may start if the funds are frozen. Since it opened, the helpline has received 943 complaints, and fraud totaling Rs. 8.84 crore has been reported. At this time, Rs. 1.20 crore has been successfully frozen in all 2006 accounts. Authorities advise victims of cyber

financial crime to call 1930 immediately and report their cases before the scammers can move or spend the stolen money. In order for the incident to be investigated further and addressed, victims are urged to report it to the nearest police station. Partha Sarathi Mahanta had formally taken over as Guwahati's Commissioner of Police in the interim.

In an effort to increase public access to law enforcement, a new WhatsApp hotline number, 6026900651, was introduced for city dwellers. This helpline makes it simple for citizens to file complaints and receive assistance. Residents of Guwahati are guaranteed round-the-clock assistance because the service has been operational 24/7.

## Hemolota Handique trust launches "My School Trees" campaign



**Guwahati, Jan 28:** The "My School Trees" (Mor School, Mor Gos) campaign by the Hemolota Handique Trust of Jorhat was launched at Kandhulimari Lower Primary School, which is located in the West Block of the Golaghat district. Forest Officers Eastern Range Agoratoli Kalyan Deep Bora and Bibhu Choudhuri gave the children an educational and enlightening talk about "Flora and Fauna of Kaziranga National Park." The presentation was also attended by members of the local community. The Trust launched this project to inform schoolchildren about the importance of trees for wildlife protection and their positive impact on lowering climate risk. The Agoratoli Range native trees that the school's students planted

were selected and donated by Kaziranga National Park. The Trust has provided the saplings with strong fencing materials, but more significantly, it has assigned "Mother Tree" (Brikkho Ma), a local resource person. The school can look for a replacement and ask the "Mother Tree" for advice and suggestions on how to take care of the trees if any of the seedlings are not doing well. The "Mother Tree" of Kandhulimari Lower Primary School is Rashmi Baruwa, a resident of Kandhulimari village. Chairman of the Trust and a former professor at Assam Agriculture University, Tapan Chandra Dutta, has taken several actions to encourage children to plant trees. The other trustees are Gautam Barooah and Upanga Dutta.

## Governor restate dedication to fight drug trafficking



**Aizawl, Jan 28:** Mizoram Governor VK Singh reiterated state government's unwavering resolve to tackle escalating threat of drug use and trafficking. During his speech at Aizawl's Republic Day celebration, Singh emphasized the amazing work that law enforcement has done to reduce drug-related crimes & cross-border smuggling. He claimed that in 2024, authorities found massive amounts of illegal drugs, firearms, ammunition, & explosives in addition to nearly 12 lakh kg of illegally imported areca nuts valued at Rs 16.6 cr. 4,568 people were arrested for drug-related offenses by the state police & the Excise and Narcotics Department last year. Governor Singh urged NGOs, religious groups, and civil society organizations to keep up their support for initiatives to combat the drug problem and address this issue. He underlined the government's dedication to growing the travel, sports, agriculture, and health industries in his closing remarks. Cabinet members, Chief Minister Lalduhoma, and other dignitaries attended the event.

## CM Conrad K. Sangma lays planning for Tura Water Supply Scheme

**Shillong, Jan 28:** At a ceremony held at Tura District Auditorium, Meghalaya CM Conrad K. Sangma laid the cornerstone for Greater Tura Urban Water Supply Scheme. Speaking at the event, Sangma said, "This project was first mentioned in 2004, when I was contesting the by-election in Selsella. It was conceived in 2004-2005 with the late P. A. Sangma, who envisioned that it would help tourism, agriculture, & fisheries in addition to addressing the water issues that metropolitan Tura was facing at the time." Rs 398.48 crore ini-



tiative, according to the CM, is intended to address Tura's water constraints and guarantee a steady & sustainable supply for the community. "Tura Urban Water Supply Scheme is anticipated to be finished in roughly 24-36 months and is funded by Government of India through Special Assistance on Capital Investment," he stated. In order

to guarantee the project's success, the CM urged the community to actively participate. "I implore all parties involved to back the catchment areas' preservation and protection. The government can start projects and construct reservoirs, but the catchment regions that must be protected are where the water for these dams and reservoirs comes from. Involving locals at every stage of the process would help them create a feeling of accountability and ownership, enabling them to be proud of their contributions to Tura's growth," he said.

## CM lays foundation stone for Kokrajhar University administrative building

**Guwahati, Jan 28:** Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma laid the cornerstone for Kokrajhar University's administrative building, demonstrating how the growth & development of BTR continues to spur advancement. University will provide advanced courses in subjects like artificial intelligence, robotics, and more, with the goal of becoming a center of excellence. Rs. 50 cr in funding for regional educational infrastructure development announced, including opening of Anandalaya Bhawan of Vivekananda Kendra in Dibrugarh. With an emphasis on skill development, the recently opened building is committed to improving the lives of the Tea Tribe community. CM Sarma expressed gratitude for



Vivekananda Kendra's assistance to Assamese youth, focusing on skill development at Anandalaya Bhawan. He also announced Rs. 5 lakh for Rajib Sadia's family. Along with acknowledging their important contributions to the state's cultural legacy, he mentioned plans to talk about future support for artists like Sadia. CM Sarma envisioned Anandalaya Bhawan as a crucial hub for skill training, equipping students from the tea tribe community with the necessary skills for a brighter future.

## Women from Manipur make a living from their love of wildflower collecting

**Imphal, Jan 28:** Khundrakpam, age 27 Many young minds have found inspiration in Rani's efforts to transform her passion into a successful business. The project, called 'Dry Bloom,' turns wild flowers—which are frequently regarded as waste—into lovely accessories and gifts, making them valuable products. Growing up in Tera Lukram Leirak, Imphal West, Rani has always enjoyed gathering dried flowers. In 2020, she started experimenting with flower transformation on a trial basis while working toward her postgraduate degree in botany. What she called 'Dry Bloom' began as a small business and has now become a well-known enterprise. Although her parents



were initially skeptical of Rani's endeavor, she eventually persuaded her mother, Khundrakpam Nandarani, to take on the majority of the practical work. As the business has expanded, at least two women now have jobs and income from it. It has spread to other states as the demand for environmentally friendly products has increased. A florist named

Rani sells a range of flowers, such as hairpins and tiny bouquets. They have returned to normal despite suffering a setback during the most recent conflict. Rani and her mother-daughter run a successful business sourcing flowers from hill districts, relying on friends for delivery and providing training on dry flower bouquet making.

## India lodges strong protest with Sri Lanka after 5 fishermen injured in Navy firing

### 'Unacceptable', the Foreign Ministry stated

**New Delhi, Jan 28:** Five Indian fishermen sustained injuries, two of them critically, after the Sri Lankan Navy opened fire at them in the proximity of Delft Island early on Tuesday. The incident has sparked a strong response from India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which summoned Sri Lanka's acting High Commissioner in New Delhi to register a formal protest against the action.

Calling the action 'unacceptable', the Foreign Ministry stated, "An incident of firing by the Sri Lankan Navy during the apprehension of 13 Indian fishermen in the proximity of Delft Island was reported in the early hours of this morning".

"Out of the 13 fishermen who



were on board the fishing vessel, two have sustained serious injuries and are currently receiving treatment at the Jaffna Teaching hospital," it added.

Three more fishermen on board the same vessel received minor injuries and were admitted to hospital for treatment. Meanwhile, the Indian Consulate officials in Jaffna have visited the injured fishermen and

are extending all possible help.

"The Sri Lankan acting high commissioner in New Delhi was called in today morning to the Ministry of External Affairs and a strong protest was lodged over the incident," MEA said. Additionally, the Indian High Commission in Colombo has raised the matter with the Sri Lankan foreign ministry.

## Two moists killed in gunfight in Jharkhand

**Ranchi, Jan 29:** Two Maoists were killed in an encounter between security forces and the CPI (Maoists) in the West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand. Two INSAS rifles have been recovered from the spot.

"A joint team of Jharkhand Police and 209 Cobra Battalion had an encounter with Maoists during which two, including one woman, were killed. A security personnel sustained a minor injury in his hand," said Chaibasa SP Ashutosh Shekhar.

"Bodies of the two rebels killed in the gun battle have been recovered from the spot," he added. One of the Maoists killed in the encounter has been identified as zonal commander Sanjay Ganju.

## Riots accused Tahir Hussain granted 'custody parole', to cover 2 lakh daily expenses

**New Delhi, Jan 28:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted custody parole to former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor Mohammad Tahir Hussain to campaign for the Delhi election. The court has allowed the 2020 riots accused to come out of jail for 12 hours to campaign starting January 29 till February 3.

The court put conditions on Hussain for custody parole. He will bear the expense of two police personnel, the jail van and the escort vehicle. The court directed him to make an advance deposit of two days, which is approximately over ₹2 lakh per day.

The court allowed him to visit his party office and hold meetings with voters within the constituency but he will



not visit his house at Karawal Nagar. Further, he will not be allowed to speak about the cases pending against him.

Tahir Hussain requested the Supreme Court on Tuesday that he be allowed to campaign in custody for the Delhi assembly polls.

Senior advocate Siddharth Aggarwal, appearing for Hussain, told a bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sanjay Karol and Sandeep Mehta that only four-five days are left for campaigning so he be allowed to connect with the electorate under police custody.

### 'World class system exposed': Akhilesh

## Akhilesh Yadav Criticizes Yogi Govt Over Maha Kumbh Stampede



**Lucknow, Jan 29:** Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has strongly condemned the stampede at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, which has reportedly claimed 15 lives.

He demanded that those responsible for falsely claiming a "world-class system" at the event take moral responsibility for the tragedy and step down from their positions. Yadav also called for the Indian Army to take over the management of the Maha Kumbh Mela, citing a loss of faith in the Uttar Pradesh government's handling of the event.

"Now that the truth behind the claims of 'world-class system' has been exposed, those who were making these claims and spreading false propaganda should take moral responsibility for the people killed in this accident and resign from

their posts," Akhilesh wrote in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

He also called for the management of the Maha Kumbh to be handed over to the Army instead of the Uttar Pradesh government, in order to re-establish faith among the devotees and saint community.

"In order to re-instill faith in the system among the saint community and devotees who have come to the Maha Kumbh, it is necessary that the administration and management of the Maha Kumbh should be immediately handed over to the Army instead of the UP government and administration," the Lok Sabha MP from Uttar Pradesh Kannauj added.

Earlier, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister urged state government to act swiftly to assist the injured and prevent further disruption.

## Supreme Court seeks data on triple talaq prosecutions

**New Delhi, Jan 29:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to provide the details of the number of FIRs and chargesheets filed against men for pronouncing instant triple talaq to divorce spouses in violation of the 1991 Muslim Women (Protection of Rights in Marriage) Act.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar, hearing as many as 12 petitions challenging the constitutionality of the 1991 law, also asked the Centre and other parties to file their written submissions to the pleas. The bench fixed the petitions for final hearing in the week commencing March 17. Samastha Kerala Jamiathul Ulema, from Kozhikode, is the lead petitioner.

## Rahul Gandhi criticizes BJP for favoring 'maharajas'; Scindias respond

### Scindia accuses Rahul Gandhi of ignoring royals

**Indore, Jan 28:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi ruffled the BJP's feathers after he claimed on Monday that backward classes had no rights before independence and only "maharajas (kings) enjoyed such rights". His remarks triggered a stinging response from Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, who accused him of ignoring the contribution of the royal families, and a sharp retort from the Congress.

Addressing a rally in Madhya Pradesh's Mhow, Rahul Gandhi alleged that the "BJP and RSS" wanted a pre-independent India where the "poor suffer in silence" while "the country is run by billionaires".

"The change was brought with independence. You got



land and rights. The BJP-RSS wants an India of pre-independence, where common people had no rights and only the likes of (Gautam) Adani and (Mukesh) Ambani had rights. They want the poor to suffer in silence and not dream while the country is run by billionaires," he said.

Rahul Gandhi's remarks drew a response from Scindia and his cousin and BJP

MP Dushyant Singh, accusing the Gandhi scion of ignoring the contributions of erstwhile royal families.

In a tweet, Scindia, a member of the erstwhile royal family of Gwalior, and who was also once an aide to Rahul Gandhi during his Congress days, lashed out at his former boss, saying his remarks "exposed his narrow thinking and understanding".

## Parliamentary panel submits Waqf amendment bill report to LS speaker

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** The joint committee of Parliament examining the Waqf (Amendment) Bill submitted its report to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday.

Panel chairperson Jagdambika Pal met Birla at his Parliament House office and handed over the report. The panel on Wednesday



adopted by a majority vote its report that contained changes suggested by members of the ruling BJP, prompting the opposition to

dub the exercise an attempt to destroy Waqf boards.

The Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill adopted the report on the draft legislation by a 15-11 majority vote. Opposition members submitted dissent notes to the report. BJP members insisted that the Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha in

August last year, seeks to bring modernity, transparency and accountability in the management of Waqf properties.

On the other hand, the opposition termed it an attack on the constitutional rights of the Muslim community and interference in the functioning of Waqf boards.

## Ahmedabad flight transformed into Coldplay concert by an IndiGo pilot

**Mumbai, Jan 27:** Fans are giddy with anticipation for Coldplay's eagerly awaited performances in Ahmedabad, which will be the band's largest-ever shows in India. To witness the British band's incredible performances at the Narendra Modi Stadium, thousands of concertgoers traveled to Gujarat. A visual and musical extravaganza, the performances were a part of their Music of the Spheres World Tour. The exuberant ambiance captivated the fans, who danced beneath a breathtaking display of lights that turned the evenings into moments they would never forget. The magic of Coldplay's performance didn't just stay at the stadium—it also took off mid-air! A now-viral



video shows IndiGo Captain Pradeep Krishnan engaging with excited passengers on a Pune-Ahmedabad flight, many of whom were headed to the concert. The Captain jokingly asked, "How many of you are going to the Coldplay concert? How many of you have two extra tickets?" This lighthearted moment sparked cheers

and laughter from the thrilled travellers. There was more fun to come. By turning on their phone flashlights, passengers recreated Coldplay's iconic "sky full of stars" moment, transforming the dimly lit cabin into a pre-concert celebration in the sky. Everyone on board was in a good mood after the band's impromptu and joyful tribute.

## Day 3 Box Office Revenue of Akshay Kumar's "Sky Force" Movie

**New Delhi, Jan 27:** Despite receiving mixed reviews at the box office, Akshay Kumar's Sky Force has already told another tale. Within three days of its release, Akshay Kumar's Republic Day movie surpassed the Rs 60 crore milestone and held a firm grip at the box office. The Republic Day holiday helped the movie, and the box office results showed a consistent upward trend. On Sunday, the movie made Rs 27.50 crore across all languages. The movie brought in Rs 61.75 crore after earning Rs 12.25 crore on Friday and Rs 22 crore on Saturday. The movie had a 47.22% attendance rate in the afternoon showings on Sunday. The trend saw a spike in attendance, with evening shows recording 56.52 percent occupancy and night shows recording 39 percent. Taran Adarsh, a trade analyst, wrote that "numbers" speak louder than words and praised the movie. On Day 2, the movie saw an exponential growth of 71.90%, setting the stage for a significant number on Sunday. Taran Adarsh wrote in



his post, "The weekend total is sure to hit the ₹ 70 cr+ mark, marking a superb start to its #Boxoffice journey... All eyes are now on its weekday performance to determine if it has the legs to turn into a success story." Veer Pahariya and Akshay Kumar play IAF officers in Sky Force. The movie tells the story of India's first and deadliest airstrike, a retaliatory attack on Pakistan's Sargodha airbase during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. After several unsuccessful films, the movie also marked Akshay Kumar's double-digit box office debut.

## King Khan didn't look 60, SRK enchants Dubai with king-like swagger

**Pune, Jan 27:** Shah Rukh Khan recently dazzled the crowd with his king-like swag at an event at the Global Village in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Fan pages devoted to the actor shared a number of images



and videos. What made Shah Rukh Khan stand out was his unique charm and wit, which won over millions of hearts. In one video clip, Shah Rukh Khan

can be heard saying, "I am turning 60 in one more year, this year, but damn, I look like 30. I just want to tell you, 'Main kuch cheezein bhool jaata hoon yaar (I forgot a few things).'" Needless to say, the audience gave

a roaring shout out to the superstar's words. At the moment, Shah Rukh Khan is filming

King, directed by Siddharth Anand. He will appear on

screen alongside Abhishek Bachchan and Suhana

Khan in the movie. Shah Rukh Khan teased fans with the concept behind the film's title without giving away any of the plot. He

can be heard saying, "I'm not just shooting it here, I'm shooting it in Mumbai now when I go back in a couple of months. My director Sidharth Anand is very strict. He made Pathaan. So



he is very strict. He said, 'Don't tell people about the film, what you are doing in it.' "So I can't tell you but I can assure you it will entertain

you, you will have fun. I've used many titles...Now we have run out of titles...Now Shah Rukh Khan as Shah Rukh Khan in King.

That was a bit of a show-off," he said in his usual charm.

## Director Laxman Utekar removes Vicky Kaushal's dance number



**Surat, Jan 27:** A scene in Chhaava where Vicky Kaushal, who plays Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, is shown dancing drew criticism from Maharashtra minister Uday Samant on Sunday. In response, Laxman Utekar, the film's director, disclosed that he chose to cut the scene from the movie following a meeting with Raj Thackeray. In a statement to the media, the filmmaker said, "I have met Raj Thackeray. He is an avid reader and studious person. So, I have taken some suggestions and guidance from him. And I can say his words are very helpful to me. After meeting him, I have decided to delete those scenes where we have shown Sambhaji Maharaj as doing lezim dance." "Lezim dance is not a big deal," he added, adding that the dance

scene starring Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna will not be included in the film. That Lezim dance is nothing compared to Sambhaji Maharaj. Therefore, we will cut those scenes out of the movie. He continued by saying that Shivaji Sawant's book Chhaava, which shows Sambhaji as a 20-year-old warrior, served as the model for the movie's depiction of Sambhaji Maharaj. Utekar chose to eliminate the dance sequence, highlighting that Lezim dance was not more important than Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj's legacy, out of consideration for those who were offended by the portrayal. The director acknowledges Maharashtra ministers' concerns and plans a special premiere show on January 29 with historians and experts for guidance.

## Cricketer Mohammad Siraj & Asha Bhosle's granddaughter Zanai respond to dating rumors

**Mumbai, Jan 27:** Legendary singer Asha Bhosle has finally addressed the dating rumors that surfaced a day after they first surfaced, involving her granddaughter Zanai Bhosle and cricketer Mohammed Siraj. Following the viral success of Zanai's birthday photo with Siraj, the rumors began to circulate. Zanai and Siraj clarified and refuted these rumors on their individual Instagram Stories. Zanai shared the pic and wrote: "Mere pyaare bhai" and also added Coldplay's song Sky Full of stars in the background. Re-posting it on his Instagram Story, Mohammed Siraj



wrote, "Meri behen ke jaisi koi behna nahin. Bina iske kahin bhi mujhe rehna nahin. Jaise hai chaand sitaaron mein, meri behna hai ek hazaar mein. Zanai

re-shared Siraj's post with a red heart emoji. The post featured Asha Bhosle, actors Jackie Shroff and Abhay Verma, Ayesha Khan and cricketers Suyash Prabhudessai, Siddhesh Lad and Shreyas Iyer. Sharing the photos, Zanai wrote, "23' done right." However, fans had a lot to say about Zanai's photo with Siraj. One person commented, "Are you going to marry Siraj?" in response to the post. "Are Zanai and Siraj dating?" was one of the comments. Like her grandmother, Zanai sings, and her performances have been causing a stir lately.

## Mahindra Truck and Bus strengthens Assam's transport sector with Lakhimpur dealership

Lakhimpur, Jan 29: Mahindra Truck and Bus Division (MTBD) has taken a significant step towards enhancing Assam's transport infrastructure with the inauguration of its 87th dealership in Lakhimpur. This state-of-the-art facility, equipped with four service bays, is designed to handle over 10 vehicles per day. It also provides 24-hour breakdown assistance, driver lodging, and AdBlue, a fuel-efficient solution that



reduces emissions and enhances vehicle performance. MTBD's expansion comes on the back of impressive growth, with a 46% CAGR over the past three years.

The company's Mileage Guarantee program for BS6 OBD II trucks and its advanced telematics solution, iMAXX, ensure superior fuel efficiency and vehicle health monitoring, offering economic advantages for transporters. Dr. VenkatSrinivas, Business Head – MTBD, highlighted the brand's focus on reducing operational costs while boosting profitability for transporters through innovation and customer-centric solutions.

### Fund outflows of \$190 million, ITC Hotels

Mumbai, Jan 29: Anticipates large outflows from ITC Hotels due to ETF sales. "ITC Ltd is part of key indices, ITCH could see outflows to the tune of \$190-200 million related to ETF selling in the stock," Jefferies noted in their most recent report on the recently listed stock. In addition, Jefferies anticipates that British American Tobacco, or BAT, will sell a portion of its interest in ITC's defunct hotel business. BAT's management had stated earlier in October 24 that it had no plans for BAT to own stock in ITC hotels in India and that it would sell its stake when the time was right.

## DGT and BITS Pilani join forces to boost entrepreneurship and skilling

Guwahati, Jan 29: The Directorate General of Training (DGT), under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), has partnered with Pilani Innovation & Entrepreneurship Development Society (PIEDS) of BITS Pilani to launch incubation programs aimed at fostering entrepreneurship among National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) students. The initiative combines BITS Pilani's academic excellence with DGT's robust training ecosystem to create a future-ready workforce and support start-ups. The collaboration introduces the Innovation Challenge and the Open Incubation Program, focusing on nurturing entre-



preneurial talent. The Innovation Challenge includes a Women NSTI Track to bridge the gender gap in innovation, while the Open Incubation Program offers a six-month grant-based initiative covering ideation, mentorship, and funding. In Guwahati, a growing hub for skilled pro-

fessionals in Northeast India, this initiative is expected to catalyze start-up opportunities. With its thriving local markets and demand for innovative solutions, Guwahati provides an ideal platform for aspiring entrepreneurs to leverage mentorship and funding support under the program. "The partnership bridges the gap between education and industry, creating opportunities for youth to innovate and succeed," said Trishaljit Sethi, Director General Training, MSDE. This initiative aligns with India's broader skilling overhaul, driven by a ₹60,000 crore investment, to equip students with industry-relevant skills and drive economic growth.

## Royal Enfield Hunter 350 hits 500,000 sales milestone, solidifies market leadership

Shillong, Jan 29: Royal Enfield's Hunter 350 has achieved a remarkable feat, surpassing 500,000 units sold worldwide since its launch in August 2022. The compact roadster, known for its stylish design and agile performance, has rapidly become one of the fastest-growing models in the midsize motorcycle segment. Targeted at urban explorers and new-age riders, the Hunter 350 blends dynamic performance with Royal Enfield's iconic retro charm, making it the preferred choice for young riders. Its popularity has surged globally, with the bike now available across India, APAC, Europe, North Amer-



ica, Latin America, Australia, and New Zealand. Com-

menting on the milestone, Yadvinder Singh Guleria, Chief Commercial Officer of Royal Enfield, said, "Reaching 500,000 sales is a reflection of the trust and enthusiasm our customers have for the Hunter 350. It has disrupted the mid-size motorcycle segment, inspiring a vibrant community of passionate riders." In Shillong, the Hunter 350 has gained strong traction among local youth. Its agility makes it ideal for navigating the city's winding roads, while its sleek design appeals to those looking for both style and performance. The bike has quickly become a popular choice in the city's bustling motorcycle market.

## Blenders Pride Fashion Tour 2025: A new era in fashion experiences



New Delhi, Jan 29: The Blenders Pride Fashion Tour 2025 is set to redefine the fashion landscape in India with its latest edition, 'The One and Only,' a unique fusion of fashion, music, and entertainment. Partnering once again with the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI), this year's tour promises to deliver an extraordinary experience across six cities, showcasing some of the nation's top designers and celebrities. The tour will begin in Gurugram with a tribute to Rohit Bal's legacy, followed

by a high-fashion spectacle in Mumbai by Tarun Tahiliani. Other key destinations like Chandigarh, Guwahati, and Vizag will also host star-studded showcases from Kanika Goyal, Jaywalking, and Bloni, with appearances from Bollywood icons such as Jacqueline Fernandez, Tiger Shroff, and Tamannaah Bhatia. Kartik Mohindra, Chief Marketing Officer of Pernod Ricard India, highlighted the tour's role in bringing global fashion experiences to young, aspirational consumers across India.

## Lenovo expands retail footprint with 25+ exclusive stores



Guwahati, Jan 29: Lenovo, a global technology leader, has strengthened its retail footprint in India by opening over 25 exclusive stores across North and East India, bringing its total to 480+ outlets nationwide. This expansion targets Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Haryana, aiming to make advanced technology more accessible. The new stores offer a wide range of AI-enabled devices, including gaming, consumer, and commercial products. A standout addition is a hybrid store in Faridabad, Haryana, featuring a dedicated gaming zone for an immersive experience. Raghavendra Araveeti, Sales Head, North

and East – Consumer Business, Lenovo India, emphasized, "Expanding our retail footprint reinforces our commitment to bringing smarter technology closer to consumers – from metros to smaller towns." In Guwahati, Lenovo's growing presence aligns with the city's increasing demand for high-tech solutions. The store is designed to serve professionals, students, and gamers, providing access to Lenovo's innovative products and services, including express delivery options. With interactive displays, personalized assistance, and faster delivery times, Lenovo's expansion solidifies its position as a market leader while addressing the growing tech needs of consumers in smaller towns and cities across India.

## India showcases skilled workforce on 76th Republic Day, honors 100 entrepreneurs

Guwahati, Jan 29: Celebrating the 76th Republic Day, Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, honored 100 entrepreneurs at a special event in Kaushal Bhawan. Recognized as pivotal contributors to India's innovation under the Skill India Mission, these entrepreneurs also attended the Republic Day parade as special guests. Chaudhary, fresh from the World Economic Forum 2025 in Davos, highlighted India's growing stature as a global skill hub. "India's skilled workforce is earning global acclaim, and our entrepreneurs



are key to this transformation," he stated. Discussions at Davos included

sustainability, AI, and women-led development. India's robust start-up ecosystem

boasts 118 unicorns valued at \$354 billion. The MSME sector, comprising 63 million enterprises, employs over 11 crore people and contributes 30% to GDP. Entrepreneurs like Jharkhand's Ritendra Prasad, who transitioned from an EDP program to launching a solar business, exemplify this growth. Guwahati, a bustling hub of trade and innovation, reflects India's entrepreneurial spirit. Its skilled workforce, especially in tech and manufacturing, is driving business growth. Government initiatives have further enhanced opportunities, boosting exports and job creation.

## Bajaj Finserv Q3 Profit Rises, Income Falls

New Delhi, Jan 30: Bajaj Finserv on Thursday reported a marginal 3.4 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,231 crore for the third quarter (Q3) of the financial year 2024-25 (FY25). The company reported a net profit of Rs 2,157.67 crore during the same period last year. Sequentially, profit rose 7 per cent from Rs 2,086.97 crore.

Bajaj Finserv's consolidated interest income however fell by 20 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) to Rs 13,922.38 crore from Rs 17,408.60 crore. Sequentially, however, revenue saw a marginal rise of 5 per cent from Rs 16,571.61 crore.

## LIC Mutual Fund launches multi asset allocation fund to attract diversified investors

Guwahati, Jan 29: LIC Mutual Fund has launched the LIC MF Multi Asset Allocation Fund, a new open-ended scheme aimed at offering diversified exposure across equity, debt, and gold. The New Fund Offer (NFO) will open from January 24 to February 7, 2025, with the goal of generating long-term capital appreciation. The scheme will invest in a diversified portfolio of equity and equity-related instruments, debt, money market instruments, and units of gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs). The benchmark for the scheme combines 65% Nifty 500 TRI, 25% Nifty Composite Debt Index, and 10% domestic gold prices. Commenting on the NFO, Mr. R.K. Jha, Managing Director & CEO of LIC Mutual



Fund, emphasized the growing interest in multi-asset allocation funds, which offer reduced concentration risks and better diversification.

The hybrid mutual fund segment saw a 27% rise in assets under management in 2024, with significant growth in multi-asset funds. In Guwahati,

investors are increasingly seeking products that offer balanced exposure to various asset classes. With the volatility in equity markets, the launch of LIC's Multi Asset Allocation Fund is expected to resonate well with local investors looking for a diversified investment approach that balances risk and return.

## Godrej Agrovet announces the launch of Argo Rid

Guwahati, Jan 29: LIC Mutual Fund has launched the LIC MF Multi Asset Allocation Fund, a new open-ended scheme aimed at offering diversified exposure across equity, debt, and gold. The New Fund Offer (NFO) will open from January 24 to February 7, 2025, with the goal of generating long-term capital appreciation. The scheme will invest in a diversified portfolio of equity and equity-related instruments, debt, money market instruments, and units of gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs). The benchmark for the scheme combines 65% Nifty 500 TRI, 25% Nifty Composite Debt Index, and 10% domestic gold prices. Commenting on the NFO, Mr. R.K. Jha, Managing Director & CEO of LIC Mutual Fund, emphasized the growing interest in



multi-asset allocation funds, which offer reduced concentration risks and better diversification. The hybrid mutual fund segment saw a 27% rise in assets under management in 2024, with significant growth in multi-asset funds. In Guwahati, investors are increasingly seeking products that offer balanced exposure to various asset classes. With the volatility in equity markets, the launch of LIC's Multi Asset Allocation Fund is expected to resonate well with local investors looking for a diversified investment approach that balances risk and return.

## GCPL expands market reach with affordable INR 99 HIT Anti-Roach Gel



Guwahati, Jan 30: Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL) has reinforced its leadership in the pest control market with the launch of a new INR 99 variant of HIT Anti-Roach Gel. This cost-effective solution aims to address persistent cockroach infestations, which affect 65% of urban Indian homes despite regular cleaning efforts.

With the household insecticide market witnessing strong growth, GCPL identified an opportunity to enhance accessibility while maintaining product efficacy. The new variant, designed to combat counterfeit products and expand market penetration, is expected to drive a 10x growth opportunity in the cockroach gel category.

Shilpa Suresh, Head of Marketing - Home Care at GCPL, highlighted the importance of affordable pest control solutions. "Cockroach infestations pose serious health risks. This new variant empowers households with an effective and

budget-friendly solution to ensure hygiene and safety," she said. The INR 100 crore gel-based anti-cockroach market in India is growing at over 25% annually. The HIT Anti-Roach Gel, with its odourless, kitchen-safe formula, provides up to 45 days of protection per application, making it ideal for high-risk areas such as cupboards and shelves.

In Guwahati, where urban expansion and sanitation challenges contribute to pest issues, the INR 99 HIT Anti-Roach Gel is expected to see strong demand. Retailers anticipate increased sales as consumers seek effective and safe pest control solutions. With rising awareness about hygiene, GCPL's affordable innovation is well-positioned to cater to Guwahati's evolving home care needs. Targeting high-infestation regions such as the West and South, GCPL continues to strengthen its market presence with innovative, consumer-centric solutions.

## NSDC, CoLLearn and DA One Sports launch cricket coach skilling program

Guwahati, Jan 30: The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), in partnership with ed-tech platform CoLLearn and ShikharDhawan's DA One Sports, has launched the Cricket Coach Education Programme to upskill coaches across India. The initiative aims to elevate coaching standards and meet the growing demand for skilled trainers in the sports industry.

Under this collaboration, NSDC will facilitate awareness workshops and pro-



vide skill loans, CoLLearn will organize classes and placement support, while DA One Sports will handle student assessments and on-field training. The program

covers modern coaching techniques, player analytics, and injury prevention strategies to enhance player performance and team dynamics.

With cricket gaining popularity in Assam and the Northeast, Guwahati is poised to benefit from this initiative. Local cricket academies and

training centers can leverage the program to hire certified coaches, improving grassroots development and creating new opportunities for aspiring professionals in the region. CoLLearn's Srishty Jain called the initiative a "game-changer", while ShikharDhawan emphasized its role in shaping future cricketing talent. The program also offers career development support, ensuring trained coaches are well-prepared to thrive in India's expanding sports ecosystem.

# Sonam Kapoor's dramatic Dior moment at Paris Fashion Week

## Black, bold and regal

Sonam Kapoor is dishing out one stunning look after another, the latest one being at Dior's Spring/Summer 2025 Haute Couture show in Paris. The actress, who is the brand ambassador of the luxury fashion brand, arrived in an ensemble from their Spring/Summer 2025 collection, which was nothing short of a sartorial statement. Her look was an amalgamation of regal and opulent elements. Sonam opted for a monochromatic look featuring a fluid sheer dress and paired it with a faux fur coat from the house's Resort 2025 collection. Of course, don't forget those long black gloves for an edgier finish. The look does feel like she channelled vintage Hollywood elegance (somewhat reminiscent of Audrey Hepburn's iconic Breakfast at Tiffany's look). As far as her makeup is concerned, it was put together by makeup artist Arti Nayar. Sonam opted for a dewy base, sculpted cheekbones, and softly defined eyes to enhance her striking features. She finished it off with a pink-toned lipstick. And that gorgeous bun—did you spot the gajra though? What a way to bring together contrasting elements. While you might feel a necklace could have elevated the look, those pearl earrings,



reminiscent of a kanauti, did their job brilliantly, and of course, those earcuffs! Attending her first Dior show now as the global ambassador of the French luxury house, Sonam Kapoor said, "This Dior show holds a very special place in my heart as it marks my first attendance as the brand's global ambassador since it was announced in October. Having attended Dior's shows in the past as an admirer, stepping into this role as their first South Asian ambassador feels truly surreal." "Dior has always been more than just a brand to me—it has been an integral part of my personal style journey and a creative partner in many of my films. Becoming a part of this storied legacy is both an honour and a responsibility, one that I embrace with great pride. I look forward to deepening my association with Dior and shining a

spotlight on the incredible artistry of Indian and South Asian craftsmen, bringing their talent to the global stage," she adds. Sonam Kapoor, who embraced motherhood in 2022, was last seen in the action thriller film Blind.

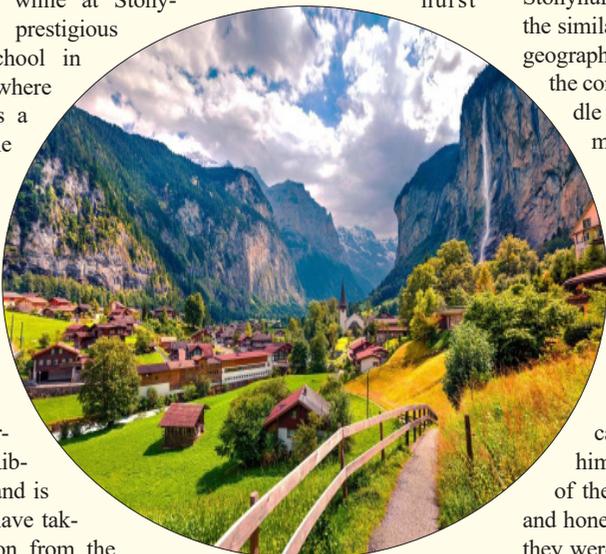
spotlight on the incredible artistry of Indian and South Asian craftsmen, bringing their talent to the global stage," she adds. Sonam Kapoor, who embraced motherhood in 2022, was last seen in the action thriller film Blind.

## A Tolkien trail: Where to find the real-life Middle-earth

While Tolkien's stories take place in the fictional realm of Middle-earth, the awe-inspiring landscapes of the books, films and TV shows are closer than you might imagine. The first book in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, was released 70 years ago, in the summer of 1954. However, that's not the only recent milestone for Tolkien's legendarium: the second season of the epic TV series, *The Rings of Power*, was released on 29 August 2024. As befits the ultimate epic fantasy series, the settings are gorgeous, ranging from bucolic, rolling countryside to plunging valleys and desolate deserts. And while Tolkien's stories take place in the fictional realm of Middle-earth, the awe-inspiring landscapes of the books, films and TV shows are not as otherworldly as you might imagine. Many of them are based on real-world locations and visiting them brings to life both the landscapes themselves and the imaginary worlds they inspired Tolkien to create.

### The Tolkien Trail: Lancashire, England

While writing *The Lord of the Rings* in the 1940s, Tolkien lived for a while at Stonyhurst College, a prestigious boarding school in Lancashire where his son was a teacher. The elder Tolkien was known to walk often through the woodlands and rolling hills of the surrounding Ribblesdale Valley, and is thought to have taken inspiration from the place while creating the Shire, the rural homeland of the hobbits. Today, fans can explore the area on the Tolkien Trail, which opened in 2002 and takes hikers

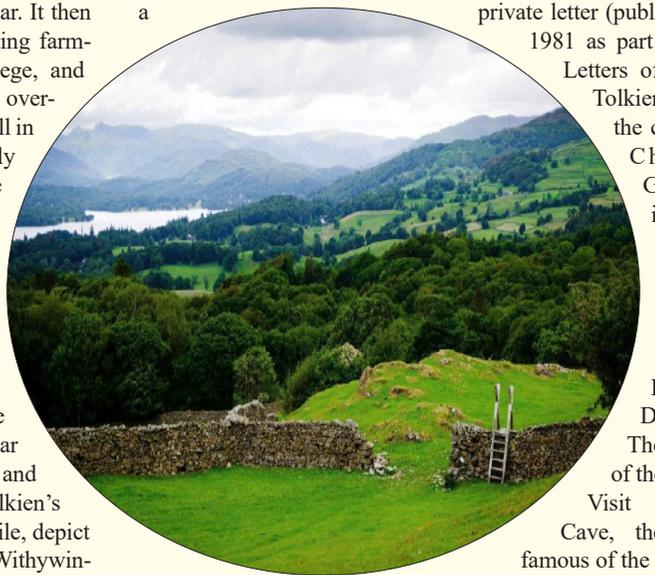


through the very landscapes that inspired the author. The route starts in the village of Hurst Green at the atmospheric 17th-Century Shireburn Arms pub, where Tolkien was a regular. It then winds for around seven easy miles through undulating farmland, past the grand buildings of Stonyhurst College, and across historic landmarks like Cromwell's Bridge, an overgrown packhorse bridge once used by Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil War. Although Tolkien didn't directly document the influence of places along the trail, there are several sources of likely inspiration. The route passes the stately home Hacking Hall where, during Tolkien's time, there was a wooden ferry barge, the Hacking Ferry, that carried people across the River Ribble. In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the Bucklebury Ferry (also outside a stately home, Brandy Hall) carries the hobbits across the Brandywine River in similar fashion while they are fleeing a fearsome spectral horseman. The local landowning family near Stonyhurst, meanwhile, were called the Shireburns – and the similarly named River Shirebourne appears in Tolkien's geography of Middle-earth. Tolkien's maps, meanwhile, depict the convergence of three rivers – the Shirebourne, Withywindle and Brandywine – in a way that exactly mirrors the meeting of the Hodder, Ribble and Calder rivers here in Lancashire. In addition, St Mary's Church in the nearby village of Newchurch-in-Pendle bears an unusual feature: an eye-shaped carving halfway up the tower, known as the Eye of God, which resembles the all-seeing Eye of Sauron from the *Lord of the Rings* books and movies.

### Cheddar Gorge: Somerset, England

Most of the real-life places associated with Tolkien's imaginings of Middle-earth are based on educated guesswork, but there is one place that the writer himself confirmed as a real-life inspiration for *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien and his wife Edith married in 1916, and honeymooned in the Somerset village of Clevedon. While they were there, they paid a visit to one of the most jaw-dropping landscapes in Britain: Cheddar Gorge, a sheer limestone valley, pockmarked with caves whose walls are bejewelled with intricate rock formations, stalagmites and stalactites. The hon-

eymoonings author – always married, at least in part, to his work – was taking notes, and in 1971 he confirmed in a private letter (published in 1981 as part of *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*) that the caves of Cheddar Gorge inspired the Glittering Caves of Helm's Deep in *The Lord of the Rings*. Visit Gough Cave, the most famous of the caves at Cheddar, and you'll likely recognise elements of Tolkien's description of the Glittering Caves: "columns of white and saffron and dawn-rose ... fluted and twisted into dreamlike forms".



recognise elements of Tolkien's description of the Glittering Caves: "columns of white and saffron and dawn-rose ... fluted and twisted into dreamlike forms".

### Denize Bluffs: Waitomo, New Zealand

LOTR mega-fans will instantly recognise Denize Bluffs, an area of soaring rock formations and wild bush on New Zealand's North Island. In the films, this landscape features in the prequel movie *The Hobbit*: In the TV show, meanwhile, Denize Bluffs serves as part of the highland home of the Harfoots, the series' hobbit protagonists. In reality, Denize Bluffs sits on a privately owned sheep and cattle farm that has been in the same family for three generations. Current stewards Warrick and Suzie Denize are very proud of the *Lord of the Rings* association, and now run Hairy Feet Waitomo: tours of the property that take in the various locations seen in the films and TV shows and bring them to life with showbiz tales from the production. Tours must be booked in advance. The farm can be found around eight miles west of the town of Piopio.

# Tips on how to stay fit and still enjoy festive Indian sweets

Tips for sticking to your diet through the festive season are everywhere – on the news, on social media, and in that recent conversation with your well-meaning aunt. However, according to nutrition and fitness professionals, instead of taking an all-or-nothing approach, eat that dry fruit kheer and savour it – yes, truly enjoy it. But here's the catch, instead of throwing caution to the wind and treating the festive season like a month-long all-you-can-eat party, if you simply add in some exercises and eat nutritious foods most of the time, your body can certainly handle a few ghee-laden mithais and fried tikkis and puris.

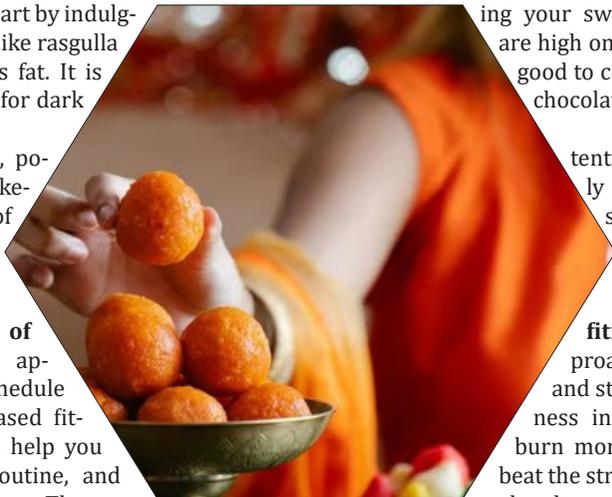
## Balance your food wherever you can

According to Kolkata-based nutritionist Aparajita Saha, while high-calorie food during the festive season may be unavoidable, you can be smart by indulging your sweet tooth with healthier options. She says, "Sweets like rasgulla is high in sugar as well as fat. It is good to control sweets of all kinds, but if you must indulge go for dark rasgulla, and custards."

When you arrive at a big, polished, you're much more likely to overeat and eat what's in sight. "Instead of showing up hungry, snacks on high-fibre fruits, vegetables, and whole grains beat your hunger in check," Aparajita says.

## Strike the ideal balance of

Apart from a moderate amount up your workout schedule according to Bengaluru-based fitness instructor, Anil Shetty. He says, "Extra workouts will help you burn more calories, stay on track with your healthy diet routine, and beat the stress that comes along with the outings." "Exercise almost always shows not only intense flavor with each bite, but also a deep, century-old history. After Peru abolished slavery in the 1800s, nearly 90,000 Chinese men, mostly Cantonese, came to the country to work as indentured servants. They brought over ingredients like ginger, soy sauce, and scallions, and started melding them with items found in their new land, like potatoes, pineapples, and bananas. Thus, chifa, which translates from Cantonese to "to eat," was born. Nikkei kicked off similarly, with diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru beginning just before the turn of the 19th century. Lured by the advertised prospect of a paradise-like setting, thousands of Japanese men and women sailed to Peru, only to then be offered menial labor. Those who stayed created a new life—and cuisine—for the next generation.



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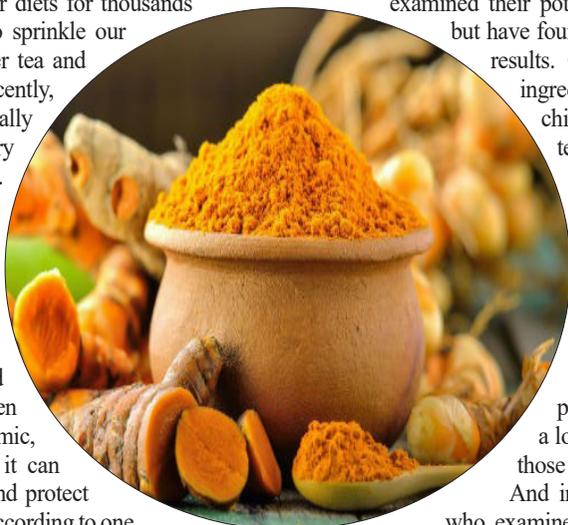
## fitness and fun

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## Are there health benefits to eating turmeric and other spices?

Spices have been a part of our diets for thousands of years – it's second nature to sprinkle our chips with pepper, sip on ginger tea and add chillies to our meals. But recently, some spices have been unofficially promoted from everyday culinary staples to all-healing superfoods. Hillary Clinton reportedly ate one chilli pepper a day while on the campaign trail in 2016 as an attempt to ward off illness. Turmeric, which has been used in Asia for millennia, has found its way into coffee shops around the world in the form of "golden lattes" – and, during the pandemic, into viral messages that claim it can "boost your immune system" and protect you from getting sick. It's now, according to one celebrity chef, "everywhere". Meanwhile, cayenne pepper still hasn't recovered since the ill-advised "Beyoncé diet" back in 2013, which suggested consuming a concoction of cayenne pepper, maple syrup, lemon and water to lose weight. (Also see our story on whether "boosting" your immune system can really protect you). But do spices really add any health benefits to our food, or help us ward off illness? And can any of them actually do us harm? One of the most well known and widely used spices are chilli peppers. Many studies have



examined their potential effects on our health – but have found both beneficial and adverse results. Capsaicin is the main active ingredient in chillies. When we eat chillies, capsaicin molecules interact with the temperature receptors in our bodies, sending signals to the brain to create the feeling of heat. Some studies point to the idea that capsaicin may help you live longer. One 2019 Italian study found that people who ate food seasoned with chilli peppers four times a week had a lower risk of death compared to those who never ate chillies.

And in 2015, researchers in China, who examined the chilli consumption and health of nearly 500,000 Chinese adults, found that eating chillies was associated with lower risk of death. Those who consumed spicy foods almost every day had a 14% lower risk of death than those who ate spicy foods less than once a week. "The major findings were that higher intake of spicy foods is related to a lower risk of mortality, particularly deaths due to cancer, heart disease, and respiratory diseases," says researcher Lu Qi, professor of nutrition at Harvard's school of public health.

## Low carb diet may improve cholesterol levels in people with type 2 diabetes



People with type 2 diabetes are at a higher risk of developing high cholesterol, which is a risk factor for heart disease. Traditionally, a high carbohydrate and low fat diet was considered best for people with type 2 diabetes. Over the past few years, some studies have shown that following a low-carbohydrate, high-fat diet may be beneficial for those with type 2 diabetes. A new study says that replacing some dietary carbohydrates with protein and fat in the diet of people with type 2 diabetes may help improve their cholesterol levels. People with type 2 diabetes — a condition where the body struggles to manage its blood sugar levels — are at a higher risk for cardiovascular disease. Previous studies also show that those with type 2 diabetes have a heightened risk of developing high cholesterol, which is a risk factor for heart disease. Both type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol can often be managed by diet and lifestyle changes. Traditionally, a high carbohydrate and low fat diet with healthy carb sources and fiber-rich foods was considered best for people with type 2 diabetes. Over the past few years, some studies show that following a low carbohydrate, higher fat diet may be beneficial for those with type 2 diabetes. A study published in January 2023 found that 51% of study participants achieved type 2 diabetes remission following a low carb diet. Research published in October 2024 reported that following a low-carbohydrate diet might improve beta-cell function in people with type 2 diabetes, making the disease easier to manage. Reduced carb, high protein diet linked to lower 'bad' cholesterol. This new research consists of findings from two different studies completed at Copenhagen University Hospital Bispebjerg in Denmark. The first Isoenergetic (Iso) study included 30 participants with type 2 diabetes focused on maintaining their current weight, while the second Hypoenergetic (Hypo) Study consisted of 72 participants with type 2 diabetes aimed at losing weight. For both studies, participants were provided with all meals for either a carbohydrate-reduced high-protein (CRHP) diet or a conventional diabetes diet over a six-week period. After the Iso Study, researchers found that while weight was maintained in both diet groups, those following the CRHP diet reduced their triacylglycerol-rich lipoproteins. Trusted Source, apolipoprotein B, and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol — also known as "bad" cholesterol — while increasing their amount of "good" high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, compared to those following the conventional diabetes diet. When analyzing the Hypo Study, weight loss caused by following the CRHP diet tended to reduce TRL and LDL levels and increase HDL, compared to those who lost the same amount of weight following the conventional diabetes diet. However, in the Hypo Study, the metabolic effects of the CRHP diet compared to the conventional diabetes diet were less noticeable.

### What are the best carbs for type 2 diabetes?

MNT also spoke with Monique Richard, MS, RDN, LDN, a registered dietitian nutritionist and owner of Nutrition-In-Sight to get her top tips on the best carbohydrates for readers who have type 2 diabetes or are prediabetic. "Often the first-line of addressing glucose control when working with those who have prediabetes or diabetes is adjusting carbohydrate intake as well as educating about why it matters (hint, carbohydrates break down to glucose which in turn affects blood glucose regulation), the quality, the variation among carbohydrate food groups (the carbohydrate profile of a donut is much different than the amount of carbohydrate in broccoli, or even a potato), and all the nuances in between," Richard explained. "When educating my clients and patients on carbohydrates I let them know that 'nothing is off the table' (pun intended). It is all about understanding portion sizes as well as how that food acts in your body. One individual with diabetes may have a very different blood glucose reaction from pizza compared to another individual with diabetes," Richard said.

## Lautaro Martinez becomes Inter's top goalscorer in Champions League with hat trick against Monaco

Milan, Jan 30: Lautaro Martínez became Inter Milan's top scorer in Europe's elite competition as he netted a hat trick against 10-man Monaco in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Lautaro's treble moved him onto 18 goals in the Champions League, one more than former Inter and Italy forward Sandro Mazzola, who racked up goals in the old European Cup in the 1960s and 70s. The



Inter Milan captain was given a standing ovation by the San Siro crowd when he was taken off in the 76th minute, with

his goals having secured a 3-0 win and place in the round of 16 of the revamped Champions League.

"I'm really proud because I'm beating records but as I always say, what's important is that Inter wins, I am here to help the team, to make all these fans happy," Lautaro said. "I'm really proud of everything I am doing." Lautaro's 8 Goals in 10 Signal Peak Performance.

## Arsenal Can Beat Anyone, Says Arteta



Girona, Jan 30: Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta said his side could handle any opposition after progressing directly to the Champions League last 16 with a 2-1 win at Girona on Wednesday.

A much-rotated Gunners side defeated the Catalan outfit with goals from Jorginho and Ethan Nwaneri after falling behind to Arnaut Danjuma's first-half strike.

Arsenal, avoiding the play-off phase added this season, will play Juventus, AC Milan, Feyenoord or PSV Eindhoven in the last 16.

"Winning in this competition is very demanding but overall the team has been very consistent, regardless of all the issues they have had to face," Arteta told reporters after a fourth consecutive European victory.

"(Hopefully it breeds) more belief in that dressing room that we are a good team and we can face anyone and still perform and win games." Neto made his Arsenal debut against Girona in goal with Arteta saying first-choice stopper David Raya was hurt. "He certainly could not play, he is injured," explained the coach, ahead of Manchester City's impending visit to face Arsenal in the Premier League, in a key title race clash on Sunday. Veteran Brazilian goalkeeper Neto, 35, erred for Girona's opener, with the Bournemouth loanee caught out of his box and Danjuma able to finish past him from distance.

## India vs England

### Shami's return sight for sore eyes

Chennai, Jan 30: Just as artificial light was beginning to take over from natural light at the Niranjan Shah Stadium at Rajkot on Tuesday, the familiar but slightly forgotten sight of Mohammed Shami steaming in with a white ball next to the main pitch played itself out. Since that fateful evening against Australia in Ahmedabad on November 19, 2023, all cricketing stakeholders — the paying public, commentators, broadcasters, the board and the players — have yearned for him. It's definitely not been a case of out of sight, out of mind. If anything, it's been a case of absence making the heart



grow fonder. It's easy to why the speedster, at 34 very much in the December second week of his career, has this sort of reputation. Even if he doesn't make things happen, the mere possibility of having a Shami in the XI is akin to that of a solid fixed deposit in the bank during a bear run. He's a totally bankable bowler; not only safe as houses but also capable of conjuring magic. With Jasprit Bumrah in the set-up, India's ceiling is already

high. But when both of them operate in tandem, the floor and the ceiling raise.

It's why the 2023 World Cup, despite the unhappy ending, is a happy memory for the scores of fans who followed the hosts' sojourn either in the stands or via TV. In a country where there is a cult around batters and column inches dedicated to the cricketers who score runs, Shami was instrumental in making bowling look cool.

It's a similar story in red-ball cricket. Remember Virat Kohli's emotionally-charged 'they should feel hell?' line from the 2021 Test against England.

## Afghan women cricketers return after 3-year exile



Melbourne, Jan 29: Cricketer Firooza Amiri says her team will "represent millions of women in Afghanistan who are denied their rights" when the side reunites after more than three years for an exhibition game in Australia on Thursday.

An Afghanistan Women's XI will play a Cricket Without Borders XI in the match at Melbourne's Junction Oval. It will bring together 21 female players who were formerly

contracted by the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) before the Taliban regime re-took control in August 2021.

Since fleeing Afghanistan, the women cricketers, banned from playing in their home country, have been based in Canberra and Melbourne and playing for various club teams in local competitions. Amiri and Nahida Sapan, who will captain the Afghanistan Women's XI, thank Australia for women's cricket support.

## Real Madrid 'yet to show their best', warns Ancelotti

Guinmap, Jan 29: Carlo Ancelotti said Real Madrid "are improving but are yet to show their best" as his side bid to earn automatic qualification to the Champions League last 16 against Ligue 1 club Brest on Wednesday.

The reigning champions of Europe are ensured of their place in at least the knockout play-off round as the league phase of the revamped Champions League wraps up with its final matchday this week. However, after suffering three defeats in their opening seven matches, 16th-placed Real are only in with an outside chance of securing a top eight finish and automatic progression to the last 16.

A faltering start to the defence of their Spanish and Champions League titles now seems to be behind Ancelotti's

## Kohli's Ranji return draws massive crowd, extra gates opened

New Delhi, Jan 30: A working Thursday morning did not stop fans from creating an electrifying atmosphere for Virat Kohli's return to Ranji Trophy. The former India captain, playing for Delhi in the tournament after 12 years, ensured thousands of fans flocked to watch him in action at the Arun Jaitley Stadium for Delhi against Railways.



As of Wednesday, the Delhi & District Cricket Association (DDCA) had planned to open only three gates — 16, 17, and 7 — for spectators. The overwhelming turnout compelled authorities to also open gates 18 to accommodate the spectators.

On the morning of Day 1, the stadium had already recorded a crowd of more than 15,000 occupying the Gautam Gambhir and Bishan Singh Bedi stands.

## KL Rahul, Siraj and Kohli return for last Ranji league games

Chennai, Jan 30: Locked in a three-way tussle for a quarterfinal berth, Karnataka will have KL Rahul's experience to bank on in the quest for a bonus point win over table-toppers Haryana in their final league match of the Ranji Trophy Elite Group C in Bengaluru on Thursday.

Karnataka currently have 19 points and Haryana have 26 points, but Kerala with 21 points are putting pressure on both the teams. If the former champions manage a bonus point victory (7 points) at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, their tally will be swelled to 26 points.

In that scenario, the home

side can enter the last eight either as the top team or the second-placed team of the group, depending on Kerala's outing against Bihar at Thumba, Thiruvananthapuram. A win even without a bonus point will take Kerala to 27 points, and they will end up as Group C leaders. In that event, Haryana, who will stay on 26 points, will be knocked out as Karnataka will have more bonus point wins (2) to their credit than Haryana (1).

Meanwhile, Hyderabad, although out of contention for knockouts, will see Mohammed Siraj playing their fixture against Vidarbha in Nagpur.



charges after they have won nine of their last 10 outings in all competitions. "I think the team are improving but are yet to show their best, even though we're getting close," Ancelotti said during his pre-match press conference on Tuesday.

"The idea and the vision that we have for this team, I think it's clear to everyone and the

team have improved collectively, but also individually. "That's the case for Kylian Mbappe, but also for Rodrygo (Goes) or (Jude) Bellingham and all the other players. They've all worked very hard. "Kylian is playing very well. I think he just needed a little time to improve athletically and adapt to his new environment.