



Initiative; Ceremonial Cheque Distribution under Mukhya Mantri Mahila Abhiyan (AMMUA) in Haflong 77th Republic Day Celebrated with Grandeur and Patriotic Fervour Across Dima Hasao

## 16th National Voters' Day Celebrated at DC's Office, Haflong; New Voters Felicitated



**Haflong, Jan 25:** The 16th National Voters' Day (NVD), 2026 was observed at the District Commissioner's Office, Haflong, on Saturday with the objective of promoting electoral awareness and encouraging informed participation in the democratic process. The programme was marked by the participation of newly enrolled voters, who have recently attained 18 years of age and will be exercising their franchise for the first time. Addressing the gathering, Election Officer Bruhid Rabha, ACS, highlighted the objective and significance of National Voters' Day, emphasising the importance of free, fair, and ethical voting in strengthening democracy. On the occasion, Assistant Commissioner Mithinga Diamary, ACS, administered the National Voters' Day pledge to all those present, reaffirming their commitment to uphold democratic values. DIPRO Purabi Phonglo Bodo was also present along with other officials. The programme was attended by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), all Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs), Booth Level Officers (BLO Supervisors and BLOs) of the Haflong Town area, and officers and staff of the District Commissioner's office. The observance underscored the administration's continued efforts to nurture informed and responsible voters, especially among the youth, thereby strengthening the democratic fabric of the district.

## 77th Republic Day Celebrated with Grandeur and Patriotic Fervour Across Dima Hasao

**Haflong, Jan 26:** The 77th Republic Day of India was celebrated with great enthusiasm and patriotic spirit at the central function held at the N.L. Daulagupu Sports Complex, Haflong, in Dima Hasao district. The Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC), Debolal Gorlosa, graced the occasion as the chief guest. CEM Gorlosa unfurled the National Tricolour, accompanied by District Commissioner Munindra Nath Ngatey, ACS, and Senior Superintendent of Police Ripunjoy Kakoti, APS. The programme commenced with Shaheed Tarpan, paying floral tributes to the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, followed by inspection of the march-past contingents. Extending Republic Day greetings to the gathering, CEM Gorlosa spoke about the aspirations and achievements of the present council and expressed his gratitude to Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma for his continued support. Emphasising the importance of quality education and robust healthcare institutions, he underlined their role in the overall upliftment of Dima Hasao. He also appealed to the youth



to stay away from narcotics and actively engage in sports to maintain physical fitness and mental well-being, enabling them to shoulder responsibilities towards society and the nation. Highlighting the achievements of the BJP-led council, CEM Gorlosa spoke at length about progress in infrastructure development, communication, healthcare, education, and the rapid growth of tourism in the district. He described these developments as the trust and blessings of the people of Dima Hasao. He noted that under the present leadership, many young job aspirants from the district have successfully secured positions through competitive examinations, including UPSC and APSC. He further reiterated the council's commitment to preserving the rich traditions and cultural heritage of all tribes in the district. *(To be continued in page- 9)*

## Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar Among Five Killed in Tragic Plane Crash



**Delhi / Baramati, Jan 28:** In a shocking aviation tragedy, Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra Ajit Pawar lost his life on Wednesday morning when the chartered aircraft he was travelling in crash-landed near Baramati Airport in Pune district and burst into flames, aviation authorities and news agencies reported. According to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the VSR Ventures-operated Learjet 45 (VT-SSK), en route from Mumbai to Baramati, went down as it attempted to land, killing all five people on board, including two crew members and two of Pawar's aides. Eyewitness footage showed the aircraft engulfed in smoke and fire with multiple explosions as it crashed in an open field near the runway. Rescue teams reached the scene, but no survivors were found. Pawar, a senior leader with deep roots in Maharashtra politics and a key ally in the state government, was travelling to Baramati—a seat he represented and his political stronghold—to participate in election-related activities. News of his sudden death has triggered widespread shock and condolences across the nation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Pawar's demise as "shocking and saddening" in a social media post, paying tribute to his service and leadership. The cause of the crash remains under investigation by aviation authorities, with officials expected to examine technical and operational factors. Sources: Reuters, The Federal, Al Jazeera

## Mukhya Mantri Eti Koli, Dutti Paat Scheme Launched at Kopili Tea Estate to Honour Tea Garden Workers' Legacy

**Kopili Tea Estate, Jan 25:** As part of a massive statewide initiative marking 200 years of the Assam tea industry, the Mukhya Mantri 'Eti Koli, Dutti Paat' scheme was formally implemented at Kopili Tea Estate, reaffirming the state government's commitment to the welfare and dignity of tea garden workers. The programme was held in the presence of Minister Nandita Gorlosa, who attended the event as the Chief Guest. The scheme, initiated under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, aims to honour the invaluable contribution of tea garden workers to Assam's economy and cultural heritage by providing a one-time financial assistance of ₹5,000 to eligible beneficiaries. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Nandita Gorlosa highlighted the historic significance of the tea industry in Assam and acknowledged the gener-

ations of workers whose hard work has sustained and strengthened the sector for two centuries. She stated that the Eti Koli, Dutti Paat scheme is a symbolic yet meaningful gesture of gratitude from the government, recognising both the labour and legacy of tea garden communities. The programme also saw the presence of Dima Hasao Autonomous Council Executive Member Samsing Engti, Munindra Nath Ngatey, District Commissioner, Dima Hasao, Chairperson of Haflong Municipal Board, Ripa Hojai, Additional Deputy Commissioners, and several other senior officials and dignitaries, reflecting the importance accorded to the initiative by the administration. The event at Kopili Tea Estate formed part of the larger statewide rollout of the scheme, which seeks not only to provide immediate financial support but also to reaffirm the government's



long-term commitment to the socio-economic upliftment of tea garden workers and their families. The launch was welcomed by workers and local residents alike, who expressed appreciation for the recognition of their role in shaping Assam's identity as one of the world's leading tea-producing regions.

## Minister Kaushik Rai Reviews Progress of Four-Lane NH-27 East-West Corridor in Dima Hasao



**Haflong, Jan 27:** Minister of Assam for Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, M & M and other allied departments, Kaushik

Rai on Monday reviewed the progress of the four-lane East-West Corridor (NH-27) from Nirimbanglo to Jatinga up to Harangajao. The review

meeting was held at the Haflong Circuit House, underscoring the government's focus on expediting key infrastructure projects in the hill district. During the meeting, officials informed the Minister that the 49.2-kilometre stretch of the East-West Corridor between Harangajao and Nirimbanglo has achieved nearly 90 percent physical progress. Following consultations with the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and other concerned stakeholders, it was stated that the route is expected to be opened for

traffic in the near future, which will significantly improve road connectivity in the region. The Minister expressed satisfaction over the pace of work and emphasized the importance of timely completion of the remaining portion. He noted that the four-lane corridor would play a crucial role in boosting economic activities, improving transportation, and ensuring safer and faster movement for commuters in Dima Hasao and adjoining areas. The review meeting was attended by District Commissioner Munindra Nath

Ngatey, ACS; Senior Superintendent of Police Ripunjoy Kakoti, APS; Joint Secretaries of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) and Amit Porbosa, ACS; Additional Deputy Commissioner Shaurya Sharma, ACS; along with senior officers from NHAI and various line departments. Officials assured the Minister that all efforts are being made to resolve remaining issues and complete the project at the earliest, in line with the vision of strengthening Assam's road infrastructure and regional



## Amit Shah Slams Rahul Gandhi Over 'Gamosa' Absence



**Dibrugarh, Jan 30:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of disrespecting the North East by refusing to wear 'gamosa', presented by President Droupadi Murmu at the 'At Home' reception hosted by her on Republic Day. All dignitaries, including those from abroad, had worn the scarf as a mark of respect, but Gandhi was the "only person to refuse" to do so, Shah claimed, while addressing a

public rally at the Khanikar Parade Ground here "Rahul Gandhi can do whatever he wants, but as long as the BJP is in power, it will not allow any disrespect of the North East's culture", he said. Shah alleged that the Congress did nothing for Assam's development. "I want to ask Rahul Gandhi what his party has given to Assam except guns, bullets, conflict and deaths of youth," the union home minister said.

Shah also accused the Congress of using infiltration as a "weapon for its vote bank politics". "There has been no infiltration in Assam since the BJP came to power. Those who had come to India illegally will be identified and sent back," he added.

## UP: Woman Booked for Railway Pension Fraud

**FIR filed against Parvati Devi**

**Ballia, Jan 30:** Police have booked a woman for allegedly posing as the wife of a deceased retired railway employee and fraudulently withdrawing pension years after both the employee and his wife had died, officials said. On a complaint filed by Dharmendra Yadav of Bheilai village, police registered an FIR on Thursday at Rasra police station against Parvati Devi, relatives of the late Maldhani, and some unidentified employees of the Rasra development block.

According to police, Maldhani, a former railway employee, retired from service and was drawing pension. After his death on August 28, 2007, his wife Prabhavati Devi drew the pension. Pra-

bhavati Devi died on March 21, 2014. Police said Parvati Devi was allegedly produced by Maldhani's relatives as Prabhavati Devi and continued to withdraw pension fraudulently from the Rasra branch of Central Bank.

Police booked the accused under charges of cheating, forgery and others of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Station House Officer Yogendra Bahadur Singh said police are probing the case further.



## WB Govt Seeks Revision of Election Commission's Observer Appointments

**WB seeks officer swaps citing 'administrative and official needs.'**

**Kolkata, Jan 30:** The West Bengal government has written to the Election Commission, seeking changes to the list of central observers, while proposing alternative names for nine of the 15 IAS officers selected by the poll panel, a senior official said. Officers for whom replacements have been suggested include the state's home secretary, he said. The proposal was sent due to "administrative and official requirements", the official said. "The state government forwarded alternative names in place of nine IAS officers on Thursday. The Election Commission will examine the proposal and take a final call," he said.

The poll panel had recently published a list of 25 senior officials from West Bengal for deployment as central observers for the upcoming assembly elections in five states - West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. The list includes 15 IAS officers, including Home Secretary Jagdish Prasad Meena, and 10 IPS officers. Police Commissioners of Howrah and Asansol also figure in the list. Earlier, the commission said it had sought the names of officers from the state government on several occasions for the appointment of central observers. "As no response was received within the stipulated timeframe,



the commission finalised and published the list on its own," an EC official said.

Alongside the list, it issued detailed guidelines, mandating compulsory briefing sessions for all empanelled IAS and IPS officers, he said.

## Four Naxalites with total bounty of Rs 8 lakh surrender in Chhattisgarh's Sukma

**Sukma, Jan 30:** Four Naxalites, including two women, carrying cumulative rewards of Rs 8 lakh, surrendered along with their weapons in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Friday, a senior police official said. The cadres, who belonged to the Kistaram area committee of the south Bastar division of Maoists, turned themselves in here under the state's 'Poona Margem (from rehabilitation to social reintegration) initiative, Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range, Sundarraj P said. The Naxalites told the police that they were impressed by the state government's surrender and rehabilitation policy, he said. Of the surrendered cadres, Sodhi Joga, an area committee member, carried a reward

of Rs 5 lakh.

The others, Dabar Ganga, alias Madkam Ganga, Sodhi Raje, and Madvi Budhari, carried a bounty of Rs 1 lakh

played a key role in their surrender. The newly established security camps in the Kistaram and Golapalli areas of Sukma, improved road con-

ment has been significantly reduced, he said. The surrendered cadres will be provided with rehabilitation, financial assistance, and other facilities as per government policy, he added. Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan appealed to all the remaining Maoist cadres active in the area to give up violence, assuring them that the government would provide them security and a dignified life.

With this surrender, over 200 Naxalites have laid down arms so far this year in the state. On January 15, as many as 52 Naxalites surrendered in neighbouring Bijapur district. More than 1,500 Naxalites joined the mainstream in the state in 2025.

The Centre has resolved to eliminate Naxalism from the country by March 31 this year.



each, he said. They also handed over one Insas rifle, a Single Loading Rifle (SLR), one .303 rifle and a .315 rifle, and ammunition, he said, adding that police from Sukma district and Alluri Sitarama Raju district (Andhra Pradesh)

nectivity, and the success of continuous and effective anti-Naxal operations have resulted in frequent surrender of cadres in the region, he said.

These security camps have helped curb Maoist activities, and their area of free move-

## SC: Confession Without Corroboration Not Enough for Conviction

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** The Supreme Court has set aside the Meghalaya High Court's order convicting a murder accused, holding that confessional statements, without corroboration, are insufficient to sustain a finding of guilt. A Division Bench of the apex court, comprising Justice Sanjay Kumar and Justice K. Vinod Chandran, allowed the criminal appeal filed by Bernard Lyngdoh Phawa and acquitted him, concurring with the trial court's earlier order of acquittal. "The confessional statements, without corroboration are insufficient to sustain a finding of guilt. There was not a single circumstance available" to incriminate the accused, the Bench observed. Ajay Sabharwal, counsel for the appellant, argued that the alleged confessions attributed to the accused could not form the basis of a conviction in the absence of independent and reliable corroboration.

He further submitted that there was no valid

evidence supporting the "last seen" theory, that the recoveries and seizures were not proved in accordance with law, and that the confessional statements were either exculpatory, inconsistent, retracted or otherwise unreliable. Agreeing with these submissions, the Supreme Court held that the alleged confessions of the appellants could not form the basis of a conviction without independent and reliable corroboration. It noted that there was no valid evidence to support the "last seen" theory, that the recoveries and seizures were not legally proved, and that the confessional statements lacked reliability.

Accordingly, the Supreme Court reversed the High Court's judgment, which had overturned the trial court's acquittal and convicted the appellant for murder and destruction of evidence. Following the High Court's conviction order, Phawa had approached the apex court by way

of a criminal appeal challenging the verdict. The appellant was represented by Sabharwal, along with Advocate on Record Prabhas Bajaj. The case dates back to 2006, when a college student in Meghalaya was reported missing and was later found buried in a graveyard.

The police arrested two of his friends, alleging that the victim was last seen in their company, that a rope was allegedly recovered and purportedly used to kill him, and that certain belongings of the victim were allegedly found in the possession of one of the accused. The post mortem report opined that the cause of death was lack of air, while the examining doctors acknowledged that the possibility of death by suicide by hanging could not be ruled out.

The prosecution further alleged that ransom calls were purportedly made and relied on confessions allegedly attributed to the accused, one of whom was in custody at the time such



calls were made. The trial court found the prosecution case to be weak and incomplete and acquitted the accused. However, the High Court reversed the acquittal and convicted them. Upon a comprehensive re examination of the matter, the Supreme Court held that the evidence relied upon was unreliable, the investigation was allegedly marred by serious gaps, and ultimately acquitted both accused, directing their release.



## Santana Chakma Appreciates ₹33.10 Cr Allocation for OBC Scholarships

**Agartala, Jan 30:** Tripura's Minister for OBC Welfare, Santana Chakma, has extended heartfelt thanks to Union Minister Dr. Virendra Kumar for the sanction of ₹33.10 crore under the Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship schemes for OBC students pursuing higher education in the state. The sanctioned amount includes two major tranches: ₹25 crore released on January 22, 2026 (Dy. No. 103218 JSFA); and ₹8.1 crore released earlier on April 1, 2025 (Dy. No. 70236 JSFA). These grants, issued as "Mother Sanctions," are intended to support the Central Share of the scholarship scheme and are debitable to the budget head 360106101830131 under Demand No. 093 of the Ministry. The Sub-Level Scheme (SLS) identified for Tripura is coded as TR57.

The Ministry has emphasized that no re-appropriation or change in allocation among scheme components is permitted without prior approval from the Ministry



of Home Affairs. The accounts related to these grants will remain open to inspection and audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and the Ministry's internal audit mechanisms. In a statement issued on Friday, Minister Chakma said, "I sincerely thank and express my gratitude to Dr. Virendra Kumar Ji, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, for allocating ₹33.10 crore for the welfare of

OBC students in Tripura. This financial support will significantly benefit those pursuing higher education under the Pre-Matric and Post-Matric scholarship schemes."

She also acknowledged the pivotal role of Tripura Chief Minister Prof. Dr. Manik Saha in securing the funds, stating, "I extend deep appreciation to our Chief Minister for his tireless efforts in this important matter." Assuring timely disbursement, Chakma added, "I want to reassure all OBC students in Tripura that the scholarship funds will be released promptly." She concluded with a message of goodwill, wishing a bright and prosperous future to all stakeholders involved in this noble and welfare-oriented initiative.

This allocation marks a significant step in promoting educational equity and supporting economically disadvantaged students from the OBC community in Tripura.

## The Ultra-Short: Karat Slams BJP, Motha in Tripura



**Agartala, Jan 30:** CPI(M) Politburo member Brinda Karat on Thursday launched a sharp attack on the ruling BJP and the Tipra Motha Party, alleging that both had weakened the rights and interests of tribal communities in Tripura. Addressing a public meeting in Agartala to mark the beginning of the Ganamukti Parishad's central conference, Karat said misinformation in public discourse had increased significantly since the BJP came to power at the Centre. She alleged that BJP-ruled states were actively promoting false narratives under directions from the party's national leadership. Referring to the death of Anjel Chakma, Karat said the incident had drawn nationwide attention and should not be viewed in isolation. While those directly involved in the killing were responsible, she argued that the broader social climate that normalised racial abuse against ethnic minorities also needed scrutiny. According to her, such attitudes were being encouraged by the BJP and its ideological affiliates.

Karat further alleged that political forces in Tripura had a long history of exploiting tribal sentiments for electoral gains. She said this trend was earlier visible in the functioning of the Tripura Upa-

jati Juba Samiti and later the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), and claimed that the Tipra Motha Party was now following a similar trajectory. Commenting on a recent statement by former BJP MP Rebaty Tripura—who reportedly spoke about sending Tipra Motha founder Pradyot Kishore Debbarman to jail, Karat said such remarks reflected the use of political pressure and coercion. She alleged that certain parties were willing to compromise their ideological positions in order to remain in power.

Leader of the Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury, who also addressed the gathering, said contradictions within the ruling alliance had created confusion over the issue of tribal autonomy. He pointed out that while the IPFT continued to raise the demand for Tipraland, the Tipra Motha Party spoke of Greater Tipraland, and the BJP opposed any such demand. Chaudhury said the alliance partners needed to clearly articulate their collective position. The meeting was held as part of the events marking the commencement of the Ganamukti Parishad's central conference and was attended by party leaders and supporters from across the state.

## Assam Wins Top Aviation Award for Connectivity Excellence



**Guwahati, Jan 30:** Assam has been awarded the 'Most Proactive State under RCS-UDAN (Priority Areas)' at Wings India 2026, currently underway in Hyderabad, for its role in advancing regional air connectivity. The award was presented to the state and received by Transport Commissioner Manvendra Pratap Singh. The Chief Minister's Office stated that the recognition acknowledges measures taken by the state government to strengthen aviation infrastructure and enhance connectivity under the Regional Connectivity Scheme-UDAN.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the award reflects the emphasis on expanding air connectivity to underserved and priority areas, noting that the UDAN initiative has played a key role in improving access and supporting development. Wings India 2026, Asia's largest civil aviation event, commenced on January 28 at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad and will continue for four days, featuring discussions and exhibitions highlighting India's civil aviation sector and global industry trends.

## Manipur Govt Fast-Tracks Rehabilitation for Over 3,700 Displaced Families

**Manipur, Jan 30:** The Government of Manipur has intensified efforts to rehabilitate internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the state, with more than 3,700 families—around 16,500 people—successfully resettled so far, officials said on Thursday.

The rehabilitation process is being closely monitored by a State Level Committee chaired by Chief Secretary Dr. Puneet Kumar Goel, along with district-level committees led by District Magistrates, to ensure secure, timely and comprehensive resettlement. Officials said the government's strategy extends beyond shifting families from relief camps, focusing equally on livelihood restoration, education and overall community well-being.



By December 2025, over 2,200 families had already been rehabilitated. To maintain momentum, around 7,000 houses have been sanctioned under the Special Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) for reconstruction of fully damaged homes, with construction at various stages.

The state government has released approximately Rs

1,124 crore towards the rehabilitation process and has set a target to resettle more than 10,000 families, covering over 40,000 IDPs, by March 31, 2026. "Timely and safe rehabilitation of all displaced persons remains our utmost priority," Dr. Goel said, reaffirming the government's commitment to restoring stability and normalcy in affected areas.

## The Ultra-Short: Road Safety Drive in Churachandpur Schools

**Imphal, Jan 30:** Manipur Police conducted a targeted road safety awareness programme for school students in Churachandpur district on Thursday as part of National Road Safety Month 2026, being observed under the theme "Road Safety, Life Safety". The campaign focused on key safety measures, including the compulsory use of helmets, the need for valid driving licences, the dangers of drunk driving and the importance of wearing seatbelts. Special emphasis was placed on the issue of juvenile driving. Police explained that under Section

199A of the Motor Vehicles Act, offences involving juvenile drivers attract strict penalties, including a fine of Rs 25,000, imprisonment of up to three years for parents or vehicle owners, cancellation of vehicle registration for one year and a ban on the juvenile from obtaining a driving licence until the age of 25.

The programme was conducted by Singnat Police Station under the leadership of Inspector James Vaiphei and was held across three schools—Lyzon Friendship School, St Joseph's High School and Rayburn High

School. Through presentations and interactive sessions, students were informed about various traffic violations and the corresponding penalties under the Motor Vehicles Act (2025–2026). These included driving without a helmet (Section 194D), triple riding (Section 194C), drunk driving (Section 185), driving without a licence (Section 181), dangerous driving (Section 183), failure to wear seatbelts (Section 194B), use of mobile phones while driving (Section 184(c)), lack of insurance (Section 196) and disobeying



traffic authorities (Section 179).

Inspector Vaiphei highlighted the importance of instilling road safety awareness at an

early age, noting that educating students could play a crucial role in reducing traffic violations and accidents in the future.



## Editorial

# Honouring the Hands That Built Assam's Tea Legacy

Assam's tea industry is not merely an economic enterprise; it is a living chronicle of labour, resilience, and cultural identity woven over two centuries. The launch of the Mukhya Mantri Eti Koli, Duti Paat scheme at Kopili Tea Estate is therefore more than a ceremonial gesture—it is a timely acknowledgment of the generations of tea garden workers whose tireless efforts have shaped Assam's global reputation as a premier tea-producing region. Marking 200 years of Assam tea, the initiative reflects a conscious attempt by the state government to place tea garden workers at the centre of this historic milestone. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, the scheme seeks to honour the dignity of labour by extending a one-time financial assistance of ₹5,000 to eligible workers. While the amount may appear modest in purely monetary terms, its symbolic value is profound. It signifies recognition, respect, and remembrance—values often overlooked in the

long narrative of industrial progress. The presence of Minister Nandita Gorkhola as the Chief Guest at Kopili Tea Estate added weight to the occasion. Her remarks rightly underscored the historic contribution of tea garden communities, whose sweat and perseverance have sustained the industry through colonial times, economic shifts, and generational change. By calling the scheme a gesture of gratitude, she highlighted an essential truth: development must carry with it a sense of moral responsibility towards those who form its foundation. Equally significant was the participation of senior officials, including representatives of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council, the district administration, and local bodies. Their presence sent a clear message that the welfare of tea garden workers is not a peripheral concern but a shared administrative priority. Such collective involvement strengthens public confidence and ensures that welfare initiatives move beyond announce-

ments to meaningful implementation. The Eti Koli, Duti Paat scheme also prompts a larger reflection. Financial assistance, while important, should be seen as part of a broader, sustained commitment to improving living conditions, education, healthcare, and employment security for tea garden workers and their families. True tribute to their legacy lies in creating pathways for long-term socio-economic empowerment. The warm reception of the scheme by workers and local residents at Kopili Tea Estate speaks volumes. It reveals a deep-seated desire not just for support, but for recognition of identity and contribution. As Assam commemorates two centuries of its tea industry, initiatives like this remind us that behind every cup of tea lies a story of human effort. In honouring the past, the government has taken a step towards a more inclusive future—one where the hands that nurtured Assam's tea gardens are finally acknowledged as the custodians of its enduring heritage.

## Conserving wetlands to nurture nature, society

The World Wetlands Day marks the signing of the Ramsar Convention, a treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands globally. The theme for this year, Wetlands and traditional knowledge: Celebrating cultural heritage, rings close for India as it spotlights the timeless role of traditional knowledge in sustaining wetland ecosystems and preserving cultural identity. The importance of wetlands in sustaining vital ecosystems, forming a critical link between land and water with lakes, rivers, floodplains, marshes, mangroves, peatlands, and lagoons, can't be stated enough. They are agents of water security, climate regulation, food production, and livelihoods. Wetlands have sustained India's civilisational journey for millennia, from the Himalayan high-altitude lakes to the floodplains of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra, from the tanks of the Deccan plateau to coastal mangroves

and lagoons. Over the past decade, the Union government has strengthened wetlands conservation through policy reforms, institutional mechanisms, and international engagement. One of the most notable achievements has been the rapid expansion of India's Ramsar network: The number of sites has risen to 96 from 26 in 2014 (an increase of about 269%)—the highest in Asia, and third-highest in the world. The network currently covers 1.36 million hectares (10% of the

known wetland extent of the country). A recognition of Udaipur and Indore as Wetland Cities stands testimony to embedding wetlands in urban development plans and programmes.

Wetlands conservation in India is supported by a strong foundation of environmental laws and regulations. The national environment policy recognises wetlands as a vital freshwater resource and calls for their prudent use. A national-level

bhagita in May 2022. This aims to enable community-driven efforts for the conservation and management of India's wetlands. The Save Wetlands Campaign was also launched as part of this Mission. India's approach to wetland conservation is inspired by the belief that transformative change begins with individuals and communities. The nationwide network of wetlands mitras (friends of wetlands) mobilises citizens, youth, and local communities as stewards and ambassadors of wetlands. At the 15th Conference of Parties of the Ramsar Convention held in 2025, in Zimbabwe, India introduced and secured the adoption of the resolution on Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles for the Wise Use of Wetlands, marking a global endorsement of Mission LiFE as a tool for wetland governance. A key feature of our approach has been the growing recognition that conservation cannot be



separated from culture and livelihoods. By acknowledging this, the Centre has sought to move towards participatory governance. Conservation and management interventions ensure integration of traditional knowledge and practices for wise use. By placing culture at the heart of wetland conservation, India is strengthening community-led stewardship, enhancing climate resilience, and ensuring wetlands nurture both nature and society.

As a step towards participatory conservation and the wise use of wetlands, the government launched Mission Sah-

## Why gig economy turns the clock back on progress

The ubiquity of platforms and the sharing economy is evidenced by the fact that brands like Uber and Airbnb are now used as verbs in everyday vocabulary. Their products—taxis and rooms for hire—are established. The novelty is in the 'platforms' matching users and providers online using peer-to-peer systems. The sharing economy—the Orwellian term used to describe the phenomenon—is focused on transport (Uber, Lyft, DiDi), short-term accommodation (Airbnb) and food delivery (Uber Eats, DoorDash, Deliveroo). The concept is universal, allowing platform companies to operate globally to defray costs across a larger revenue stream.

The approach targets a regulated industry with decent margins, attacking incumbents and existing operating models. The suppliers are typically non-traditional. Instead of trained drivers, ordinary individuals use their own cars to ferry passengers to and from destinations. Surplus accommodation, such as empty homes or spare rooms, substitute for traditional hotels.

The platforms lower the cost, increasing access to consumers who may not traditionally use the services. This is achieved in several ways. It is theoretically 'capital-lite'. The platform acts as a broker, avoiding investment in the assets needed to provide the service. Uber drivers must provide the vehicle. Airbnb hosts own the property. Delivery drivers mostly use their own transport. It minimises the need for fixed costs such as premises.

Labour costs are reduced by the legal ruse of converting employees to independent contractors, avoiding laws specifying minimum wages, loadings for out-of-business hour work, maximum working hours or mandatory breaks, sickness leave, holidays, training costs and other benefits such as health coverage in some places. There is arbitrage of regulatory frameworks. Traditional providers must comply with requirements for licensing, insurance, training, occupational health and safety and minimum service standards. The platforms use the disingenuous argument that they are not in the transport or accommodation business to avoid these standards. The sharing economy is best thought of as farming out services to the cheapest producer, like outsourcing goods production to emerging markets to take advantage of lower cost.

The platforms undermine existing industries by cannibalising revenues. Uber's revenues are at the expense of taxis and hire cars unless they can grow the overall market. Other than in locations with poor transport options, this has not been significant despite claims by ride-share companies. The position with hotels and other accommodation providers is similar. It reduces the value of existing franchises with the price of taxi licences and share price of hotel firms having fallen wherever such platforms operate. Food delivery services may have expanded the market and reach of restaurants although setup costs, marketing fees and commissions payable to platforms, ranging from 15 to 30 percent, can significantly impact restaurants' profit margins, especially where they are small. It has also changed eating habits with consumers increasingly addicted to convenience leading to an offsetting decline in purchase of food ingredients and falls in nutrition quality. It has also influenced industry structure with some larger restaurants creating 'ghost kitchens' focused on online deliveries to lower costs.

As with many digital innovations, the sharing economy's economic benefits are overstated. Cannibalisation means that overall sector revenues may be unchanged. Even if volumes increase, lower cost reduces the overall income. Using existing unused assets is environmentally desirable but reduces investment in and purchases of new productive capacity. Where the State compensates existing providers, such as taxi and hire car licensees, for the diminution of value of licences the sharing economy is effectively subsidised by taxpayers. Any benefits may be offset by the disclosure of personal data, loss of privacy, cybercrime and security expenses to protect data and electronic payments.

The sharing economy entails a redistribution of income and wealth from providers and employees to customers. Service providers in advanced economies earn the minimum wage at best. In emerging economies, platforms may provide income opportunities where there is no other formal employment available. Earnings frequently do not take into waiting times and expenses such as fuel and unpaid labour. Fixed cost elements, such as capital investment, depreciation, insurance and maintenance, may not be properly factored into the charges. Providers face precarious existences and uncertain income always exposed to online reviews and rating systems, irrespective of validity or fairness, which can deactivate them, excluding opportunities for future work.



## Royal Enfield's HunterHood Festival to rev up Shillong on February 7

**Guwahati:** Royal Enfield will bring its street culture platform HunterHood to Shillong on February 7, 2026, marking the festival's debut in the Northeast after successful editions in Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai. Built around the spirit of the Hunter 350 motorcycle, the event aims to celebrate urban expression through music, art, sport and community-led creativity.

The one-day festival will feature BMX and skateboarding showcases, street football, slam dunk zones and interactive challenges, alongside custom motorcycles by JD Customs. Skate showcases curated by the Shillong Skate Mag community and live graffiti by the Mixed Media Art Crew and Art of Motorcycling 2024 winner Amit Kumar will add visual depth. Indigenous dance forms led by the Shlem Institute of Music will share space with hip-hop cyphers anchored by local dancer



Iamon Kharjana. Works by Gauhati Art Project founder Abhishek Choudhury and interactive installations by Sameer Hazari and St+art India are also part of the lineup.

Music performances include hometown artist Reble, Grammy-nominated rapper Raja Kumari, Nagaland-based indie-pop band Trance Effect, and sets by DJ Knack, Smokey, SawaJam Sound System and Gauley Bhai. A flea market and curated food experiences will showcase

talent from across the Northeast.

In Guwahati, there is a note growing enthusiasm for lifestyle-led motorcycle communities and street culture festivals. Guwahati's expanding youth demographic, rising custom motorcycle scene and contemporary art collectives make the city a natural next destination for platforms like HunterHood, reflecting a broader shift towards experiential brand engagement in Assam's urban markets.

## TVS Motor posts record Q3FY26 performance with strong sales, profit growth

**Guwahati:**TVS Motor Company has reported its highest-ever quarterly sales, revenue and profits for the third quarter of FY26, reflecting strong demand across domestic and international markets. For the quarter ended December 2025, the company's operating revenue surged 37 per cent to Rs. 12,476 crore, compared with Rs. 9,097 crore in the corresponding quarter last year.

Operating EBITDA rose 51 per cent to Rs. 1,634 crore, while the EBITDA margin improved to a record 13.1

per cent. Profit before tax (PBT), before exceptional items, climbed 57 per cent to Rs. 1,315 crore during the quarter. Overall two- and three-wheeler sales, including international business, grew 27 per cent to an all-time high of 15.44 lakh units. Motorcycle sales increased 31 per cent, scooter sales rose 25 per cent, and three-wheeler sales more than doubled. Electric vehicle sales also touched a record 1.06 lakh units, marking a 40 per cent growth year-on-year.

For the nine months ended

December 2025, operating revenue stood at Rs. 34,463 crore, up 29 per cent, while PBT rose 43 per cent to Rs. 3,594 crore and PAT reached Rs. 2,625 crore.

Dealers in Guwahati noted sustained demand for scooters, motorcycles and EVs, driven by rising urban mobility needs and growing interest in electric two-wheelers. Improved financing options and expanding charging infrastructure are further strengthening TVS Motor's market position in the Assam capital and nearby towns.



## Coffee as a Productivity Booster: Starting the Day Right



**Guwahati:** In an increasingly fast-paced world, productivity is no longer driven by speed alone but by how intentionally one begins the day. Coffee has evolved from a quick caffeine boost into a purposeful morning ritual, one that helps reset the mind, build focus, and ease into the day with clarity and balance. Instant coffee, in particular, has become an enabler of this shift, offering a seamless way to preserve the ritual even on the busiest mornings. Rooted in Tata's long-standing legacy in coffee, built on decades of expertise and trust, Tata Coffee Grand fits naturally into this modern "start your day right" philosophy. Crafted to

deliver the richness, aroma, and taste of freshly brewed coffee, it transforms everyday mornings into moments of mindful preparation without the time or effort of traditional brewing.

Whether it's the first cup before an early workout, a quiet pause while planning the day ahead, or the fuel needed to transition into work mode, Tata Coffee Grand supports a smoother, more focused start. As part of contemporary morning reset kits and mindful habits, coffee now plays a central role in shaping productive routines. The sensory experience of a well-made cup, the aroma, warmth, and depth of flavour, creates a comforting rhythm that encourages consistency and mental readiness. With its flavour-locked decoction crystals, Tata Coffee Grand helps retain the coffee's natural richness and freshness, ensuring every cup delivers a reliable and satisfying experience. By seamlessly blending convenience with quality, Tata Coffee Grand enables productivity that feels intentional rather than rushed, making coffee not just a beverage but an essential part of a thoughtful, energising morning routine.

## Ujjivan Small Finance Bank launches 'EZY' to strengthen digital banking for retail customers

**Guwahati:** Ujjivan Small Finance Bank has announced the launch of Ujjivan EZY, its upgraded mobile and internet banking platform, marking a key milestone in the Bank's digital-first strategy. Designed exclusively for retail customers, the unified platform offers a secure, intuitive and personalised banking experience across mobile and web channels.

Available in nine languages, EZY brings together over 200 banking features, including more than 90 newly introduced capabilities. Built on a next-generation microservices architecture, the platform enhances speed, scalability and

system resilience, enabling faster rollout of new services and improved responsiveness to customer needs.

The platform integrates core banking services such as account management, fund transfers, fixed and recurring deposits, bill payments, debit card controls, GST payments and investment options including Demat and NPS. New additions include loan services, smart statements, enhanced digital tools and personalised interfaces based on customers' product relationships, delivering an end-to-end digital banking experience.

Security has been strength-

ened through the integration of AppProtectt, an advanced security SDK offering protection against fraud, device-level threats and emerging cyber risks. The platform also focuses on accessibility and inclusion, catering to customers across regions, age groups and varying levels of digital literacy.

Commenting on the launch, Deepak Agarwal, Head – Strategy and Transformation, said the move reflects the Bank's shift towards a unified digital ecosystem aligned with trust, simplicity, security and financial inclusion.

In Agartala, the launch is expected to support growing



demand for seamless digital banking among retail customers and small businesses, as digital payments and online financial services continue to gain traction in Tripura's capital. Digital channels currently account for over 95 per cent of the Bank's total outward transactions, underlining strong customer adoption.

## Slice backs early-stage founders at IIT Guwahati, boosts Assam's startup ecosystem

**Guwahati:** slice Small Finance Bank (slice SFB) has extended support to early-stage startups at IIT Guwahati, strengthening Assam's growing startup and innovation ecosystem. As part of its continued engagement with young founders, the bank awarded non-dilutive startup grants to two ventures—Picapool and ImpactWeaver—during Disrupt, the startup pitching platform of UDGAM, the annual entrepreneurship festival organised by the Entrepreneurship Cell of IIT Guwahati.

The selected startups were recognised for developing technology-driven solutions addressing real-world challenges. Picapool is building a collaborative commerce platform that allows users with similar purchasing needs to pool demand and access better prices. ImpactWeaver, an Assam-based venture, focuses on creating technology-led solutions and partnerships to improve social impact and the effectiveness of social investments in the region.

slice said its participation at UDGAM reflects its strategy of en-

gaging early with academic institutions, particularly in the Northeast, to help convert campus ideas into viable ventures. Addressing students and founders, slice Chief Technology Officer Nitin Basant highlighted the importance of early capital, mentorship, and ecosystem access for young entrepreneurs.

The initiative coincides with slice completing one year since its merger with North East Small Finance Bank. The bank has entered its second year as slice SFB and plans to open Assam's first digital bank branch in Guwahati, underlining its long-term commitment to the region.

Guwahati is fast emerging as a key startup and fintech hub in the Northeast, driven by increasing digital adoption, a young talent pool, and growing institutional support. Initiatives like slice's early-stage backing are expected to encourage more local entrepreneurs, strengthen access to capital, and boost confidence in the city's startup-friendly business environment.



## Samantha Ruth Prabhu, Rishabh Pant named global ambassadors as 'Good Game' launches in India with Rs 1 crore prize

**Guwahati:** Good Game, billed as the world's first as-live global gaming reality show, has officially launched in India with the aim of finding the country's first Global Gaming Superstar. Actor and entrepreneur Samantha Ruth Prabhu has joined cricketer Rishabh Pant as a global brand ambassador, alongside popular gaming creator Ujjwal Chaurasia. The show has announced a prize money of ₹1 crore, among the highest for a reality show winner in India, along with an opportunity to represent the country at a global level.

The platform plans to invest up to ₹100 crore annually and is inviting brands and sponsors to associate with the show, which is expected to reach at least 500 million young viewers across India. Designed as a competitive reality format, Good Game brings together esports, mainstream entertainment and real-world performance, testing contestants on gaming skills, creativity, screen presence and performance under pressure.

Founder Rai Cockfield said the initiative aims to bridge entertainment and gaming while opening global opportunities for Indian talent. Samantha Ruth Prabhu said the show reflects how ambition and creativity are evolving among young Indians today.

The launch is expected to resonate strongly in markets like Guwahati, where interest in online gaming, content creation and digital entertainment has grown rapidly in recent years. With a large youth population and rising smartphone



and internet penetration, the Guwahati market is emerging as a key audience base for gaming-led content, making such national-level platforms relevant for aspiring gamers and creators from the Northeast.

Registrations for auditions are open to Indian citizens above 18, with in-person auditions scheduled in Mumbai and Delhi in February and March 2026.

## Wowzers Cheesy Nahi, Cheesier: SunfeastWowzers Turns Up the 'Wow'

**Guwahati:** As indulgence-led snacking evolves, young consumers today seek more than just taste—they want intensity, personality, and share-worthy moments. Rising to this demand, Sunfeast-Wowzers from ITC Ltd. has dialed up the sensory drama with communication that's bolder, cheesier, and crunchier.

At the heart of Wowzers lies its signature 28-layer cracker, generously enrobed in indulgent cheesy crème. Every bite doesn't just taste cheesy—it feels cheesier, taking the 'wow' quotient a notch higher. The new campaign, conceptualized by Ogilvy, translates this heightened product experience into a vibrant, youthful film that speaks the language of today's consumers. Set in a high-energy environment, the film captures spontaneous snack breaks among friends. Riding the wave of the ASMR trend, the TVC immerses viewers in sound and rhythm, mirroring how young audiences experience food today.

With this communication, Wowzers moves beyond



conventional product claims to build a stronger cultural connect. By pairing a cheesier product experience with a fresh, vibe-led visual language, the brand positions indulgence as contemporary, premium, and socially relevant.

Suraj Kathuria, Head of Marketing, Sunfeast at ITC Limited, said:

With Wowzers, we've leaned into what makes the product truly distinctive—making indulgence even cheesier and bringing that alive through a fresh, high-energy film."

Adding the creative perspective, Puneet Kapoor, Chief Creative Officer, Ogilvy South, shared:

"I still recall biting into Wowzers at the ITC office, with the whole team instantly falling for the multi-sensorial snacking experience led by that indulgent cheesy hit. The campaign idea was simply to demonstrate the truth we tasted first: the proof of the tasty, cheesy cracker is in the munching."

." TVC Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkcfGDrrMY>.

Nihil unum faucerei ius, nonlos suleger ponscre eriam pere essedi clum dius et? Nam ocum ommor peremqua L. Sp. Ant? Bis. Apere, qua reis co patam inatis et it audam inumeri onsupionese in sil consult odiena L. Opoerop ublicaesi

## Medanta highlights advanced cardiac care as heart disease burden rises in Assam

**Guwahati:** With cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) emerging as a major public health concern in Assam, especially among adults above 40 and increasingly among younger urban populations, Gurgaon-based Medanta – The Medicity showcased the future of advanced heart treatment in Guwahati on Wednesday. Studies indicate that people living in urban and hilly regions are becoming vulnerable to heart ailments well before the age of 40, underscoring the need for early detection and timely intervention.

Addressing doctors and patients, Dr. Praveen Chandra, Chairman, Interventional Cardiology, Cardiac Care at Medanta, highlighted recent advances in the treatment of coronary artery disease (CAD) and Valvular Heart Disease (VHD). He spoke on evolving therapies, including valve repair and replacement, minimally invasive small-access surgery, robotic-assisted procedures, and interventions to control high blood pressure and cholesterol. He stressed



that combining technology, clinical expertise and community outreach can shift heart care from reactive to preventive.

Earlier in the day, Dr. Chandra held a special OPD in Guwahati, offering specialist consultations and diagnostic services to patients from across Assam.

In Guwahati, the rising incidence of lifestyle-related heart diseases is driving strong demand for advanced cardiac diagnostics and treatment options in the city.

Healthcare experts say Guwahati is steadily emerging as a regional medical hub for the Northeast, reducing dependence on metros outside the region. Medanta's upcoming 400-plus bed super-specialty hospital, whose construction began after a recent Bhoomi Poojan, is expected to strengthen the city's healthcare ecosystem and create new opportunities for specialized medical services. Medanta has also launched a dedicated helpline for the Northeast at 8904395588.

## NSDC International sends 39 trained youth to Japan, boost India-Japan skilled mobility push

**Guwahati:** In a step strengthening the India-Japan skilled mobility corridor, NSDC International, under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, on Tuesday organised a send-off ceremony for Indian candidates who have completed Japanese language training and are departing for employment in Japan.

Held at Kaushal Bhawan, New Delhi, the ceremony marked the departure of 39 candidates trained under NSDC International's structured Japanese language and cultural readiness programme. The candidates will take up opportunities in caregiving, hospitality and agriculture across Japanese prefectures including Tokyo, Ibaraki and Hokkaido. The initiative aims to ensure smooth workplace integration through language proficiency, cultural orientation and employer alignment.

Economic Advisor MSDE Archana Mayaram referred to the joint India-Japan vision adopted during the

Prime Minister's visit to Japan last year, which envisages human resource exchange of five lakh personnel over five years, including 50,000 skilled professionals from India. She said the departing

candidates so far, with 185 already working in Japan, while more than 100 additional candidates are being prepared.

In Guwahati, the programme signals rising de-



youth would act as ambassadors of India's growing role in the global services economy.

NSDC CEO Arun Kumar Pillai said skilled workforce mobility has become central to international cooperation, adding that India's trained youth are gaining global trust. NSDC International has trained over 400

mand for foreign language training, overseas placement services and skill certification. Training partners and youth from Assam and the Northeast are expected to benefit as global mobility-linked skilling opens new employment and income avenues, strengthening the region's participation in international labour markets.



## Herb Roasted Turkey Breast



**Guwahati:** In a step strengthening the India-Japan skilled mobility corridor, NSDC International, under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, on Tuesday organised a send-off ceremony for Indian candidates who have completed Japanese language training and are departing for employment in Japan.

Held at Kaushal Bhawan, New Delhi, the ceremony marked the departure of 39 candidates trained under NSDC International's structured Japanese language and cultural readiness programme. The candidates will take up opportunities in caregiving, hospitality and agriculture across Japanese prefectures including Tokyo,

Ibaraki and Hokkaido. The initiative aims to ensure smooth workplace integration through language proficiency, cultural orientation and employer alignment.

Economic Advisor MSDE Archana Mayaram referred to the joint India-Japan vision adopted during the Prime Minister's visit to Japan last year, which envisages human resource exchange of five lakh personnel over five years, including 50,000 skilled professionals from India. She said the departing youth would act as ambassadors of India's growing role in the global services economy.

NSDC CEO Arun Kumar Pillai said skilled workforce mobility has become central to international cooperation, adding that India's trained youth are gaining global trust. NSDC International has trained over 400 candidates so far, with 185 already working in Japan, while more than 100 additional candidates are being prepared.

In Guwahati, the programme signals rising demand for foreign language training, overseas placement services and skill certification. Training partners and youth from Assam and the Northeast are expected to benefit as global mobility-linked skilling opens new employment and income avenues, strengthening the region's participation in international labour markets.

## The 8 Best Broccoli Recipes That You Will Adore

From swift weeknight meals to exquisite culinary creations, broccoli contributes a satisfying crunch, delightful flavor, and lively color to your dish. Regardless of whether you choose to steam, roast, stir-fry, or bake it, these recipes highlight the finest qualities of this green nutritional powerhouse, rendering it a beloved choice for both children and adults. **Garlic Butter Roasted Broccoli:** Tender broccoli florets roasted with garlic and butter develop a rich, savoury flavour. Crispy edges and a hint of garlic make this simple side dish irresistible alongside any main course. **Broccoli Cheddar Soup:** Creamy broccoli soup enriched with sharp cheddar cheese creates a comforting, hearty meal. Perfect for chilly evenings, it's smooth, flavourful, and packed with nutrients in every spoonful. **Stir-Fried Broccoli:** Quick and tasty, broccoli is stir-fried with ginger, garlic, and soy sauce. This Asian-inspired dish is crisp, flavourful, and pairs perfectly with rice or noodles for a wholesome meal. **Broccoli And Cheese Casserole:** A baked casserole combining broccoli, melted cheese, and bread-crumbs makes a cheesy, golden side dish. It's perfect for family dinners or holiday feasts, offering both comfort and flavour. **Lemon Garlic Broccoli Pasta:** Broccoli tossed with al dente

pasta, olive oil, garlic, and lemon juice makes a light yet flavourful meal. It's fresh, zesty, and ideal for a quick weeknight dinner. **Broccoli Salad:** Crisp broccoli florets combined with sweet cranberries, toasted almonds, and a rich dressing create a delightful salad. It is sweet, tangy, and ideal for picnics or potlucks. **Broccoli Fritters:** Shredded broccoli combined with eggs, flour, and spices, then pan-fried to golden perfection, creates crispy fritters. Serve them as appetizers or snacks for a healthy, tasty treat. **Broccoli and Mushroom Stir Fry:** A quick and delightful side dish, this recipe features broccoli and mushrooms sautéed in a savory sauce. Rich in flavor and nutrients, it pairs wonderfully with rice, noodles, or grilled proteins.



## Top Brinjal Dishes from Various Regions of India

Regardless of whether it is roasted, stuffed, fried, or pickled, brinjal remains an integral part of India's culinary tradition. Brinjal, commonly referred to as eggplant or aubergine, is among the most adaptable vegetables found in Indian kitchens. It seamlessly integrates into a variety of dishes, ranging from smoky curries to crispy fritters, and harmonizes well with diverse spices and cooking techniques across different regions. Indian culinary practices have elevated brinjal to a prominent ingredient, cherished in both daily meals and festive occasions.

Below is an exploration of some of the most intriguing methods to enjoy brinjal in India. **Baingan Bharta:** Perhaps the most iconic brinjal dish, baingan bharta is a smoky, mashed curry beloved across the country. Large brinjals are roasted directly over an open flame until the skin chars and the flesh turns soft. The pulp is scooped out, mashed, and cooked with onions, tomatoes, green chilies, ginger, and a generous dose of mustard oil. The result is a rustic, smoky curry best enjoyed with hot rotis or parathas. **Bharwa Baingan:** In many parts of India, small brinjals are slit and stuffed with spice mixes. In Maharashtra, the stuffing often includes ground peanuts, coconut, sesame seeds, and spices like coriander and cumin. In Uttar Pradesh, the filling leans toward garam masala and dry spices. The stuffed brinjals are then shallow-fried or simmered in a tomato-based gravy, creating a dish that bursts with flavor in every bite. **Vankaya Pulusu:** This tangy brinjal stew is a staple in Andhra households.

Small brinjals are cooked in tamarind juice with jaggery, mustard seeds, curry leaves, and red chili powder. The balance of sweet, sour, and spicy flavors makes it irresistible. Traditionally served with steamed rice, vankaya pulusu is comfort food at its finest. **Ennegayi:** In North Karnataka, brinjal is transformed into ennegayi, a stuffed delicacy. Baby brinjals are filled with a masala paste made from roasted

peanuts,

ten served during festive occasions and is considered a delicacy in Telangana cuisine. **Baingan Ka Raita:** A refreshing twist on brinjal, baingan ka raita involves roasting brinjal until soft, mashing it, and mixing it with yogurt, cumin powder, and green chilies. The coolness of yogurt balances the smoky brinjal, making it a perfect side dish for biryanis or spicy curries. **Brinjal Fry:** In Kerala, brinjal slices are marinated with turmeric, chili powder, and salt, then shallow-fried until crisp. Sometimes, they are dipped in rice flour batter for extra crunch. Served alongside rice and sambar, brinjal fry is a simple yet satisfying dish that highlights the vegetable's texture. **Baingan Masala:** This curry features brinjal cooked in a rich onion-tomato gravy with garam masala, coriander powder, and kasuri methi. It's a versatile dish that can be paired with chapatis or rice. The brinjal absorbs the spices beautifully, making each bite flavorful and hearty. **Brinjal Pachadi:** A traditional Tamil dish, brinjal pachadi combines roasted brinjal with tamarind, jaggery, and ground spices. It has a sweet-sour profile and is often served as part of festive meals. The dish showcases how brinjal can adapt to complex flavor combinations while retaining its distinct character. **Brinjal Pickle:** Brinjal also finds its way into pickles. In Andhra Pradesh, brinjal pieces are cooked with tamarind pulp, chili powder, mustard seeds, and sesame oil to create a fiery pickle. In Tamil Nadu, brinjal pickle often includes jaggery for a sweet-spicy balance. These pickles are stored for weeks and enjoyed with rice or dosas.



sesame seeds, coconut, and spices, then simmered in oil until tender. The dish pairs beautifully with jowar rotis, making it a rustic yet wholesome meal. **Gutti Vankaya Kura:** This dish is similar to ennegayi but has its own regional twist. Brinjals are stuffed with a spicy masala of roasted chana dal, red chilies, and tamarind, then cooked slowly until the flavors seep into the flesh. **Gutti vankaya kura** is of-

## Chickpea Flour Recipes That Characterize Indian Comfort Cuisine

Regardless of whether you desire something savory, sweet, or nutritious, gram flour offers a dish that can fulfill any craving. Besan, also known as gram flour, is among the most adaptable ingredients found in Indian kitchens. Derived from ground chickpeas, it is rich in protein, simple to prepare, and suitable for both savory and sweet recipes. Ranging from crunchy snacks to hearty curries, besan has been a fundamental component in various regions for centuries. Let us delve into some of the most favored and delectable methods to savor it. **Besan Chilla:** A quick and healthy breakfast option, besan chilla is a savory pancake made by mixing gram flour with spices, onions, tomatoes, and green chilies. Cooked on a hot griddle with a drizzle of oil, it is crisp on the outside and soft inside. Served with chutney or curd, it makes for a light yet filling meal. **Pakorae:** Perhaps the most famous besan dish, pakorae are deep-fried fritters made by dipping vegetables like onions, potatoes, or spinach in a spiced besan batter. Crispy and golden, they are the ultimate monsoon snack, best enjoyed with hot tea and tangy chutneys. **Kadhi:** Besan kadhi is a comforting curry made by whisking gram flour with yogurt and spices, then simmering it until thick and creamy.



Often paired with rice, kadhi is a staple in many North Indian households. Variations like Gujarati kadhi are slightly sweet, while Punjabi kadhi is tangier and often served with pakorae. **Dhokla:** A Gujarati delicacy, dhokla is a steamed savory cake made from a fermented batter of besan and yogurt. Fluffy and spongy, it is tempered with mustard seeds, curry leaves, and green chilies. Served with green chutney, dhokla is light, tangy, and perfect for breakfast or snacks. **Besan Ladoo:** On the sweeter side, besan ladoos are festive favorites. Roasted gram flour mixed with ghee, sugar, and cardamom is rolled into soft, melt-in-the-mouth balls. Garnished with nuts, they are a must-have during Diwali and other celebrations. **Mysore Pak:** This iconic South Indian sweet is made by cooking besan with ghee and sugar until it sets into a rich, fudgy block. Known for its melt-in-the-mouth texture, Mysore Pak is a royal treat that originated in Karnataka and remains a beloved dessert across India.



# 7 Indian Heritage Experiences That Preserve India's Legacy

India's cultural legacy extends beyond mere monuments, forts, and palaces; it is embodied in the vibrancy of urban life, the operation of markets, the persistence of rituals, and the endurance of crafts across generations. Each alley in an ancient city tells a tale, every fortification bears witness to history, and every group of artisans upholds centuries of tradition in their craft. Consider heritage journeys that delve deeper, where travel transcends merely visiting renowned landmarks, and instead focuses on immersing oneself in history via culture, architecture, storytelling, cuisine, art, and local communities. From a luxury rail trail that covers multiple heritage destinations in one seamless journey, to staying in royal palaces, exploring UNESCO wonders, walking through old heritage lanes, and meeting the communities that keep India's crafts alive, here are seven must-do Indian heritage experiences every traveller should add to their bucket list.

## Deccan Odyssey: India's Luxury Heritage Trail on Wheels

Deccan Odyssey, part of Ebix Travels, is among India's most celebrated luxury rail journeys, often referred to as the country's "blue train" for its blend of old-world grandeur and modern indulgence. Designed like a moving five-star hotel, the centrally air-conditioned train features Deccan-inspired interiors, well-furnished Deluxe and Suite cabins with en-suite bathrooms, fine dining, a refined bar lounge, and wellness facilities including an Ayurvedic spa. With immersive six- to eight-day itineraries across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi, the journey offers a premium way to experience India's legacy through curated excursions to iconic forts, palaces, UNESCO heritage sites, and historic cities—making it a heritage experience in itself.

### Stay in a Heritage Palace:

Live the Royal India Dream There's something truly special about stepping into a palace that has hosted royalty, celebrations, and centuries of history. Heritage palace stays are one of the most immersive ways to experience India's regal past because instead of just visiting a palace, you get to live inside one. These properties often preserve original architectural elements such as courtyards, frescoes, jharokhas, and grand halls, while offering modern luxury comforts that make the experience seamless. Many

also include cultural evenings with folk performances, traditional welcome ceremonies, and heritage-inspired dining. For travellers who love history served with elegance, a palace stay turns an ordinary holiday into a royal memory.

### Fort Walks That Feel Like a Time Machine

India's forts are not just massive structures, they are storybooks in stone. From legends of warrior kings to tales of strategy and sacrifice, these forts offer trav-



ellers a powerful glimpse into India's dramatic past. The best way to explore forts is not in a hurry, but through rampart walks, museum galleries, hidden passage discoveries, and guided heritage trails. Many forts also offer storytelling tours and evening light-and-sound shows that bring history alive in a cinematic way. And of course, the views from these forts, overlooking cities, deserts, or hills make the experience even more unforgettable.

### Explore UNESCO Sites

India's UNESCO World Heritage Sites are iconic for a reason. They represent centuries of architectural brilliance, cultural richness, and historical significance. What many travellers miss, however, is that these places aren't meant to be rushed. Whether it's ancient caves, temples, historic cities, or stepwells, UNESCO sites are best explored slowly, with time to understand their details. A guided walk or local heritage tour adds depth, ex-

plaining what each symbol, carving, corridor, and design element represents. For travellers who want more than just photographs, UNESCO circuits offer travel that educates, inspires, and stays with you.

### Take an Old City Walk Through Heritage Lanes

Some of India's most authentic heritage doesn't sit behind museum glass, it thrives in everyday life. That's why walking tours through old city areas are among the most underrated yet rewarding heritage experiences. These walks take you through bustling bazaars, heritage havelis, spice lanes, temples, historic chowks, and iconic food streets, places where culture continues to function exactly as it has for decades, and sometimes centuries. It's raw, real, and layered: architecture, language, food habits, and crafts come together in a single walk. Old city explorations are ideal for travellers who want to experience heritage without it feeling staged.

### Temple Towns and Ghats: India's Spiritual Heritage

India's spiritual sites are among its oldest living heritage spaces. From temple towns to sacred ghats, these destinations are not just about devotion, they are cultural ecosystems where rituals, architecture, and community life blend into something timeless. The beauty lies in the rhythm of these places: morning prayers, temple bells, evening aartis, heritage streets lined with flowers and diyas, and age-old traditions that continue daily. Whether you're religious or not, temple towns and ghats offer a peaceful yet powerful connection to India's civilizational continuity.

### Craft Villages: Meet the People Preserving India's Culture

Heritage isn't only built in forts and temples, it is also created by hand. Across India, artisan communities continue to preserve traditional crafts despite changing times. Visiting craft villages and artisan clusters is one of the most meaningful heritage experiences because it connects travellers directly with living culture. From weaving and dyeing to block printing, pottery, metalwork, embroidery, and folk art, these experiences reveal how traditional skills are passed down through generations. Many places offer studio visits, demonstrations, and hands-on workshops, making travellers part of the process rather than just buyers. It is also one of the best ways to support local heritage while travelling through genuine cultural exchange.

## Exploring Baiyun Mountain: top attractions for your visit in Guangzhou

Baiyun Mountain is a popular natural landmark in Guangzhou, renowned for its lush greenery and picturesque peaks. Its name, meaning "white cloud" in Mandarin, derives from the fluffy clouds surrounding the mountain after rain. The area encompasses various parklands featuring gardens, ponds, and sculptures. Covering about 21 square kilometres in the northeast of Guangzhou's city centre, Baiyun Mountain is classified as a national A5-grade scenic area. It has long been considered the most beautiful mountain in Guangzhou, with the highest peak, Moxing Ridge, rising to 382 metres above sea level. New attractions such as Mingchungu Natural Birdcage, Yunluo Botanical Garden, and Yuntai Garden add to the mountain's diverse landscapes, offering stunning views of the city and the Pearl River Delta. Additionally, visiting Baiyun Mountain is a great idea for your list of places to see in the Guangzhou area, along with Lotus Hill and Baomo Garden.

### Cable Car Ride to Cloudy Valley

Ride the cable car up Baiyun Mountain to reach Cloudy Valley, where you can enjoy stunning aerial views of the mountain landscape,

city skyline, and trails below. The cable car ride is a convenient way to reach the top of the mountain with ease, suitable for people of all ages and fitness levels. While at Cloudy Valley, visitors can unwind and take in the views, purchase a snack from a nearby concession stand, or simply appreciate the natural surroundings.

### Mingchungu Natural Birdcage

You can also explore China's largest natural bird enclosure, spanning 56,000 square metres and housing over 150 different bird species, including rare ones such as red-crowned cranes and swans. Visiting this garden not only allows you to observe many fascinating birds and their behaviours, but also broadens your knowledge of different species, enhancing both the enjoyment and educational value of your visit. Take a leisurely walk by the stream and mountains, and interact with the birds in this tranquil setting.

### Cloud of Dusk

The Cloud of Dusk includes the Sightseeing Platform and Wanwang Pavilion, both famous for their picturesque sunset views. At dusk, visitors can enjoy the sunset and its vibrant colours from Wanwang Pavilion. The Cloud of Dusk and Mountain-

top Park have become popular destinations for tourists seeking to appreciate the scenery and have a good time. Heading back to South Gate The path back to the South Gate is several kilometres long. Enjoy blossoming trees, interesting tree roots and green lawns on your way.

### Yunluo Botanical Garden

The Yunluo Botanical Garden, which opened to the public in late 2024, is situated at the base of Baiyun Mountain and spans 86.6 hectares. Home to more than 1,500 plant species, the garden integrates plant conservation, ecological education, and leisure activities. It features themed sections such as the Rainforest Plant Garden, Orchid Garden, and Medicinal Plant Garden, along with the Flower City Art Museum and the Natural Education Museum, which offer informative exhibits and interactive experiences. In addition to its diverse flora, the garden protects rare and endangered species like *Parashorea chinensis* and *Paphiopedilum emersonii*. Its design emphasises harmony between nature and contemporary landscape architecture, creating a peaceful retreat for visitors. You can visit Yunluo Botanical Garden either at



the beginning or the end of your tour of the Baiyun Mountain Scenic Area through its South Gate, as it is conveniently located near both the South Gate and the cable car station. Please note that an additional entrance ticket is required.

### Nengren Temple

Nengren Temple, situated on South Yunshan Road, spans an area of 10,000 square metres and was constructed in 1851. After restoration, it was made accessible to the public in May 1995. The temple comprises various halls, including Daxiongbao Hall, Ciyun Hall, Tianwang Hall,

Dizang Hall, and Liuzu Hall, as well as a Bell Tower and a Drum Tower. The total floor space of the temple exceeds 1,000 square metres.

### Sculpture Park

Located in the western section of Flying Goose Ridge on Baiyun Mountain, the Sculpture Park covers an area of 460,000 square metres. As the largest sculpture-themed park in China, it features numerous sculptures that depict the history of Guangzhou and its Lingnan cultural heritage. Visitors can appreciate modern art and delve into the rich culture of Lingnan at this location.



## District Coordination Committee Reviews SPARSH Leprosy Awareness Campaign in Haflong



**Haflong, Jan 30:** A meeting of the District Coordination Committee was held today at the office of the Joint Director of Health Services, Haflong, to review and plan activities for the SPARSH Leprosy Awareness Campaign (SLAC), which will be observed from January 30 to February 13, 2026. The 15-day-long campaign aims to create mass awareness that leprosy is a fully curable disease and that free treatment is available at all government health institutions. The initiative focuses

on reducing social stigma, promoting early detection, and ensuring that no affected individual is left untreated. Addressing the meeting, Dr. Leena Hakmaosa, In-charge Joint Director of Health Services, emphasized the need to intensify awareness efforts, dispel myths associated with leprosy, and strengthen community participation. She informed that the main thrust of the campaign would be through Gram Sabha meetings organized in collaboration with the Panchayat and Rural Development Depart-

ment (PNRD). Dr. Hakmaosa also highlighted that the campaign aligns with the national goal of eliminating leprosy by the year 2027. The meeting underscored the importance of early detection, timely treatment, and active community involvement in achieving a leprosy-free society. On the occasion, a pledge was administered to all participants, reaffirming their commitment to spreading awareness and supporting leprosy eradication efforts. The observance of Anti-Leprosy Day further reiterated

the Health Department's resolve to combat the disease through sustained education, awareness, and prompt medical intervention. Speaking on the significance of early diagnosis, Dr. Veiphei stressed that screening a maximum number of individuals with any form of skin-related symptoms is crucial for early detection and successful treatment of leprosy. Medical and health workers were urged to intensify screening activities across the district. Providing the current status, Dr. Marina Changsan informed that at present, three leprosy cases have been detected in Dima Hasao district and are undergoing treatment. She noted that early identification plays a vital role in ensuring effective treatment and preventing further transmission of the disease.

## Initiative; Ceremonial Cheque Distribution under Mukhya Mantri Mahila Abhiyan (AMMUA) in Haflong



**Haflong, Jan 29:** The District Commissioner Munindra Nath Ngatey, ACS, convened a meeting on January 29, 2026, at the D.C. Conference Hall in Haflong to discuss the upcoming Ceremonial Cheque Distribution under the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Abhiyan (AMMUA) program scheduled for February 3, 2026. The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary of NCHAC, Partha Sarathi Jahari, ACS, Additional Deputy Commissioners, and various departmental officers.

## COCOMI Holds Massive 'Save Manipur Rally' Demanding Resettlement Of IDPs

**Manipur, Jan 30:** The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) on Saturday organised a massive public rally in Imphal, demanding protection of Manipur's territorial and social integrity and the restoration of a popularly elected government in the state. Expressing concern that hundreds of displaced families are yet to be rehabilitated, leaders of the civil society group said the rally was organised to reflect public sentiment calling for the immediate resettlement of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the restoration of free movement along all national highways. Protesters raised slogans demanding protection of democratic rights, immediate rehabilitation of displaced families and an end to President's Rule in Manipur. With President's Rule set to complete one year on February 12, several speakers at the rally voiced concern over its continuation

in the state. In July 2025, Parliament had extended President's Rule in Manipur by six months until February 13, 2026, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah citing the need to fully restore law and order before resuming the political process.

COCOMI leaders said the rally was aimed at sending a clear message to the Government of India that the people of Manipur seek peace, justice, development and the return of a democratically elected government. They expressed confidence that the rally, titled Manipur Kanba Khongchat (Save Manipur Rally), would strongly convey the aspirations and concerns of the people to New Delhi. The rally began from Tiddim Ground, Kwaikethel, and witnessed participation from clubs, organisations, women's groups and civil society members from across the state. It concluded at Thau Ground with a public convention.

## CM Khandu's Push for Grassroots Empowerment

**Itanagar, Jan 29:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday stressed the importance of discipline, ideological understanding, and grassroots empowerment while addressing a state-level orientation programme for newly elected zilla parishad chairpersons, members, and gram panchayat chairpersons. Khandu congratulated the BJP for its strong performance in the recent panchayat elections, noting the party's dominant presence across the state. He also highlighted the entry of many first-time representatives, including graduates and post-graduates, into the panchayati raj system. The orientation programme aims to provide leaders with clarity on party ideology, responsibilities, conduct, and coordination with government systems. The department plans to conduct separate training sessions as part of this initiative.

Describing the BJP as a "party with a difference" guided by 'nation first' principles, Khandu contrasted it with others that prioritize power over public service. He traced Arunachal Pradesh's democratic development since 1972 and noted rapid progress in the past decade under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

## 77th Republic Day Celebrated with Grandeur and Patriotic Fervour Across Dima Hasao

A special programme commemorating the 150th anniversary of the national song Vande Mataram was presented on the occasion. The celebrations also featured vibrant traditional cultural performances by various indigenous tribes and non-tribal communities of Dima Hasao, adding colour and cultural richness to the event. The programme was attended by NCHAC Executive Members, Members of the Autonomous Council (MACs), Principal Secretary of NCHAC Partha Sarathi Jahari, senior officers from the council and district administration, and a large number of members of the public. Meanwhile, in Maibang, the 77th Republic Day was observed with solemnity and patriotic zeal at Dishru Field. Shyamanta Rabi Bara, ACS, Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Maibang, unfurled the National Flag in the presence of Shri Vaibhav Rawat, IPS,

Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Maibang. The Maibang programme featured colourful cultural dances, traditional performances, patriotic plays, and parade drills, reflecting the unity and rich heritage of the region. On the occasion, a Lifetime Achievement Award was conferred upon Phali Bodo, eminent educationist and social activist, in recognition of her outstanding contribution to society. The NCC Girls Unit of Maibang Degree College secured the first prize in the Republic Day parade competition. Addressing the gathering, Bara highlighted the historical significance of Maibang, recalling the glorious legacy of the Dimasa Kingdom and its contribution to the cultural enrichment of Dima Hasao. He stressed the need to preserve brotherhood and unity, stating that collective harmony is essential for the district's progress and meaningful contribution to nation-building.

## Dima Hasao Police Hosts Get-Together with Journalists, Reinforces Media-Police Partnership

**Haflong, Jan 26:** The journalist community of Dima Hasao expressed their heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation to Senior Superintendent of Police, Ripunjoy Kakoti, APS, and his team for graciously organizing a warm and well-structured get-together in honor of the district's media fraternity. The event was widely praised by journalists, who viewed it as a meaningful gesture that demonstrated the SSP's respect for the media and his dedication to fostering a healthy relationship between the police and journalists. Participants emphasized that such interactions are vital for building mutual trust and understanding, which are essential for transparent and responsible service to society. During the gathering, important topics related to



law and order, as well as media concerns, were briefly discussed. SSP Kakoti cited the provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS), and assured the media of his on-

going support and cooperation. He highlighted the importance of constructive coordination between the police and media for the overall development and welfare of Dima Hasao. The journalists also shared their perspectives on their working conditions and the structure of media coverage across various platforms. On the occasion of Republic Day, they extended their best wishes to SSP Kakoti and his team, appreciating his positive outlook and supportive approach towards the media in the district. The journalist community further conveyed their eagerness to work closely with the police in the future, looking forward to continued guidance, collaboration, and support in their collective efforts to promote peace, progress, and well-being in Dima



# De Kock hundred in his 100th T20 leads South Africa to series win over West Indies

## The "Easy Win": SA Cruises Past WI's 221 With 15 Balls to Spare

**Centurion, Jan 30:** Quinton de Kock celebrated his 100th Twenty20 international with a century as he powered South Africa to a seven-wicket victory over the West Indies on Thursday. De Kock hit a career-best 115 off 49 balls with a borrowed bat from Dewald Brevis. Ryan Rickelton finished the rout with a career-best 77 not out off 36. The left-handers battered the West Indies for 162 runs in 11.5 overs. Together, they had South Africa flying at 12 runs per over. "Special to watch," South Africa captain Aiden Markram said. "Quinn put on a great show for the crowd. Ricks flies under the radar but to get us home back to back is a good effort from him."

The West Indies made a hefty 221-4 but South Africa cruised to 225-3 with 15 balls to spare. The target didn't faze the Proteas. They chased down 258 against the West Indies on the same ground in 2023, led by de Kock's 100, his only previous T20 century. After losing five straight bilateral T20 series, South Af-

rica gave coach Shukri Conrad his first T20 series win as they clinched it 2-0 with a match to spare. That third match is on Saturday, then both teams head to the T20 World Cup starting next week in India and Sri Lanka. De Kock was rested from the first T20, where Markram hit

he miscued to mid-off and was out after smashing 10 sixes and six boundaries. Rickelton was dropped on 17 and happy to play second fiddle to de Kock. He had just got to his fifty off 25 balls when de Kock left then finished the match in a rush. Rickelton hit nine boundaries and



three sixes. The West Indies made only one change after the first T20, bringing in captain, wicketkeeper and opening batter Shai Hope. But he was out for 4 from a nick behind. That brought in Shimron Hetmyer, who overtook opener Brandon King en route to a 30-ball fifty, two days after hitting 48 in Paarl. Their partnership of 126 ended when King was caught on the boundary on a 30-ball 49. Hetmyer was fourth out after a

42-ball 75, 50 of them from boundaries. Sherfane Rutherford then blasted 57 in an unbroken stand of 76 with Romario Shepherd, who made 17. Spinner Keshav Maharaj was the pick of the South Africa bowlers with 2-22. Markram said without that spell they would have been chasing 240-250.

86 not out in a nine-wicket win chasing 174. The captain made only 15 this time but de Kock, who was on 6, took up the mantle and launched sixes against five of the six West Indies bowlers.

He brought 50 up in 21 balls and got to 100 off 43. He was going for a third consecutive six off Akeal Hosein when

## Olivia Gadecki, John Peers retain Australian Open mixed doubles title

### Gadecki, Peers Make AO History

**Melbourne, Jan 30:** Olivia Gadecki and John Peers became the first team to win consecutive Australian Open mixed doubles titles since 1989 after beating the French pair of Kristina Mladenovic and Manuel Guinard 4-6, 6-3, 10-8 on Friday. The Australians trailed 7-5 in the final-set tie-breaker before coming back to lead 9-7. On match point and with Peers serving, Guinard hit a backhand into the net to clinch victory for the home players at Rod Laver Arena. Wild-card entries Gadecki and Peers were the first reigning Australian Open mixed doubles champions to return to the final the following year since Mladenovic and Daniel Nestor in 2015. The 23-year-old Gadecki was born 13 years after Jim Pugh and Jana Novotna went back to back in 1988 and 1989. "Sort of a bit shocked," Peers said. "That could have

gone either way. Just sort of happy that we kept sticking with it... it was on a knife's edge." The French team won the opening set on its second set point when Peers hit a shot wide, three games after

the match.

Mladenovic was trying to win her fourth Grand Slam mixed doubles title — she won Wimbledon in 2013 and the Australian Open in 2014 with Nestor and the 2022



Mladenovic double-faulted on set point and the Australian team broke to keep the set alive.

In the second set, Gadecki and Peers went ahead 3-1 on a service break and then held to take a 4-1 lead, winning 13 of 15 points to put them in control of the set and level

Australian Open mixed doubles title with Ivan Dodig. She also has six Grand Slam women's doubles titles. "Winning a Grand Slam once is very difficult but defending it is even harder... big congrats to you!" Mladenovic said to Gadecki and Peers.

## Sophie Molineux named Australia women's T20 captain for India series

**Sydney, Jan 29:** Spin bowling all-rounder Sophie Molineux was on Thursday appointed the Australian women's T20 captain for the series against ODI world champions India next month and will succeed Alyssa Healy as the leader across formats after the home assignment. Healy had announced that she would retire from international cricket after playing against India in which she will captain the Australian team in three ODIs and a one-off Test. Australia's squads for all formats were announced on Thursday. India's tour of Australia begins on February 15 with a three-match T20I series starting at Sydney. The other two matches will be played on February 19 and 21 at Canberra and Adelaide.

The three-match ODI series will be played on February 24, 27 and March 1. The first match will be held at Brisbane's Allan Border Field while the next two will be at the Bellerive Oval in Hobart. The one-off Test between India and Australia



**England, Jan 30:** Jamaldeen Jimoh-Aloba's first-ever goal for Aston Villa was an 87th-minute winner in a 3-2 comeback victory over Salzburg to conclude the opening phase of the Europa League on Thursday. The 19-year-old Jimoh-Aloba's strike followed Tyrone Mings' equalizer at Villa Park. Morgan Rogers sparked the comeback in the 64th after the visitors built a 2-0 lead on own goal from Victor Lindelof and then Moussa Yeo's goal. Villa wasn't able to overtake Lyon atop the 36-team standings, however, after the French team beat 10-man PAOK 4-2 to remain in front of Unai Emery's team on goal difference. Both Lyon and Villa had already secured a spot in the round of 16. Like in the Champions League, the top eight finishers advance automatically to the last 16. The teams placed from nine to 24 enter a two-leg playoff. The rest of the top eight are: third-place Midtjylland, Real Betis, Porto, Braga, Freiburg, and Roma. Midtjylland, a Danish club, beat Dinamo Zagreb 2-0 to move up to third, two points back of Lyon and Villa. In Seville, former Manchester United winger Antony scored and set up Abde Ezzalzouli's goal in Real Betis' 2-1 win over Feyenoord. Porto rallied from a goal down to beat Rangers 3-1 and jump from ninth to fifth, Braga advanced in the sixth spot after a 0-0 draw at Go Ahead Eagles, and 10-man Freiburg slipped to ninth with a 1-0 loss at Lille. Jan Ziolkowski headed in an 80th-minute equalizer for Roma in a 1-1 draw with Panathinaikos.



will be played at the iconic WACA Ground in Perth from March 6 to 9. Following this, Molineux will be Australia's captain in all formats starting with a tour of the West Indies in March. While Tahlia McGrath was retained as the vice-captain, another spin bowling all-rounder Ashleigh Gardner has been appointed as co-vice-captain. Nicola Carey, who is currently playing for Mumbai Indians in the Women's Premier League, has returned to the white-ball formats while 19-year-old Lucy Hamilton, in the Delhi Capitals' camp, has been named in the Test side. The selectors have also

named Phoebe Litchfield in their squads across formats despite the left-handed batter being ruled out of the ongoing WPL. While Alana King has been excluded from the T20I squad, Megan Schutt, Grace Harris and Heather Graham do not feature in the ODI side. Schutt was expected to retire from ODIs after Australia's loss to India in the World Cup semi-final last year.

The 28-year-old Molineux has also been the youngest captain in the Women's Big Bash League when she took over the reigns from Meg Lanning at Melbourne Renegades, and went on to lead Victoria later.