

## Minister Pijush Hazarika Distributes CM's Women Entrepreneurship Scheme Cheques, Lays Foundation for Major Road Projects in Maibang



**Maibang, Feb 03:** In a significant boost to women empowerment and infrastructure development in Dima Hasao district, Assam's Minister for Water Resources, Shri Pijush Hazarika, on Tuesday distributed seed capital cheques under the Chief Minister's Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan and laid the foundation stone for major road projects at a special programme held in Maibang. During the programme, the Minister distributed ₹10,000 each as seed capital to over 18,000 women beneficiaries, encouraging them to take their first step towards entrepreneurship and self-reliance. He urged the beneficiaries to make proper and productive use of the assistance to start income-generating activities, stating that successful utilization would make them eligible to receive ₹25,000 in the next phase of the scheme. On the same occasion, Min-

ister Hazarika laid the foundation stone for five road development projects covering a total length of 120 kilometres, to be constructed at an estimated cost of ₹997 crore with World Bank funding. Expressing optimism, he said that these projects, envisioned under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, would significantly improve connectivity and accelerate overall development in the hill district. Addressing the gathering, the Minister emphasized that to maintain the rapid pace of Assam's development, continued public support for the Chief Minister is essential. He highlighted several flagship welfare schemes such as Orunodoi, Nijut Moina, and the Chief Minister's Women Entrepreneurship Mission, stating that these initiatives have strengthened self-reliance, dignity, and economic

independence among women across the state. Referring to the remarkable transformation of Dima Hasao, Shri Hazarika noted that the travel time between Haflong and Silchar has been reduced from nearly six hours to about one and a half hours, greatly benefiting tourism and economic activities. He remarked that the district, once affected by unrest and instability, is now witnessing peace and rapid development due to the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma. The Minister also spoke about the state government's transparent and merit-based recruitment process, urging citizens to continue supporting the present leadership so that Assam can retain its position as one of the fastest-growing states in the country. The programme was attended by Minister for Sports and Youth Welfare Smt. Nandita Gorlosa, Chief Executive Member of NCHAC Shri Debolal Gorlosa, MLA Jitu Goswami, senior officials, and other dignitaries.

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## BJP Gears Up for MLA Polls in Dima Hasao, Banks on Unmatched Development to Reclaim Haflong (ST) Seat with Big Margin



**Haflong, Feb 04:** With the Assembly elections slated in the coming months, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has begun its campaign preparations in right earnest in Dima Hasao, expressing confidence of reclaiming the Haflong (ST) constituency with a decisive margin, riding on its multi-sectoral development record in the district. A meeting-cum-interaction programme of the Dima Hasao BJP Election Management Committee was held at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan, Haflong, which was chaired by Member of Parliament from Madhya Pradesh, Vivek "Bunty" Sahu. The meeting was attended by Chief Executive Member of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council, Debolal Gorlosa, Dima Hasao BJP Vistarak Binod Tiwari,

District BJP President Dhriti Thawsen, Executive Members (EM), MACs, senior leaders, and party karyakartas. Addressing the meeting, leaders highlighted the unprecedented development initiatives undertaken by the BJP-led governments at the Centre, State, and Council levels, which, they said, have fundamentally transformed Dima Hasao across sectors. Emphasis was laid on major strides made in tourism promotion, road and infrastructure development, healthcare expansion, sports infrastructure, youth engagement, and women empowerment, initiatives which, according to party leaders, remain unmatched by the opposition. The leadership asserted that focused investments in connectivity, livelihood generation, health services, and grassroots

governance have strengthened public confidence, placing the BJP in a commanding position ahead of the polls. The meeting focused on strategic planning, booth-level preparedness, and strengthening the party's vision and objectives, with a clear roadmap laid out for effective outreach in both urban and rural areas of the district. The election momentum in Dima Hasao follows the recent visit of Assam Cabinet Minister Pijush Hazarika to Maibang, where he had formally sounded the poll bugle for the upcoming Assembly elections. Party leaders stated that the BJP is fully prepared to convert its development narrative into electoral success and secure a resounding mandate from the people of Haflong (ST).

## Central Bushu Festival Celebrated with Grandeur at Maibang, Showcasing Rich Dimasa Heritage



**Maibang, Feb 05:** The most significant festival of the Dimasa community, the Central Bushu, was celebrated with great enthusiasm and traditional fervour at Dishru Mlaoyam, Maibang in Dima Hasao district. The two-day post-harvest festival witnessed massive participation, reflecting the deep-rooted cultural heritage, unity, and vibrant traditions of the Dimasa people. The programme was graced by the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Dima Hasao Autonomous Council, Debolal Gorlosa, as the Chief Guest, who formally inaugurated the sacred 'Baikho', marking the commencement of the cele-

brations. He was accompanied by Chairman, DHAC, Mohet Hojai, Dima Hasao District BJP President & MAC, Dhriti Thawsen, Executive Members Donpainon Thawsen, Probita Johori, Biswajit Daulagupu, and Samsing Engti, along with MACs Monjoy Langthasa, Ratan Jarambusa, Projith Hojai, Hirojit Jidung, Pronath Rajiyung, and Krishna Joishi. Also present were Dima Hasao Vistarak, Vinod Tiwari and leaders of apex bodies such as JNH, DSU, and DMA, besides a large gathering of community members. The Central Bushu celebration was marked by colourful traditional dances performed by different age groups,

along with competitions featuring Karam (traditional drum) and Muri (traditional flute). People from every nook and corner of Dima Hasao district, as well as neighbouring districts, participated in the festivities, making the event a vibrant cultural confluence. Traditionally, Bushu celebrations begin from January 27 and are observed across various regions of Dima Hasao including Gunjung, Diyungbra, Harangajao, and Maibong, among others. In certain areas, the festival is observed as 'Hangsao Bushu', which is specially selected in the month of January and continues in a traditional manner with uninterrupted music, singing, and rituals for seven days. Insight into the Festival Bushu, the biggest festival of the Dimasa community, signifies the celebration of harvest and rejoicing over newly grown rice. It reflects the rich culture, social customs, and collective spirit of the community. The festival is celebrated in three forms — Jidab, Surem, and Hangsaomnouba.

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## Massive Fire Guts Several Houses in Maibang, No Casualties Reported

**Maibang, Dima Hasao, Feb 03:** A devastating fire incident was reported early this morning at Subash Nagar under Maibang Police Station in Dima Hasao district, leaving several families homeless. The fire broke out at around 7:00 AM on 03 February 2026, the cause of which is yet to be ascertained. According to preliminary reports, the blaze affected nine residential houses, including one rented house, causing extensive damage to property. Fortunately, no casualties or injuries have been reported so far. Upon receiving information, Fire and Emergency Services rushed to the spot and acted swiftly to control the flames, preventing the fire from spreading further in the densely populated locality. Their timely intervention helped avert a potentially larger disaster.



Officials informed that an assessment of losses is being carried out by the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) along with CQRT volunteers to evaluate the extent of damage and prepare a detailed report. The district administration has assured that necessary relief and assistance will be provided to the affected families as per government norms. Meanwhile, the affected residents have appealed for early support to rebuild their lives after the sudden tragedy. Further investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of the fire.

## ASHA Workers Protest Pay Hike Outside Health HQ



**Kolkata, Feb 06:** Hundreds of ASHA volunteers on Friday took to the streets in Kolkata, dissatisfied with the Rs 1,000 hike in their honorarium announced in the West Bengal interim budget. The protesting Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) volunteers staged an impromptu sit-in outside the Swasthya Bhavan, the state's health department headquarters in Salt Lake, demanding an honorarium of at least Rs 15,000 per month. The Bidhannagar Police has put up barricades and deployed a large number of personnel on the streets leading to the Swasthya Bhavan, officials said. An ASHA volunteer, who was part of the demonstration, said, "What will only Rs 1,000 hike mean for us when we are paid a paltry sum? We demand a minimum Rs 15,000 per month remuneration." Another volunteer said that a 17-member delegation is scheduled to meet the state's health secretary and reiterate their de-

mands.

Last month, the female community health volunteers had blocked key thoroughfares in Kolkata's Esplanade and Salt Lake, after police stopped their march to the health department headquarters.

The ASHA workers had also staged protests at Swasthya Bhavan on January 8 and January 12, seeking a meeting with senior health officials over their long-pending demand for a fixed monthly salary instead of performance-linked allowances. Their demands also include to not be engaged in work other than mother and child support. The Mamata Banerjee government on Thursday announced a hike of Rs 1,000 in the ASHA workers' honorarium, which they claimed now stood at Rs 6,250 per month.

The state government had also declared a one-time payment of Rs 5 lakh in case of death in harness and maternity leave for ASHA volunteers.

## Four Tourists Found Dead in Nalanda

**Patna, Feb 06:** Four tourists from Bengaluru were found dead inside a room at Digambar Jain Dharamshala, Rajgir, in Bihar's Nalanda district. Sources said the room was found locked from the inside. The reason behind the deaths could not be ascertained immediately. According to the dharamshala register, four people from Bengaluru, including two women, had booked the room on January 31. They had reportedly travelled to Rajgir after visiting Nepal and had planned to go to Pawapuri in Nalanda district next. Police and administrative officials reached the spot immediately after being alerted by the dharamshala staff. A forensic team from Patna has also been called in for investigation. Rajgir station house officer (SHO), Raman Kumar, confirmed the incident and informed that police swung into action after people living nearby informed about a foul smell coming from the room. He also said local residents had seen the tourists roaming in a market two days ago. Rajgir is a prominent Jain pilgrimage centre and Siddha Kshetra (place of salvation), revered for its deep connection to the 24th Tirthankara, Lord Mahavira, who spent 14 rainy seasons (Chaturmas) there. It is also the birthplace of the 20th Tirthankara, Muni Suvatnath, and features over 26 ancient temples across its five holy hills.

## Omar Abdullah: Reopen Tourist Spots to Revive Kashmir's Economy

The Hurdle: Classified as "security-sensitive" zones

**Srinagar, Feb 06:** The continued closure of tourist resorts of Doodhpathri, Tosamaidan and Yousmarg in Valley after last year's Pahalgam terror attack has adversely affected the local economy and impacted the livelihood of stakeholders dependent on tourism activities. Replying to a question by MLA Saif-ud-Din Bhat on the closure of the internationally known tourist destinations of Doodhpathri, Tosamaidan and Yousmarg in central Kashmir, the In-charge Tourism Minister and Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, informed the Legislative Assembly in Jammu on Tuesday that the three destinations have remained closed to tourists for about nine months due to security considerations.

The closures followed the April 22, 2025, terror attack in Pahalgam, in which 25 tourists and a local ponywala were killed, after which Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha ordered the shutdown of 48 out of 87 tourist destinations in the Valley for a security audit. While some locations were later reopened as the ground situation improved, several key destinations, including Doodhpathri, Tosamaidan and Yousmarg, continue to remain shut.

The CM acknowledged that the prolonged closure of these tourist destinations has adversely affected the local economy, thereby impacting the livelihood of ATV operators, vehicle owners, ponywalas, stall owners, guides and other stakeholders dependent on tourism activities in these areas. "The continued closure caused distress among local youth, including those who had availed loans from various financial institutions for running tourism-related businesses in the said destinations," the government said.



The CM informed the House that the decision to reopen the three destinations involves security considerations and is currently beyond the Tourism Department's mandate. However, he indicated that efforts are under way, saying the time has come to reopen the closed tourist destinations.

"We are in touch with the Government of India and talks in this regard are going on. The Home Minister is visiting J&K, and I will take up this issue of closure of some tourist destinations with him when I meet him," he said. The tourism stakeholders have been demanding reopening of all tourist destinations in J&K, which were closed after the Pahalgam attack, to boost the confidence of tourists and send a message that "Kashmir is a safe tourist destination".

Many spells of snowfall in upper reaches and tourist places have revived winter tourism in Kashmir. Tourism stakeholders are hopeful that the revival of winter tourism would also lead to revival of tourism in the Valley post Pahalgam attack.

## Mayawati Seeks Ban on 'Casteist' Film Ghooskhor Pandat

**Lucknow, Feb 06:** BSP chief Mayawati on Friday condemned the alleged insult to the Brahmin community in the film Ghooskhor Pandat and demanded that the Centre immediately impose a ban on what she termed a "casteist" movie. In a post on her official X handle, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said it was a matter of "great sorrow and concern" that the term pandit was being portrayed as an infiltrator, not only in Uttar Pradesh but now even in films, leading to insult and disrespect across the country. "This has led to widespread anger among the entire Brahmin community at present. Our party strongly condemns it," she said. Mayawati further said that the central government should immediately ban such a "caste-indicative" film.



Meanwhile, the Hazratganj police station in the state capital has registered an FIR against the film's director and his team on charges of insulting a particular caste and promoting enmity.

According to the FIR, the case has been registered under Sections 196 (promoting enmity on grounds of religion, caste and language),

299 (deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage the religious feelings of any class), 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke a breach of the peace) and 353 (related to public mischief) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), as well as Section 66 of the Information Technology (Amendment) Act.

## Lok Sabha adjourned for the day amid opposition uproar on various issues

**New Delhi, Feb 06:** Proceedings in the Lok Sabha were adjourned for the day, following noisy protests by Opposition members over multiple issues. Friday was the second day when the House could not take up discussion on the Union Budget presented on February 1. As the House reassembled at 12 noon after an earlier adjournment, opposition members continued with their protests by trooping into the Well of the House.

Chairing the proceedings, Krishna Prasad Tenneti urged opposition to take their seats and put down placards. As opposition members refused to relent, he adorned the House till Monday. Earlier in the morning, several Opposition MPs entered the Well of the House, raising slogans and holding placards, prompting repeated appeals from Speaker Om Birla to restore order. Expressing



concern over the disruptions, Birla said Parliament was meant to function through debate and discussion, not sloganeering. He pointed out that members had been elected to raise issues in a constructive manner and warned that persistent disruptions amounted to disrespect for the House.

The Speaker noted that during the ongoing session, 19 hours and 13 minutes had already been lost due to interruptions. He also urged protesting members to allow proceedings to continue, noting that a question by Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi was listed for the day. As the protests continued unabated, the Speaker adjourned the House till 12 pm. Opposition

parties, led by the Congress has been protesting inside and outside the Parliament against the Speaker refusing to allow Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi to speak on former Army Chief General MM Naravane's unpublished 'memoir', in which he makes some statements involving PM Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in connection with the 2020 India-China standoff. Eight Congress MPs were suspended by the Speaker on Tuesday, amid continuous protests demanding to let the LoP speak on the issue.

In an unprecedented development on Thursday, the Lok Sabha passed the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address without the Prime Minister's customary reply, which could not be delivered due to sustained Opposition protests.

## Bikash Debbarma Reviews Plans to Boost Women's Livelihoods



**Agartala, Feb 06:** In an effort to strengthen women's empowerment and generate sustainable livelihood opportunities, the Directorate of Tribal Welfare on Friday held a high-level review meeting on handloom and sericulture at the Secretary's Office premises in Gorkhabasti. The meeting was chaired by Tribal Welfare Minister Bikash Debbarma and attended by senior departmental officials. Discussions centred on streamlining traditional handloom and sericulture activities to ensure

steady income generation for women, particularly from rural and tribal-dominated areas.

According to sources, the review focused on capacity-building through skill training, improving production infrastructure, providing financial assistance, and widening market access for products. Officials also explored ways to blend age-old crafts with modern management and marketing practices to ensure long-term sustainability of these sectors. Addressing reporters after the meeting, Min-

ister Debbarma said, "A comprehensive programme has been adopted to make women self-reliant through handloom and sericulture. Today's meeting reviewed the implementation process and future road-map. Once fully executed, the initiative will empower women economically and revitalise our traditional industries."

The Minister also conducted a separate review with District Tribal Welfare Officers (DTWOs) and Sub-Divisional Tribal Welfare Officers (SDTWOs) to assess the progress of ongoing schemes, fund utilisation, and ground-level implementation. Reaffirming the government's commitment to the holistic development of tribal communities, Debbarma stressed the importance of strong administrative coordination, transparency, and regular monitoring to ensure that welfare schemes reach beneficiaries effectively and on time.

## Assam Congress Issues Show-Cause Notice to Joint Secretary

**Guwahati, Feb 06:** The Assam Congress has issued a show-cause notice to its joint secretary, Panjak Saikia, for allegedly making "inappropriate remarks" in the media about former state party president Bhupen Kumar Borah. The notice was issued on Thursday by Assam Congress general secretary (organisation) Bipul Gogoi, instructing Saikia to submit his response within 24 hours. "It has come to the notice of Assam PCC President Gaurav Gogoi that you made inappropriate comments in the media on matters related to former PCC Presi-



dent and Chairman Campaign Committee Bhupen Kumar Borah," the notice stated.

It further warned that Saikia must explain why disciplinary

action should not be taken against him for the alleged violation of party discipline.

The notice was shared with the media on Friday.

## Pradyot to Sue Tripura Govt Over 'Illegal' Urban Land Grab



**Agartala, Feb 06:** Tipra Motha Party founder and Tripura royal scion Pradyot Bikram Manikya has announced plans to move court against the state government, alleging that portions of Sixth Schedule district council land are being illegally converted into a Nagar Panchayat. The announcement came after his visit to Bishramganj in Sepahijala district, where he held discussions with officials regarding the demarcation of Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTA-ADC) land in connection with the Bishramganj Nagar Panchayat.

Pradyot was joined by TTA-ADC Chief Executive Member Purna Chandra Jamatia, former CEO C.K. Jamatia, and other party leaders during meetings with district officials, including SDM Bishramganj Binky Saha, who also serves as Executive Officer of the Nagar Panchayat. The talks focused on the government's notification to convert parts of council land—a move Pradyot has vowed to contest legally. "The government cannot create a Nagar Panchayat within district council areas. They claim past elections justify this, but it is illegal. We have maps and proper doc-

umentation, while they rely only on mouja records and old polls," Pradyot said, describing the move as a "forceful occupation."

He stressed that the issue was not opposition to Nagar Panchayats themselves but to the arbitrary conversion of tribal council land. "Elections may come and go, but no one can take land illegally. Citizens must be aware and act. We will do whatever is necessary to uphold the law," he added, citing Nandan Nagar in Agartala as an example of tribal settlements vulnerable to such conversions.

Local tribal leaders view the Bishramganj incident as part of a wider debate over land rights and the application of the Sixth Schedule, which provides constitutional safeguards for tribal areas. They argue that bypassing consultation and legal compliance undermines community rights.

Pradyot concluded by asserting that the law prohibits the establishment of a Nagar Panchayat within district council areas, pledging to defend tribal autonomy through legal means. The case is expected to test the limits of administrative authority and the protection of tribal land in Tripura.

## MHA Sanctions ₹196.61 Cr to Modernize Manipur Police

**Imphal, Feb 06:** The Ministry of Home Affairs has approved Rs 196.61 crore for the modernisation of the police in Manipur, with maintaining law and order remaining the foremost priority in the ethnic violence-hit border state. An official statement issued on Friday said that the modernisation of policing has received sustained attention. The Cyber Crime Helpline is fully operational, a Cyber Forensic Division has been established, and CCTV surveillance has been expanded to 33 remote locations.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has approved Rs 196.61 crore for security, mobility, forensic equipment, and smart policing initiatives, significantly enhancing police capabilities. Police infrastructure development has also progressed, with over Rs 54 crore sanctioned for the construction and renovation of police buildings, barracks, quarters, and peace camps, 16 major projects approved under SASCI, and the inauguration of the new Police Headquarters at Mantripukhri and the Police Museum in Imphal. During 2025-26, substantial investments were made in fire and emergency services, including the procurement of rescue equipment, the training of over 63,000 personnel and volunteers, and the conduct of more than 1,500 mock drills.

During recent floods, a timely response ensured the rescue of over 1,000 people and animals and the provision of essential services. To meet the requirements of the new criminal laws, the Directorate of Forensic Sciences has been strengthened with mobile forensic vans, advanced laboratories, a DNA Analysis Wing, cyber forensic facilities, and enhanced manpower.

## Manipur: Shutdown in Churachandpur Over Kuki-Zo MLAs Joining New Govt

**Guwahati, Feb 06:** Normal life in Manipur's Churachandpur district was severely disrupted on Friday as tribal organisations enforced a total shutdown to protest the participation of a Kuki-Zo MLA in the state government formation process, officials said. Bandh supporters blocked vehicles across parts of the district headquarters town from Friday morning, while markets remained closed and vehicular movement was minimal. Educational institutions and government offices reported poor attendance. The Churachandpur unit of

the Kuki Students Organisation imposed a 24-hour shutdown starting at midnight, while the Joint Forum of Seven enforced a shutdown in Kuki-Zo areas from 6 am to 6 pm. The shutdown was particularly strict in the Tuibong area of the district headquarters, officials noted. The situation remained tense, prompting authorities to deploy additional security forces at key locations in the town as a precautionary measure. Meanwhile, the Kuki Women Organisation for Human Rights (KWOHR) announced a mass public ral-

ly on Friday afternoon to oppose the involvement of Kuki-Zo MLAs in government formation. The organisation said the protest aimed to demonstrate strong opposition to any move involving Kuki-Zo MLAs under the current circumstances, representing the collective stance of Kuki women against what they described as unacceptable political developments. On Thursday evening, clashes erupted near the Tuibong forest gate between a mob and security forces, leading to baton charges and the use of tear gas to disperse

stone-pelting protesters. The confrontations continued until around 3 am on Friday, leaving two demonstrators injured, officials said.

The Indigenous Tribes Advocacy Committee warned that any attempt to intimidate or harm MLA N Sanate, or to damage his properties, would be seen as a violation of the collective stance of tribal communities in Pherzawl and Jiribam districts. The committee reaffirmed its support for the interests of the Hmar, Kuki, and Zomi tribes and cautioned against letting recent political developments



create friction among the three communities. The protests follow visits by N Sanate and MLA L M Khaute to Imphal on Wednesday as part of the NDA team staking a claim for government forma-

tion. The two Kuki-Zo-Hmar legislators, along with Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen, also participated virtually in the seventh session of the 12th Manipur Legislative Assembly on Thursday.

## Editorial

## Bushu Festival: Preserving a Living Cultural Legacy

The grand celebration of the Central Bushu Festival at Maibang once again highlighted the rich cultural legacy of the Dimasa community and its enduring relevance in contemporary times. Celebrated with traditional music, dances, and rituals, Bushu is not merely a harvest festival but a collective assertion of identity, unity, and self-governance rooted in centuries-old customs.

The enthusiastic participation of people from across Dima Hasao, alongside the presence of elected representatives and autonomous council leaders, reflected a

rare convergence of tradition and administration. Yet, the soul of Bushu lies not in official presence but in the community-driven spirit that sustains it—where villagers collectively contribute resources, labour, and time to uphold their heritage.

In an era marked by rapid modernisation and cultural dilution, the Bushu festival stands as a reminder that indigenous traditions survive only when lived, not merely commemorated. The involvement of youth in traditional dances, music, and rituals signals hope, but it also places responsibility

on institutions and policymakers to actively support cultural platforms beyond symbolic gestures.

Preserving festivals like Bushu is not just about safeguarding tradition; it is about protecting cultural diversity, social cohesion, and indigenous wisdom. As development accelerates across the hills of Dima Hasao, cultural preservation must move hand in hand with progress. The rhythm of the Karam and the songs of Bushu must continue to echo—not as relics of the past, but as living expressions of a proud people shaping their future.

## Tiding over tough times

In 1998, I was working as Special Correspondent of The Assam Tribune. I had joined the newspaper as a Staff Reporter in 1989, after returning from Newstime (Eenadu Group) in Hyderabad. Late Robindra Nath Borooah was my editor for a brief period, before late Naren Deka took over as editor. After Deka Sir retired in 1995, PG Baruah Sir, who was then the Managing Director, assumed the role of editor of The Assam Tribune. It was a particularly difficult period for The Assam Tribune. Circulation was declining, and several leading newspapers from Delhi and Kolkata were launching their Guwahati editions. Compared to these colourful, bulky outside papers, the newspaper appeared like a poor cousin. To add to its woes, these external players were aggressively underpricing their newspapers to exert pressure on us. After taking over as editor, PG Sir faced a severe manpower crunch, as The Assam Tribune was in a transitional phase. Offset printing technology was being introduced, along with the large-scale use of computers in the newsroom. Partha Sarathi Dutta was the Executive Editor at the time, but he left soon after.

In this precarious situation, PG Sir called me one evening and said, “You take over as Executive Editor.” It came like a bolt from the blue. I was only 38 then and had hardly any experience of desk work, having spent my entire journalistic career as a reporter. “Sir, I have very little desk experience, and there are so many senior colleagues I would be superseding,” I pointed out. “You can manage,” he said. “I have full faith in you.” Saying this, he led me to the Executive Editor’s chair and added, “From tomorrow, you will sit in this chair.” The months that followed were intensely hectic. The immediate task was to increase the number of pages from eight to ten, and subsequently to twelve. Press Manager Willie Mathews ordered new machines capable of introducing colour and printing more pages. We countered the outside papers on every front. Like them, we reorgan-

ised the newspaper into clearly defined sections City, State, Nation, International, Editorial, and others. If they could offer comics, so could we. We contacted comics suppliers in Delhi and Mumbai. We also introduced a horoscope, which quickly became extremely popular, along with crosswords, sudoku, and similar features. Weekend supplements for youth, children, and students followed, giving The Assam Tribune a more wholesome and contemporary look. Throughout this period, PG Sir, as Managing Director-cum-Editor of The Assam Tribune, extended his full support. We also made fresh recruitments, bringing in young blood to strengthen both the reporting and editorial workforce. The goodwill of the people of our State proved to be The Assam Tribune’s greatest USP. Combined with its strong local flavour—the unmistakable smell of the soil—it helped us overcome the challenge posed by our rivals and emerge victorious. From a modest circulation of 33,000, The Assam Tribune crossed the one-lakh mark. The crowning moment of The Assam Tribune success story, however, was PG Baruah Sir’s decision to become the first newspaper proprietor in the country to accept the Majithia Wage Board recommendations. At a time when several large and resource-rich media houses were challenging the award in court—a battle they eventually lost—PG Sir’s decision stood vindicated, reflecting both his maturity as a leader and his unwavering commitment to his employees.



## The court and the appellant: Who is in the witness box?

There are times in public life when an image lingers longer than words. Mamata Banerjee walking into the Supreme Court to challenge the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls was one such. She was there to speak, but its effect exceeded the legal points she made. Her actual arguments may have won the day or not. History will have its own verdict. Regardless, the very act in that moment spoke to something essential about our times. The image is more than the visual that composed it, of course. In itself, the picture was striking enough—a small figure draped in a black shawl, partly to resemble lawyers’ robes, partly in protest. That was classic Mamata, being hyperbolic as usual, just in a non-verbal way. But this is not an abstract point about the proverbial war between pictures and words.

What we are getting at is this. Her act, her appearance before the court, embeds an idea, one that comes to be shared collectively—a chief minister, months before a high-stakes assembly election, choosing not to send lawyers to do their job alone, but to speak for herself before the highest court of the land. Arvind Kejriwal had done something similar, but that was

different—that was his own case. Here was one branch of the State walking into the precincts of another for a formal conversation. It is difficult to recall anything quite like it. It was not politics in the usual language of street theatre—not a rally or a dharna, or a kerbside speech. It was indeed politics, but also way more than that. Stripped down to its most elemental form: a chief minister was saying, in effect, I do not trust this process, and I am here to say so. Coincidentally, or perhaps not, that same day delivered a counterpart moment, giving this a stronger resonance. Parliament was locked in terminal acrimony and anger. The Prime Minister’s reply to the motion of thanks to the President’s address was suspended. The Lok Sabha Speaker later supplied a reason which has no precedent—he ascribed his decision to a threat of the PM being physically harmed. True or not, it expressed the extent of the breakdown. It was an odd, unsettling contrast: the formal arena of democracy frozen in one place, in another a legislative leader choosing the judiciary as her forum.

At one level, Mamata Banerjee doing this feels entirely in character. She has rarely trusted systems. Whether taking on the Left Front decades ago or positioning herself today against the Centre, she has felt them to be antagonistic and has always preferred confrontation over consensus. Even in power, she seems to remain anti-system somehow, relying more on informal local networks.

But to reduce this moment to personality is to miss something more important. The dispute over the SIR should have been, as it is on paper, an argument over method, a matter of technical procedure. Electoral roll revisions, conducted periodically, are meant to clean up duplications, errors, outdated entries. Democracy depends as much on this dull housekeeping as on fiery speeches. But this time, the exercise had arrived in an atmosphere thick with suspicion. Mamata’s charge is not simply that the process is flawed in its detail, but that it is unfairly designed and potentially disenfranchising—especially for the vulnerable. She spoke of names being dropped, about exclusion being coded

into the process, about last-mile agents exercising authority without accountability. Whether these claims ultimately stand up in court is a separate matter. What matters is that a chief minister is formally questioning the integrity of the process, and that by appearing before the Supreme Court, she transmits that question to the wider court of public opinion.

She is not asking voters to judge yet; she is asking judges to intervene. But in doing so, that implicit judgement is kept in suspended animation. This is where discomfort creeps in. The Supreme Court is not designed to absorb and quell political anxiety. It exists to interpret the law, not to reassure citizens when trust frays. And yet, increasingly, that is exactly the role it is being asked to play. When legislatures falter, when institutions are viewed with suspicion, when political dialogue collapses, the court becomes the last address. But the burden placed on the judiciary is made heavier by the sense transmitted to it that it is itself not immune to being judged in the larger public court. Mamata appearing in person is an act meant to increase the pressure on it, to raise the stakes in such a way for the system that virtually dares



it. Comply, or break.

The Election Commission is in that witness box too. For decades, its authority came from implicit public trust. Its decisions were institutional. Today, if that sense is abundantly compromised, Mamata’s theatrical method brings that to trial in the open. When a chief minister takes on the commission in person, the spotlight shifts to individuals. Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar may not be named as an adversary in legal terms, but his office is suddenly personalised. But we must grasp the game at that level. As a constitutional office being forced to defend itself in real time, under political glare. It is ironic how an anti-system force has taken it upon itself to police the system. This is a slippery slope to inhabit, and we must be mindful of the dangers. Political competition has sharpened to such a point that it is breaking the very formal spaces that host it. And the disagreements are transmitted to the institutions themselves, escalating every election into a democratic emergency.

Elections are transient events on the larger scale. This is not about Mamata or Gyanesh Kumar or Narendra Modi or Rahul Gandhi. Mamata may win her grim battle or not. The BJP may manage to widen its footprint in this or that territory. Newer parties may emerge. Older ones may resuscitate themselves—or not. But if India is to move to deeper forms of democracy, eventually exploring forms of electoral reform, there is a vital precondition to that. Dialogue, the very lifeblood of democracy, even if it is conducted in contestation. Each step on this escalatory ladder makes it more difficult to get back to that genuinely democratic place, one where people and institutions are willing to speak honestly and listen carefully.

## Škoda Kylaq crosses 50,000 sales in one year, expands line-up to six variants with new features and anniversary offers

**Guwahati:** Škoda Auto India has marked a major business milestone for its compact SUV Škoda Kylaq, which has crossed 50,000 cumulative sales within a year of launch. The achievement comes during the brand's strongest-ever sales phase in India, following a record performance in 2025, and reinforces the Kylaq's position as a key growth driver in the sub-4m SUV segment.

To sustain momentum, the company announced a strategic expansion of the Kylaq portfolio from four to six variants, now offered across 11 price points. A new Classic+ variant has been introduced between Classic and Signature trims, making the Kylaq the most accessible model



in its segment with a full-fledged torque converter automatic. At the top end, a new Prestige+ variant has been added. Feature democratisation across the range includes

electric sunroof, cruise control, Auto IRVM, rain-sensing wipers, multi-function steering wheel and LED lighting, now available across more trims. Safety remains a strong pillar, with the Kylaq retaining the highest Bharat NCAP ratings among ICE vehicles in its segment, six airbags standard across variants, extended warranty, roadside assistance and labour-free service packages.

Commenting on the milestone, Ashish Gupta, Brand Director, Škoda Auto India, said the expansion reflects

rising customer trust and the brand's long-term India strategy.

In Guwahati, dealers report steady traction for the Kylaq, driven by demand for safe, automatic-equipped compact SUVs with European build appeal. The expanded variant mix and limited-period anniversary benefits of up to ₹50,000, along with discounted maintenance packages valid till February 28, 2026, are expected to further strengthen Škoda's positioning in the Northeast's fast-evolving urban auto market.

## TAFE rolls out MASSEY DYNASTAR Season 3, offers Rs 8.2 lakh tractor to fuel farm innovation

**Guwahati:** Tractors and Farm Equipment Limited, one of the world's largest tractor manufacturers, has announced the launch of Season 3 of the 'MASSEY DYNASTAR Contest 2026 - #SabseBadeAllrounder Ki Talaash', aiming to strengthen innovation-driven growth in India's agriculture and rural enterprise ecosystem.

After two successful editions, the third season has been expanded as the biggest yet, positioning the contest as a national innovation platform for farmers, entrepreneurs, students, startups, academicians and rural changemakers. The initiative invites original and practical ideas powered by any Massey Ferguson tractor, spanning agriculture, allied sectors and rural businesses.

Shortlisted participants will gain national visibility and the opportunity to present their ideas before an expert jury comprising industry specialists and senior TAFE leaders. The winner will receive a Massey Ferguson 254 DYNASMART tractor,

valued at around ₹8.2 lakh, known for its performance, versatility and design, along with exciting cash rewards.

Entries can be submitted online in video or text format, in English or any Indian regional language. Each submission must demonstrate a feasible application that improves farming efficiency, creates new business opportunities, or delivers measurable social and economic impact. Finalists will present their solutions at a Grand Finale event.

The contest is open to Indian citizens above 18 years of age.

Agri-industry stakeholders in Guwahati see the contest as timely for the Northeast, where demand is rising for customised mechanisation and farm-linked enterprises. Dealers and agri-entrepreneurs believe MASSEY DYNASTAR Season 3 could encourage locally relevant innovations using Massey Ferguson tractors, supporting productivity, rural livelihoods and agri-business expansion in the region.



## GCPL welcomes MAT credit relief in new tax regime, says move to boost corporate cash flows

**Guwahati:** Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL) has welcomed the Union Budget provision allowing companies to set off up to 25 per cent of their tax liability against accumulated Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) credits under the new tax regime, terming it a positive step for corporate India.

Commenting on the announcement, Sudhir Sitapati, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Godrej Consumer Products Limited, said the move would significantly ease the transition to the new tax structure for companies carrying legacy MAT credits.

"We particularly welcome the MAT credit set-off being allowed up to 25 per cent of the tax liability under the new tax regime. This move improves cash flows and makes the new tax regime smoother for companies with accumulated credits," Sitapati said in a statement.

He added that the policy change would help unlock capital that was otherwise tied up, enabling companies to channel funds into reinvestment and expansion. According to him, improved liquidity is expected to support growth, especially in consumption-led categories that form the backbone of India's fast-moving consumer goods sector.

The MAT credit relief is likely to encourage



more companies to shift to the new tax regime, aligning with the government's broader objective of simplifying taxation while supporting investment and economic growth.

## Medanta Q3 FY26 income rises 19 per cent as volumes grow

**Guwahati:** Global Health Limited, which operates the Medanta hospital network across North and East India, on Tuesday reported a 19.1 per cent year-on-year rise in consolidated total income to ₹11,428 million for the quarter ended December 31, 2025 (Q3 FY26), driven by strong patient volumes and improved realizations.

EBITDA excluding the newly commissioned Noida hospital rose 10.9 per cent year-on-year to ₹2,814 million, with margins of 25.4 per cent. However, consolidated EBITDA including Noida declined 1.7 per cent to ₹2,494 million, reflecting initial operating losses at the new facility. Medanta Noida, which began operations in September 2025, reported revenue of ₹343 million and an EBITDA loss of ₹320 million during the quarter.

Profit after tax stood at ₹950 million in Q3 FY26, impacted by depreciation and finance costs related to the Noida hospital, as well as a one-time exceptional expense of ₹366 million arising from the statutory implementation of new Labour Codes.

During the quarter, the company added 144 beds—42 in Patna and 102 in Noida—while inpatient and outpatient volumes grew 14.3 per cent and 19.5 per cent, respectively. International patient revenue surged 29.9 per cent to ₹703 million.

For the first nine months of FY26, total income increased 17.6 per cent to ₹33,131 million, with PAT rising 8.5 per cent to ₹4,124 million, despite losses at the Noida facility.

## PM E-DRIVE Certification Puts Montra at Forefront of India's Electric Truck Market

**Kohima:** Montra Electric, the e-M&H-CV arm of the Murugappa Group, has become the country's first manufacturer to secure certification under the Government of India's PM E-DRIVE Scheme, marking a breakthrough in India's electric heavy truck segment. The milestone was celebrated with the delivery of the first PM E-DRIVE-certified Rhino 5538 EV 6x4 tractor-trailer to UltraTech Cement Limited, signalling rising institutional demand for zero-emission freight solutions. The vehicle was flagged off by Arun Murugappan, Chairman of Montra Electric (TI Clean Mobility Pvt. Ltd.), alongside senior executives from both organisations. The market impact is expected to be significant, with the

₹10,900-crore PM E-DRIVE scheme earmarking ₹500 crore for e-trucks. Incentives of up to ₹9.6 lakh per Rhino 5538 EV are set to materially improve fleet economics and accelerate adoption.

Union Minister for Heavy Industries H. D. Kumaraswamy said the certification strengthens India's drive to decarbonise logistics and achieve Net Zero targets under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Built for Indian operating conditions, the Rhino 5538 EV range offers 6x4 and 4x2 variants, battery-swapping capability, a 282 kWh LFP battery, 380 HP power, 2,000 Nm torque, and a tested range of nearly 198 km—targeting ports, mining, cement, steel, and long-haul freight corridors.



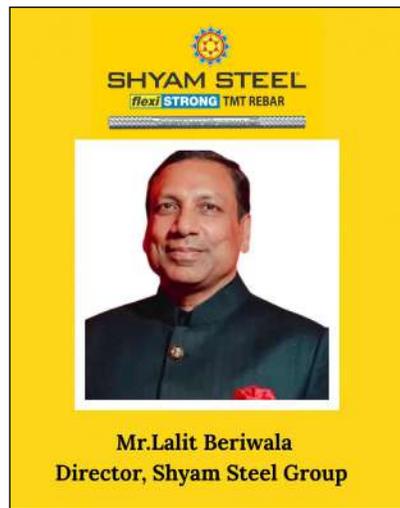
In Kohima, and surrounding regions, where infrastructure expansion and road-based freight dominate supply chains, PM E-DRIVE incentives could spur pilot adoption of electric heavy trucks for fixed routes and hub-to-hub movement. This positions Imphal as a niche but strategic market for early EV freight deployment in the North-East.

## Budget 2026–27 boosts infra, tech and inclusive growth; Shyam Steel Group MD Lalit Beriwal welcomes capex push

**Guwahati:** Welcoming the Union Budget 2026–27, Lalit Beriwal, Managing Director of Shyam Steel Group, said the Budget lays a strong foundation for a more connected, technologically empowered and inclusive India, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Commenting on the Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Beriwal highlighted the continued thrust on capital expenditure, raised to 9 per cent, with public capex increased to ₹12.2 trillion for 2026–27. He said focused investments in railway network expansion, express highway connectivity and construction-led growth would significantly strengthen India's infrastructure backbone, creating sustained demand for quality steel and boosting overall industrial activity.

He further noted that infrastructure development proposals for tier II and tier



**Mr. Lalit Beriwal**  
Director, Shyam Steel Group

III cities would accelerate growth across the steel, cement and other building material sectors, while generating large-scale employment opportunities in urban and semi-urban areas, helping address unem-

ployment concerns.

Beriwal also welcomed the emphasis on waterways development and the announcement of seven additional Dedicated Freight Corridors, along with eco-friendly and sustainable passenger corridors, semi-conductor corridors, chemical parks, rare earth corridors and textile parks. He said these initiatives, combined with long-term structural reforms, would support sustained economic growth.

Highlighting rapid digital transformation, Beriwal said the government's focus on Artificial Intelligence-driven tools and skill-to-employment frameworks aligns with modern manufacturing needs, enabling smarter processes, improved productivity and enhanced operational efficiency in the steel industry. He also lauded continued support for women-led enterprises, terming the Budget growth-oriented, progressive, business-friendly and pragmatic.

## Budget 2026–27 Charts Yuva Shakti–Driven Path to Viksit Bharat 2047: Jayant Chaudhary

**Guwahati:** Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary described the Union Budget 2026–27 as a confident and inclusive roadmap for India's next phase of growth, anchored in the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. He said the Budget places youth, skills, and future-ready sectors at the heart of national progress. Chaudhary credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's balanced approach of ambition with responsibility. He noted that the Budget prioritises productivity, competitiveness, and cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, while ensuring fiscal discipline and strategic investments.

Highlighting sectoral measures, he pointed to a strong push for manufacturing, MSMEs, and services, with investments spanning biopharma, semiconductors, electronics, textiles under SAMARTH 2.0, chemicals, capital goods, and sports manufacturing. Initiatives like a three-pronged MSME framework, a ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund, TReDS-based liquidity, and "Corporate Mitras" are expected to reinforce domestic value chains. On skills, Chaudhary underscored the government's decisive commitment, citing a 62 per cent rise in allocation for the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to ₹9,885.80 crore. He said NSQF-aligned programmes, caregiver training, sports ecosystems, and industry-linked pathways will bridge education, employment, and entrepreneurship. He added that the Budget's integrated focus on agriculture, services, social inclusion, and sports—through initiatives such as AI-backed Bharat Vistaar, SheMarts, Biopharma SHAKTI, ISM 2.0, Khelo India Mission, and SportsEdge Meerut—positions it as a national mission document driving sustainable and inclusive growth.

## DSP Mutual Fund launches Multi-Asset Omni Fund of Funds powered by DSP Netra

**Guwahati:** DSP Mutual Fund has announced the launch of the DSP Multi Asset Omni Fund of Funds, an open-ended fund-of-funds scheme aimed at simplifying investing for individuals who find it difficult to track markets, time asset allocation decisions or manage multiple investments across market cycles. The New Fund Offer (NFO) will open on February 5, 2026, and close on February 19, 2026.

The scheme is powered by DSP Netra, the fund house's in-house market intelligence framework that uses market data, valuations and long-term historical patterns to assess risk and margin of safety across asset classes. Based on these signals, allocations are dynamically adjusted as market conditions evolve. In an environment marked by frequent shifts in market leadership, interest-rate cycles and global uncertainty, the fund seeks to offer a structured approach to diversification without relying on forecasts or reactive decision-making. It will invest across equity-oriented schemes, debt-oriented schemes and commodities-oriented schemes such as gold and silver ETFs, aiming to balance growth potential with risk management. The fund also has the flexibility to invest in funds and ETFs across multiple AMCs, leveraging the stock-picking ability of leading equity fund managers alongside DSP Netra's asset allocation strategy. Rebalancing is carried out within the fund structure, helping reduce potential tax impact from frequent investor-level transactions. Equity exposure can be reduced to as low as 25% during periods of heightened volatility. Overall, allocations are expected to range between 25–75% in equity, 15–50% in debt and 10–50% in gold and silver ETFs, depending on market conditions.

In Guwahati, the demand for multi-asset products has been gaining traction among retail investors seeking stability amid volatile equity markets. Local distributors noted that a professionally managed, diversified fund-of-funds offering could resonate with investors in the city who prefer a single, long-term investment solution without active portfolio monitoring.

## Samantha Ruth Prabhu, Rishabh Pant Named Global Ambassadors as 'Good Game' Debuts in India with ₹1 Crore Prize

**Kohima:** India has welcomed the launch of Good Game, billed as the world's first as-live global gaming reality show, aimed at discovering the country's first Global Gaming Superstar. Actor-entrepreneur Samantha Ruth Prabhu and cricketer Rishabh Pant have been named global brand ambassadors, joined by gaming creator Ujjwal Chaurasia. The show has announced a prize of ₹1 crore, among the highest for a reality show winner in India, alongside the chance to represent the nation internationally.

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

Founder Rai Cockfield said the initiative seeks to bridge entertainment and gaming while opening global opportunities for Indian talent. Samantha Ruth Prabhu noted that the show reflects the evolving ambition and creativity of India's youth. The launch is expected to resonate strongly in markets such as Guwahati, where online gaming, content creation, and digital entertainment have surged in recent years. With a large youth base and rising smartphone penetration, the Northeast is emerging as a key audience hub for gaming-led content. Registrations are open to Indian citizens above 18, with in-person auditions scheduled in Mumbai and Delhi during February and March 2026.

## Union Budget Underscores Agriculture's Role in Viksit Bharat Vision: Godrej Agrovet

**Guwahati:** Reacting to the Union Budget, Sunil Kataria, Managing Director & CEO of Godrej Agrovet Ltd, said the proposals reaffirm agriculture as a cornerstone of India's journey towards Viksit Bharat, with strong emphasis on productivity, resilience, and inclusive growth.

Kataria highlighted the Budget's targeted focus on livestock, fisheries, and allied sectors, noting it marks a clear policy shift towards diversified and income-resilient farm systems. He welcomed loan-linked capital support for veterinary education, hospitals, diagnostics, and breeding infrastructure, stressing that these measures will expand rural capacity and improve access to quality services.

He added that science-led interventions in cattle genetics and breeding could significantly accelerate livestock productivity and enhance farm incomes. Kataria also praised the government's push for technology-driven agriculture, particularly the



launch of a multilingual AI platform to deliver customised, risk-aware advisory services at scale amid evolving climate and market conditions. On fiscal measures, he appreciated the extension of tax deductions to primary cooperatives supplying cattle feed and cotton seed to federal cooperatives and government organisations, saying this would strengthen formal input supply chains and improve farmer realisation.

According to Kataria, the Budget's calibrated approach—integrating productivity, innovation, inclusion, and institutional support—lays a strong foundation for a future-ready agricultural ecosystem and reinforces agriculture's role as a long-term driver of India's economic growth.

## Sunrise Spices launches Til Chicken Masala in Assam, bring traditional flavours to modern kitchens

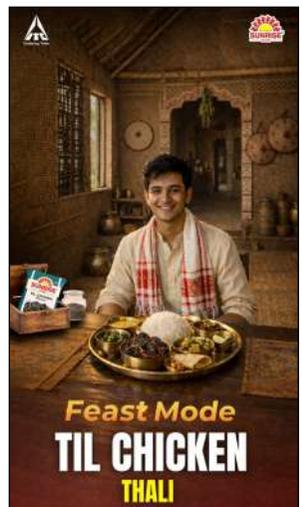
**Guwahati:** ITC Ltd.'s Sunrise Spices has launched Sunrise Til Chicken Masala in Assam, introducing what the company describes as a first-of-its-kind spice blend designed to simplify the preparation of the state's popular festive dish, Til Chicken, while preserving its authentic regional taste.

The new product is part of Sunrise's strategy to develop region-focused spice blends tailored to local culinary traditions. Known for Assam-specific offerings such as Haah-Salkumra (Duck Curry with Ashgourd) masala and other traditional meat blends, the brand said the latest launch reflects its continued emphasis on regional consumer insights and local food heritage.

Til Chicken, a winter favourite in Assamese households, traditionally requires time-intensive processes such as sun-drying, roasting and grinding sesame seeds. The ready-to-use masala, made with pre-roasted black til and a curated blend of spices, aims to deliver the dish's signature nutty flavour, smoky aroma and thick dark gravy while of-

fering convenience for modern kitchens.

Piyush Mishra, Business Head, Sunrise Spices, ITC Ltd., said the product seeks to "honour and preserve rich culinary practices while fitting seamlessly into modern lifestyles." In Guwahati, retailers expect strong demand as the affordable Rs. 20 (18g pack) pricing and the popularity of traditional convenience products continue to drive growth in the city's packaged spice segment. The product is now available across retail outlets in Guwahati.



## This Hazelnut Kofta represents the most luxurious and nutty enhancement to your dining experience.

Toasted hazelnuts, paneer koftas, and smooth yakhni unite in this luxurious vegetarian main dish that embodies both traditional and modern elements. Certain dishes evoke a sense of comfort. Others assert their presence at the table. Chef Ajay Chopra's Hazelnut Kofta accompanied by Parmesan-Hazelnut Yakhni achieves both by merging the slow, fragrant richness of a classic yakhni with the subtle elegance of toasted Turkish hazelnuts and aged Parmesan. The outcome is surprising yet profoundly recognizable: a vege-



tarian kofta that offers a sense of indulgence without being overly rich, featuring a blend of textures, warmth, and mild spices. In this dish, paneer transforms into a soft and tender delicacy, enhanced with khoya and aromatic spices, subsequently coated in crushed hazelnuts to create a crunchy, nutty exterior. The sauce – a smooth mixture of yogurt, caramelized onions,

roasted hazelnuts, and Parmesan – draws inspiration from Kashmiri yakhni customs while introducing a contemporary, nearly continental depth. Hazelnut Kofta with Parmesan-Hazelnut Yakhni By Chef Ajay Chopra for Turkish Hazelnut A. Kofta Stuffing

### Ingredients

Paneer (crumbled)- 200 g  
Ginger (finely chopped)- 80 g  
Green chilli (finely chopped)- 4 g  
Fried hazelnut (chopped)- 2 g  
Fried raisins (chopped)- 1 g  
Salt- 25 g  
Red chilli powder- 15 g  
Jeera powder- 15 g  
Chaat masala- 3 g

## Braised Paprika Chicken



Combine kosher salt, paprika, and 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper. Pat chicken dry and rub the mixture all over. Place a 3-to 4-quart Dutch oven or saucepan over medium heat and add oil. When it smokes, add chicken, skin side down, and cook until well browned, about 3 minutes. Flip and repeat on second side. Move the chicken to a plate and remove all but 1 tablespoon of the drippings. Place it back on the stove over medium heat, add the onions, and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Cook until the onions are golden and softened, which should take approximately 3 minutes. Incorporate potatoes and broth into the mixture, ensuring to scrape the pan to include any browned remnants. Introduce the chicken, bring the contents to a boil, and subsequently lower the heat to medium-low. Cover the pot and allow it to cook until the chicken is thoroughly cooked, which should take approximately 30 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a plate and cover it. Heat the sauce over medium-high heat until it reaches a boil, then allow it to cook until it has slightly reduced, which should take approximately 10 minutes. Sample the sauce and modify the seasoning according to your preference. Incorporate the chicken, ensuring it is thoroughly coated in the sauce, and then serve.

## Prepare a nutritious persimmon dessert in the comfort of your home

Persimmons, referred to in local terms as amarphal or ramphal, are among the most overlooked fruits of winter in India. Their honey-like sweetness and custard-like consistency make them ideal for desserts. Although persimmons can be consumed fresh, a simple method to enhance their flavor is by transforming them into a quick pudding or mousse that demands little effort and no baking. Persimmons are naturally sweet, which means you don't need added sugar. Their soft flesh blends into a creamy consistency, making them perfect for puddings, smoothies, or even ice creams. Rich in fiber, antioxidants, and vitamins A and C, persimmons are not just tasty but also nourishing, ideal

for a guilt-free dessert. No-Bake Persimmon Pudding: Ingredients needed are 2 ripe persimmons (soft and pulpy), ½ cup fresh cream or thick yogurt (for a lighter version), a pinch of cinnamon or cardamom powder (optional), and chopped nuts or seeds for garnish. Method: Scoop out the flesh of ripe persimmons and discard the skin. Blend the persimmon pulp until smooth. Fold in cream or yogurt gently to create a silky texture. Add a pinch of cinnamon or cardamom for warmth. Chill in the refrigerator for 1-2 hours. Serve in small bowls, topped with chopped almonds, walnuts, or sesame seeds. The result is a creamy, fragrant pudding that feels indulgent yet is incredibly easy to prepare. This dessert pairs beautifully with

winter meals. Serve it after a hearty dinner of bajra roti and sarson ka saag, or as a light afternoon indulgence with masala chai. Its natural sweetness makes it a healthier alternative to traditional halwas and laddoos, while still delivering that comforting winter warmth.



## Middle of the Winter Tomato Soup



Middle of the Winter Tomato Soup and how a couple of clever steps can turn ho-hum winter pantry staples into something pretty special. Roasting and slow cooking the vegetables enhances their flavors and textures. The outcome is so delightful that there is no need to elevate it with fresh herbs or enrich it with cream. You may even overlook the fact that we are still a good 5 months away from purchasing fresh tomatoes! This is comfort food and a nutritious recipe, perfect for a chilly January weekend. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Remove whole tomatoes from the can, reserving the juice. Cut each tomato in half and set in a roasted pan or

baking dish, single layer. Add the garlic cloves, drizzle with olive oil and season with black pepper. Roast until garlic is soft and tomatoes are dense and concentrated with brown edges, 35-40 minutes. In the meantime, warm a few tablespoons of olive oil in a large, heavy pot over medium heat. Add the onion and carrots, cooking for approximately 5 minutes. Reduce the heat and keep cooking, stirring occasionally, until the onions become very soft and begin to caramelize, which should take about 30 minutes. Incorporate the tomato paste. Transfer the roasted tomatoes and garlic into the pot and incorporate the reserved tomato juice. Mix in 6 cups of chicken broth and allow it to simmer for approximately 30 minutes to complete the cooking of the carrots and blend all the flavors together. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth (alternately, cool the mixture a bit and blend in batches in a blender or food processor) Add more chicken broth if necessary to get the consistency that you like. Season with salt and pepper as needed and serve with crispy bread crumbs and grated Parmesan.

## Winter Comforts: India's Hearty Dishes for the Chilly Season

From rotis enriched with ghee to hot bowls of dal, this season introduces a culinary tradition aimed at providing comfort, boosting energy, and safeguarding against the cold. As the mercury falls, kitchens throughout India awaken with scents that are distinctly associated with winter. In contrast to the lighter dishes of summer, winter meals are substantial, indulgent, and frequently grounded in the principles of Ayurveda, which emphasize the importance of maintaining the body's internal warmth. The captivating aspect of Indian winter cuisine lies in its variety; each region boasts its own unique "warmers," made from locally sourced grains, spices, and seasonal ingredients. Millets and Rotis: One of the most iconic winter staples is bajra roti, often paired with a dollop of white butter or ghee. Bajra (pearl millet) is considered a warming grain in Ayurveda, helping maintain body temperature and providing sustained energy. In the hills of Uttarakhand and Himachal, mandua roti (made from finger millet) is equally popular, while in Maharashtra, bajra bhakri with loni (homemade butter) is a rustic winter favourite. Spices and Seeds: Indian households rely on warming spices to fight the chill. Ajwain (carom seeds), ginger, and black pepper are staples in winter cooking, aiding digestion and circulation. Sesame seeds, used in til ladoos or til chikkis, are another winter essential, believed to generate internal heat. These foods are not just tasty but deeply functional, reflecting India's age-old food wisdom. Hearty Curries and Dals: Winter is the season for richer dals and

curries. Moong dal, cooked with ghee and spices, is considered warming and easy to digest. In Punjab, sarson ka saag with makki ki roti dominates the season, while in Bengal, mustard-based fish curries provide warmth and flavour. Across India, pulses and legumes are cooked with generous amounts of ghee, butter, or cream, making them both nourishing and comforting. Seasonal Greens: Winter also brings a bounty of leafy vegetables. Chulai (amaranth), spinach, and fenugreek (methi) are widely consumed, often turned into parathas, curries, or stir-fries. These greens are not only warming but also boost immunity, making them essential in combating seasonal lethargy and colds. Dairy Delights: Milk, ghee, and butter play starring roles in winter diets. From halwas to rotis, dairy enriches dishes with healthy fats that help the body retain warmth. In Punjab and Haryana, a glass of hot milk with turmeric or almonds is a nightly ritual, while in Gujarat, ghee is generously poured over khichdi or rotis. Sweets That Strengthen: Winter is incomplete without indulgent sweets that double up as energy boosters. Gajar ka halwa, slow-cooked with milk, ghee, and nuts, is perhaps the most celebrated winter dessert across North India. Equally beloved are gond ke ladoo, made with edible gum, jaggery, and dry fruits, traditionally given to new mothers for strength and recovery. In Gujarat and Rajasthan, dry fruit chikki made with peanuts or mixed nuts and jaggery is a crunchy treat that keeps the body warm.



## Prolonged periods of sitting can negatively impact your brain, spine, and heart

Contemporary existence has subtly crafted a way of living that our bodies were not inherently built to accommodate. With sedentary occupations, continuous meetings, binge-watching sessions, and late-night scrolling, time elapses with minimal physical activity. This seemingly innocuous inactivity, however, could be exerting unnoticed pressure on the brain, heart, and spine. Extended periods of sitting are no longer merely associated with stiffness or fatigue. Medical professionals caution that it can trigger a series of reac-

Adding to this, Dr Vinit Banga, Director-Neurology, Fortis Hospital, Faridabad, cautions, "Prolonged sitting causes low blood flow, particularly in the legs, increasing the risk of blood clots such as deep vein thrombosis." Brain Health Under Pressure While most people associate inactivity with weight gain or back pain, the brain may be among the first organs to suffer. According to Dr Mansukhani, extended sitting reduces oxygen and nutrient supply to the brain. Over time, this sluggish circulation can impair cognitive function and mood

much for the lower back," explains Dr Mansukhani. Poor posture flattens the spine's natural curve, increasing pressure on discs and surrounding muscles. The result: stiffness, neck pain, recurring headaches and, in severe cases, disc damage. Over time, weak back muscles offer less support, making injuries more likely. Add the forward tilt of screens, and shoulders and neck joints begin to strain, reducing mobility and triggering chronic discomfort. Circulation And Clot Risks You Can't Ignore Perhaps the most serious and least discussed consequence of prolonged sitting lies in the legs. "When muscles stay inactive, they fail to push blood efficiently back to the heart," says Dr Banga. Blood begins to pool in the veins, creating the perfect environment for clots to form. This can lead to deep vein thrombosis (DVT) – a potentially life-threatening condition if a clot travels to the lungs and causes a pulmonary embolism. Long flights, desk jobs and extended screen time all elevate this risk, particularly for people who rarely take movement breaks. Small Habits, Big Protection The good news: prevention doesn't require dramatic changes – just consistency. Both experts recommend simple interventions. Standing every 30–60 minutes, stretching, short walks between tasks and ergonomic desks can dramatically improve blood flow and posture. Regular exercise strengthens muscles, supports circulation and helps stabilise blood pressure.

regulation. A sedentary routine has been linked to higher risks of anxiety, low motivation and even depression. Long screen exposure compounds the problem. "Irregular sleeping patterns caused by excessive screen time further impact brain health," he notes, disrupting the body's natural repair cycles. In short, less movement doesn't just slow the body, it also slows the mind. The Spine Takes The Hit Hours hunched over a laptop may feel routine, but your back pays the price. "Sitting for long periods can be too

tions that impact circulation, mental well-being, blood pressure, and musculoskeletal strength. Furthermore, the repercussions frequently manifest gradually, making them simple to overlook until the discomfort becomes chronic. "Sitting for long hours has become a regular practice today because of office work, screen time and a sedentary lifestyle. But the risks are undervalued and can be very dangerous for blood pressure and the brain," says Dr Bhupesh Kumar Mansukhani, Director-Neurology, Neuromet Wellness and Diagnostics, Gurgaon.



## Common Intimate Hygiene Errors That May Adversely Affect Your Vaginal Health



Vaginal health is an important aspect of overall health and well-being that is frequently overlooked in discussions. It is crucial to have clear, science-based information to comprehend how daily habits, hygiene practices, and medical care influence intimate health throughout various stages of life. In an interview with Moneycontrol, Dr. Deepali Lodha, a gynaecologist at AIMS Hospital in Dombivli (Mumbai), discusses 10 essential principles that can assist women in making informed choices regarding vaginal care and long-term reproductive health. The Body Has Its Own Natural Cleaning System Many women use soaps and liquid washes to clean the vagina, but these are unnecessary. The vagina is a self-cleaning organ and does not require any internal cleansing products. Cleaning the outer area, known as the vulva, with lukewarm water is sufficient. Using chemical-based products can disturb the natural pH balance of the vagina, increasing the risk of infections. Choose Cotton Underwear Synthetic fabrics like nylon do not allow proper air circulation. This traps moisture and heat, creating an ideal environment for bacteria and yeast to grow. Wearing cotton underwear allows better airflow, keeps the area dry, and significantly reduces the risk of infections. For everyday use, cotton underwear is always the healthier choice. Don't Panic About Vaginal Discharge White vaginal discharge is completely normal and is a sign of a healthy body. It helps keep the vaginal area clean and protected. However, if the discharge turns yellow or green, has a foul

smell, or is accompanied by itching or pain, it is important to consult a doctor immediately. These could be signs of an infection that needs medical attention. Always Clean From Front to Back After using the toilet, it is very important to clean from front (vagina) to back (towards the anus). Cleaning in the opposite direction can transfer bacteria from the anal area to the vagina, significantly increasing the risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs). This may seem like a small habit, but it plays a major role in preventing infections. Annual Gynaecological Check-Ups Are a Must Just like regular health check-ups, an annual gynaecological examination is essential. Tests such as pelvic exams and Pap smears help detect cervical cancer, infections, or other health issues at an early stage. Identifying problems early is always better than dealing with complications later. Avoid Scented Products Scented pads, sprays, and perfumed vaginal washes available in the market should be avoided. The chemicals used in these products can irritate sensitive skin and disrupt the natural pH balance. This can lead to unnecessary infections and discomfort. Unscented, simple hygiene products are always safer and healthier. Track Your Menstrual Cycle Keeping track of your menstrual cycle—when it starts, how long it lasts, and how heavy the flow is—is extremely important. This helps you quickly notice missed periods, excessive bleeding, or unexpected spotting. Such information is also very useful for doctors when assessing your overall reproductive health.

## The Impact of Inadequate Nutrition on Bone Health During Weight Loss

Weight reduction is frequently regarded as a sign of discipline and self-restraint. However, beneath the diminishing waistlines, a more subtle and significantly serious issue may be developing – bone loss. Orthopaedic experts caution that swift weight loss without sufficient nutrition can compromise bone strength long before any symptoms manifest. In contrast to muscle fatigue or diminished energy, the deterioration of bones is predominantly undetectable until a fracture, joint discomfort, or early arthritis demands attention. In the pursuit of rapid weight loss, bone health is often neglected. According to orthopaedic experts across India, the consequences of nutrition-deficient weight loss are becoming increasingly common, particularly among young adults and women. Dr. Lalit Modi, Additional Director – Orthopaedics & Joint Replacement at CK Birla Hospitals, Jaipur, explains, "Many people focus on losing weight fast, but few realise the hidden cost – our bones. Rapid weight loss without

proper nutrition can weaken bones long before any pain or fracture occurs." He stresses that nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, and protein are essential for maintaining bone density, and their absence leads to silent bone loss. Dr. Rakesh Rajput, Director & HOD – Orthopaedic at CMRI Kolkata, highlights an alarming trend among teenagers and young adults. "We see a lot of teenagers and young adults who are hell-bent on reducing weight, trying to look almost like a model," he says, noting that extreme dieting and aggressive intermittent fasting are increasingly driving nutritional deficiencies. The Real Risk Of Extreme Dieting And Fasting Crash diets, meal skipping, and prolonged fasting may deliver quick results on the scale, but they come at a cost. Dr. Rajput explains, "While occasional intermittent fasting may not be harmful, but if you keep doing it regularly and neglect the dietary components, there are major side effects." These include fatigue, mood changes, headaches, and poor concen-

tration – but the most serious consequence is nutritional deficiency. "Vitamin D and minerals are going to be less. This will impact your bone health and your bones are going to be very weak and fragile," he says. Many patients, he adds, present with stress fractures and spontaneous fractures despite being young. Why Women Face A Higher Bone Health Risk Women are particularly vulnerable due to hormonal fluctuations, lower body fat, and restrictive dieting patterns. Dr. E.S. Radhe Shyam, Senior Orthopaedic Surgeon at CARE Hospitals, Hyderabad, notes, "Bones suffer quietly long before fractures make the damage visible." When essential nutrients are missing, bones become brittle, often revealing damage only after a minor fall. Dr. Modi echoes this concern, pointing out that women are especially at risk because hormonal changes, low body fat, and restrictive diets can speed up bone loss. Rapid weight loss without medical guidance can significant-



ly raise the risk of osteoporosis later in life. Early Arthritis and Long-Term Joint Damage Orthopaedic specialists are also seeing younger patients with joint degeneration and early arthritis. Dr. Rajput explains that weakened bones and cartilage degeneration are leading some patients toward surgical interventions at an unusually young age. "We now have younger people coming to us with arthritis, particularly problems with knee joints and hip joints," he says, adding that extreme dieting and steroid misuse worsen the problem.

## Dima Hasao Celebrates District Foundation Day with Grandeur in Haflong



**Haflong, Feb 02:** Dima Hasao district celebrated its District Foundation Day with great enthusiasm and splendour at the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) Complex here today. The programme was graced by the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of NCHAC, Debolal Gorlosa, as the Chief Guest, in the presence of several distinguished dignitaries. Among those present were NCHAC Chairman Mohet Hojai, Executive Members of the Council, senior bureaucrats, and officials from various departments. The celebration commenced in the morning with a colourful procession that

started from the Council premises, proceeded towards Haflong Lake, and culminated back at the NCHAC Complex. The Assam Police Battalion's pipe band emerged as a special highlight of the rally, adding ceremonial pride to the occasion. Addressing the gathering, District Commissioner Munindra Nath Ngatey, ACS, spoke at length about the historical formation of districts in this region of India. He elaborated on the early administrative challenges and the gradual evolution of Dima Hasao as a district, providing valuable insight into its administrative journey. In his address, CEM Debolal Gorlosa stated that Dima Hasao stands as an

example of balanced growth, with the Council focusing on sustainable development while preserving the district's rich cultural roots. He reaffirmed his government's continuous efforts to create greater opportunities for youth through expanded avenues in employment, education, and skill development. Conveying his greetings on the occasion, NCHAC Chairman Mohet Hojai also briefly reflected on the district's formation and highlighted the developmental works undertaken over the years. The celebration beautifully showcased the rich cultural heritage of Dima Hasao through vibrant displays of traditional attire and performances. Students from various educational institutions, along with traditional performers representing different communities, added colour and fervour to the event. A captivating Dimasa dance performance by local artists was a major attraction of the programme. The event was also attended by NCHAC Executive Members Donpainon Thaosen and Niranjana Hojai; Deputy Chairman of the District Planning Board and MAC Dhriti Thaosen; Ajoy Chakraborty; Chairperson of Haflong Town Committee Ripa Hojai; and Senior Superintendent of Police, Dima Hasao, Ripunjoy Kakati, APS, besides officials from the Council, District Commissioner's Office, SP Office, and various line departments.

## Central Bushu Festival Celebrated with Grandeur at Maibang, Showcasing Rich Dimasa Heritage



\* Jidab Bushu is the simplest form of celebration.

\* Surem Bushu lasts for three days and is the most commonly observed. \* Hangsaomanouba Bushu, celebrated occasionally, lasts for seven days and involves extensive manpower and resources. The expenses of the festival are traditionally borne collectively by the villagers. A unique custom involves community members assisting each other in cultivation, collecting rice or paddy to support the Bushu celebrations. In the case of Hangsaomanouba, a separate plot of land is cultivated specifically to meet the festival expenses. The festival begins with 'Busataiba', the first day, when meat is distributed to every household. On the second day, known as 'Busuma', young boys along with elders sing 'Bagaoba' to welcome guests. The village

headman, or 'Kunang', offers devotional prayers seeking blessings from Lord Shiva for joy and prosperity. Traditional strength sports, indigenous games, and cultural performances are organised throughout the celebration. Men, women, and youth dressed in colourful traditional attire perform energetic dances, beating drums known as 'Karam' and playing bamboo flutes called 'Murri'. The music and singing continue throughout the festival. Guests are treated with traditional delicacies including rice beer, pork and other local foods. The Central Bushu, organised by the Central Bushu Celebration Committee, stands as a grand collective celebration where people from across Dima Hasao come together to honour and preserve their most cherished cultural festival.

## Major Arms Haul Near Loktak

**Imphal, Feb 06:** A joint search operation in the vulnerable areas of Loktak Lake in Manipur's Bishnupur district led to the recovery of a substantial cache of weapons, including arms, explosives, various types of ammunition, and radio sets, disrupting militant and anti-social activities on Thursday morning. Officials reported on Friday that the joint team, comprising the Indian Army, Assam Rifles, and Manipur Police, conducted operations east of Phubala Village near Loktak Lake under the Moirang police station, Bishnupur district.

The operations, which lasted around three hours, concluded with the dismantling of an insurgent's temporary camp and the recovery of several weapons. The recovered items included a 9 mm CMG Carbine along with a magazine, a 9 mm pistol along with a magazine, a .32 mm pistol along with a magazine, five rifle grenades, two Lathod bombs, five 12-bore cartridges, ten 9 mm live rounds, a T-Eagle sniper scope, and a radio set. The reports added that the seized items were later transferred to the Moirang police station for further legal action.

## Meghalaya HC orders action against illegal mining after East Jaintia Hills blast



**Guwahati, Feb 06:** The Meghalaya High Court on Thursday (February 5) directed immediate arrests in connection with an explosion at an alleged illegal coal mine in East Jaintia Hills district that claimed at least 18 lives. A division bench comprising HS Thangkhiew and W Diengdoh took suo motu cognisance of media reports on the blast in the Thangsku area. The court noted that illegal coal mining continued despite a similar

fatal incident reported on January 14 this year. The blast took place at Mynsyngat in the Thangsku area, within the jurisdiction of the Umpleng Police Outpost. At the time of the blast, several labourers, both local residents and migrant workers from neighbouring states, were reportedly working inside narrow underground shafts. The bench directed the East Jaintia Hills deputy commissioner (DC) and superintendent of police

to identify and arrest those responsible for the mining operations and to seize materials linked to the alleged illegal activity. Authorities were also directed to provide necessary assistance and medical support to those injured, wherever possible.

The court asked the district superintendent of police and deputy commissioner to appear in person at 10.30 am on February 9 with a detailed report on the steps taken and an explanation regarding the continuation of illegal mining. It stated that further directions would be issued if there was no compliance.

The registry was directed to forward the order to district officials by email and hard copy on the same day and to provide a copy to the Advocate General. The matter is scheduled for further hearing on February 9.

## Minister Hazarika Launches Welfare and Infrastructure Boost in Maibang

Later in the day, Minister Hazarika inaugurated a Bamboo Industrial Park at Manderdisa, constructed at a cost of ₹4 crore under the DHATC package. The project aims to promote bamboo-based industries, support local entrepreneurs, and generate sustainable employment opportunities for the youth of the region.

## Arunachal CM Pema Khandu Inaugurates Key Infrastructure Projects In Lower Siang District

**Arunachal Pradesh, Feb 06:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday visited Siji, marking a significant milestone as Lower Siang district becomes fully functional. During his visit, the CM inspected ongoing infrastructure development and laid the foundation for a series of key projects aimed at improving administration, connectivity, and public services in the region.

The projects announced include the construction of a Mini Secretariat at Siji, an RCC bridge over the Siji Riv-

er, road connectivity from Likabali Highway to the district headquarters, a Government Secondary School at Dipa, accommodation facilities for government officers and staff, a Rest House and Fire Station, and Type-V quarters at the Siji Police Station in Pale.

"These initiatives will serve as the backbone of a new administrative and service delivery ecosystem for Lower Siang," Pema Khandu said, highlighting the government's focus on regional development and infrastructure enhancement.



# Royal Challengers Bengaluru win toss, elect to bowl first in WPL final versus Delhi Capitals

Vadodara, Feb 05: Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) has won the toss and decided to field against the Delhi Capitals (DC) in the final of the Women's Premier League (WPL) being held at the BCA Stadium. The Smriti Mandhana-led side is the defending champions while the Delhi-based franchise has reached its fourth consecutive final in WPL history. Smriti Mandhana said they would field the same XI. "We'd like to field first today. That's been the trend in the tournament. We are playing with the same XI. (On the break) It's been brilliant. We had a good time off. The last two-three days, we came back together and practised together. We've all discussed the challenge. Nothing changes for us today. The excitement level is high."



Delhi Capitals captain Jemimah Rodrigues said that losing the toss in a game is better for a side. "It's better to lose the toss in such big games. We are going with the same team. We've kept it very simple. We kept our plans simple. We played the Eliminator here, so

We know what it's going to be like." History beckons both Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), the 2024 champions and Delhi Capitals (DC), lead by Indian stars Smriti Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues as they collide in the Women's Premier League (WPL) final

at Vadodara on Thursday. If DC, making their fourth final appearance wins the title, it would be their first WPL and franchise cricket title and skipper Jemimah will continue her golden run which started from semifinals of 2025 Women's WC. However, a win for RCB would give them their first-ever double of holding the IPL and WPL titles simultaneously and their third franchise cricket title.

As per CricViz, a cricket data and statistics provider, DC enjoys the best fielding efficiency this season with 83 per cent, including 41 successful catches and just eight dropped catches matches this season while chasing a target five sixes against spin Since the tournament's inception, it is the winner of the eliminator Has won the trophy.



## U-19 World Cup: India opt to bat against England in final

### India Stick to Winning XI; England Swap French for Green

Harare, Feb 06: India skipper Ayush Mhatre won the toss and elected to bat against England in the final of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Friday. India are playing an unchanged side, while England replaced Alex French with Alex Green.

Teams: India: Aaron George, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Ayush Mhatre (capt), Vihaan Malhotra, Abhigyan Kundu (wk), Vedant Trivedi, RS Ambrish, Kanishk Chouhan, Khilan Patel, Henil Patel, Deepesh Devendran.

England: Ben Dawkins, Joseph Moores, Ben Mayes, Thomas Rew (capt, wk), Caleb Falconer, Ralphie ALbert, Farhan Ahmed, Sebastian Morgan, James Minto, Manny Lumsden, Alex Green.

## BATC: India Women Enter Quarters Despite 2-3 Loss to Thailand

Qingdao, Feb 06: Young Tanvi Sharma produced a stunning win, but defending champions India suffered a narrow 2-3 loss to Thailand in their second Group Y match of the Badminton Asia Team Championships here on Thursday. However, despite the defeat, India qualified for the quarterfinals. India, who had beaten Myanmar 5-0 in their opening tie on Wednesday, finished second in Group Y behind Thailand after the five-match rubber. World No. 42 Tanvi, a member of India's historic gold medal-winning team at the 2024 edition, stunned world No. 16 Busanan Ongbamrungphan 21-14, 17-21, 21-18 in a gripping contest lasting one hour and three minutes to give India a superb start.



The doubles pair of Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly then battled past world No. 65 Tidapron Kleebyeesun and Nattamon Laisuan 21-14, 20-22, 21-11 to hand India a 2-0 lead at the Qingdao Conson Gymnasium. However, Rakshitha Ramraj failed to get past 19-year-old Pitchamon Opatniputh -- the 2023 World Junior champion and 2026 Indonesia Masters runner-up -- going down 19-21, 17-21 as Thailand pulled one back to trail 1-2. In the second doubles, Tanisha Crasto and Shruti Mishra fought gallantly but

went down 21-19, 14-21, 15-21 to Hathaithip Mijad and Napapakorn Tungkasatan, ranked 57th in the world, allowing Thailand to level the tie and force a deciding fifth match. Entrusted with the responsibility of taking India home, Malvika Bansod faced world No. 69 Pornpicha Choeikeewong in the final singles but could not deliver, losing 18-21, 14-21 in a 40-minute clash. Tanvi vs Busanan: Tanvi was in command from the outset, surging to a 9-2 lead before heading into the mid-game interval at 11-4. She controlled the rallies throughout and never allowed Busanan to get close, comfortably taking the opening game. In the second game, Tanvi led 5-2 and later 11-7, but Busanan mounted a strong comeback, edging ahead at 16-15 and reeling off four points from 17-17 to force a decider.

Regaining her bearings in the third game, Tanvi jumped to an 11-6 lead at the interval. Busanan continued to fight and narrowed the gap to 16-18, but the Indian showed composure to shut the door and seal the match without much ado.

## Basque Duo Reach Copa Semis

Madrid, Feb 05: Iñaki Williams scored six minutes into stoppage time as Athletic Bilbao won 2-1 at Valencia to reach the semifinals of the Copa del Rey on Wednesday, and its Basque Country rival Real Sociedad made it to the last-four by winning 3-2 at Alaves. Athletic will be playing in its sixth Copa semifinal in seven seasons. It won the title in 2024 and was runner-up to Barcelona in 2020-21 and to Sociedad in 2019-20. Williams scored the winning goal with a left-footed strike from the middle of the area after a cross by his younger brother Nico Williams following a breakaway. Athletic, which was winless in three matches across all competitions, had taken the lead in the 26th after an own-goal by Umar Sadiq, who also equalized for the hosts in the 35th. Athletic's Mikel Jauregizar missed a 75th-minute penalty.

Before the match, Spanish media reported that fans threw several objects at the bus carrying Athletic's players. The victory comes a few days after a mural with drawings of Iñaki and Nico Williams was vandalized in Bilbao, where some fans have criticized them.



## Cristiano Ronaldo to end strike, return for Saudi Pro League clash vs Al-Ittihad

Riyadh, Feb 05: Portugal legend and Al-Nassr captain Cristiano Ronaldo is reportedly set to end his Saudi Pro League strike and face Al-Ittihad in a high-voltage clash on Friday, according to Goal.com. The report came after the five-time Ballon d'Or winner sat out a derby with Al-Riyadh after supposedly growing frustrated at how transfer funds are being distributed across teams in the Middle East. Earlier, ESPN reported that Ronaldo would boycott his second consecutive Saudi Pro League match on Friday amid frustration with the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) over its management and investment in the club. The Al-Nassr star had not featured in the club's 1-0 win over Al Riyadh on Monday, in protest of PIF's alleged lack of investment in Al Nassr and to give their arch-rivals, Al Hilal, an advantage and greater effort. Ronaldo tried to block the transfer of French football icon Karim Benzema from Al Ittihad to Al Hilal on Monday, believing the move was unfair and that PIF wanted to pave the way for an Al Hilal title win, sources told ESPN. Ronaldo trained with his team this week and posted pictures on social media on Wednesday wearing Al Nassr colours. But on the club's official X, there were only pictures of coach Jorge Jesus and other teammates training, not of Cristiano.

Al Nassr, which sits at second place below Al Hilal, trailing by one point with 46 points, faces Al Ittihad, the sixth-placed side, on Friday. In recent months, the sporting director of Al Nassr, Simao Coutinho and the CEO Jose Semedo were suspended from their posts by PIF. This move triggered Cristiano's anger and hampered the arrival of top players for the team, and there was also a cut in the club's expenses. But as sources told ESPN, Al Hilal, on the other hand, got a massive financial booster from Saudi prince Al-waleed Bin Talal Al Saud, a businessman who is also one of the club's major benefactors. Sources Have also Told ESPN that all of Al Hilal's sign-

ings in this window, including Benzema, were funded by Waleed, who is a part of the group with 25 per cent ownership of the club, with the rest owned by PIF.

According to sources, Cristiano is frustrated with the situation in Saudi Arabia and has yet to win a major title with the club. He has offers from clubs across Europe and the USA, but he does not want to accept them to avoid any effect on his FIFA World Cup prep. As per sources, with the Saudi Pro League not keen to lose one of their biggest superstars, Al Nassr and PIF have promised Cristiano big investments coming in the summer, with his Portugal teammate and Manchester United star Bruno Fernandes as one of these. Football icon Cristiano Ronaldo is set to boycott his second-straight Saudi Pro League match amid frustrations with the Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund (PIF) regarding the management and investment in the club, sources told ESPN. The Al-Nassr star had not featured in the club's 1-0 win over Al Riyadh on Monday, in protest of PIF's alleged lack of investment in Al Nassr and to give their arch-rivals, Al Hilal, an advantage and greater effort but he does not want to accept them to avoid any effect on his FIFA World Cup prep.

