

₹9,000 Directly Transferred to Orunodoi Beneficiaries in Dima Hasao District

Haflong, Mar 10: Along with other districts of Assam, beneficiaries in Dima Hasao district have received ₹9,000 directly in their bank accounts under the Orunodoi Scheme 3.0 initiative. To mark the occasion, programmes were organised across 28 constituencies under the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council in the

district. A central event highlighting the Orunodoi 3.0 scheme was also held at Lalfield in Haflong. The programme was attended by Assam's Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Nandita Gorlosa as the chief guest.

Among others present were Executive Member of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council Danpainan Thaosen and Deputy Commissioner of Dima Hasao Munindra Nath Ngate. During the programme, ₹9,000 was directly transferred to the bank accounts of benefi-

ciaries. Addressing the gathering, Minister Nandita Gorlosa stated that events related to Orunodoi 3.0 were organised across 28 constituencies under the council. She added that a total of 29,832 beneficiaries in Dima Hasao district have benefited from the scheme. The minister further said that nearly 40 lakh beneficiaries across

Assam are currently covered under the Orunodoi scheme. She also noted that specially-abled men are among those included in the list of beneficiaries. In Haflong alone, around 3,500 benefi-

ciaries received ₹9,000 each through direct bank transfer under the Orunodoi 3.0 scheme. The programme highlighted the government's continued efforts to provide financial assistance and social support to eligible families across the state.



NCHAC Presents Interim Budget for FY 2026-27; Full Budget to Follow After Assembly Elections

Haflong, Mar 13: The North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) on Thursday held its Interim Budget Session for the financial year 2026-27 at the NCHAC Session Hall in Haflong. The interim budget was presented by Donpainon Thaosen, Executive Member in-charge of Finance. In his budget speech, Thaosen emphasized the need for the interim arrangement to meet essential salary expenditures under the Council's Normal Sector. According to the proposal, the interim provision will cover a three-month period starting from April 1, 2026, ensuring that immediate financial obligations of the council are met at the beginning of the new financial year. Addressing the house, Thaosen stated that while the



interim budget ensures continuity in administrative functioning, a Full Budget for the 2026-27 financial year will be presented in the upcoming council budget session. The session was convened by Mohet Hojai, Chairman of the Thirteenth N.C. Hills Autonomous Council. He informed the house that detailed dis-

cussions and the presentation of the full budget will take place after the forthcoming Assembly elections. Members of the Autonomous Council (MACs) actively participated in the session, reflecting the council's commitment to maintaining financial stability and administrative continuity during the election period.

Kuki Inpi Assam Demands Welfare and Development Council Ahead of State Elections



Haflong, Mar 10: The Kuki Inpi Assam (KIA), the apex body representing the Kuki community in the state, has called on the Assam government to announce the creation of a Kuki Welfare and Development Council (KWDC) before the upcoming state elections. The organisation described the council as the minimum acceptable arrangement to address the community's long-standing political aspirations. KIA President H. Haolai made the announcement while reading out an official statement during a press conference held on Tuesday at the Agriculture Guest House in Haflong. The event was attended by several senior office bearers, including Vice-President Dimpu Thangew, General Secretary L.K. Hengna, Spokesperson Nem Chongloi, Kuki Women Association (KWA) President James Dounge, and the President of the Kuki Students' Organisation (KSO) Dima Hasao. In its statement, the KIA emphasised that the Kuki community's demand for a dedicated political platform has remained unresolved for decades. The organisation recalled that a proposal for a Kuki Tribes Regional Council had once been acknowledged in principle during the tenure of former Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta. However, the proposal did not materialise due to various administrative and political challenges. The KIA also highlighted the historical role played by the Kuki community in the formation and early development of hill districts such as Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong. According to the organisation, several Kuki leaders had held key positions during the formative years of the former North Cachar Hills Autonomous District Council, contributing significantly to the governance and development of the region.

Historic Boost to Power and Development: 120 MW Lower Kopili Hydro Electric Project Inaugurated in Dima Hasao

Haflong/Umrangso, Mar 13: In a historic and transformative moment for the people of Dima Hasao district, the 120 MW Lower Kopili Hydro Electric Project was virtually inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday. The ceremony took place in the august presence of Lakshman Acharya, Governor of Assam, and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, marking a significant milestone in the region's journey towards energy security and economic development. The inauguration ceremony at the project site in Longku near Umrangso was attended by Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council, Debolal Gorlosa, along with Executive Members, Members of Autonomous Council (MACs), senior officials, and other dignitaries. The event was celebrated as a proud moment for the hill district, symbolizing progress, sustainable development, and enhanced infrastructure.

Speaking on the occasion, CEM Debolal Gorlosa described the commissioning of the Lower Kopili Hydro Electric Project as a landmark achievement that will significantly strengthen power generation capacity in the region. He emphasized that the project will not only contribute to the energy needs of Assam but will also accelerate regional development, create employment opportunities, and improve the socio-economic prospects of the people of Dima Hasao. The 120 MW hydroelectric project is expected to play a vital role in harnessing the hydropower potential of the Kopili river basin while supporting the state's growing electricity demand. Local residents and stakeholders view the project as a major step toward modernization and sustainable growth in the hill district. Meanwhile, CEM Debolal Gorlosa also expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sar-



ma for their support in bringing the project to fruition. He recalled that the foundation stone for the Lower Kopili Hydro Electric Project was laid on October 7, 2021, a visionary initiative that ultimately paved the way for the successful completion and inauguration of the project. The people of Dima Hasao have welcomed the commissioning of the project with great optimism and hope that it will open new avenues of development, strengthen infrastructure, and usher in a new era of prosperity for the district and the wider region.

Administrative Reshuffle in Dima Hasao: Gayatri Devidas Hyalinge Appointed New District Commissioner

Haflong, Mar 13: In a significant administrative reshuffle affecting the hill district of Dima Hasao, the Government of Assam has transferred the current District Commissioner and appointed a new officer to lead the district administration. According to an official notification issued on March 13, 2026, by order of the Governor, Munindra Nath Ngatey, ACS (DR1997), who has been serving as the District Commissioner of



Dima Hasao, has been transferred in the interest of public service. He has been posted as Additional Secretary

to the Government of Assam in the Health & Family Welfare Department. Meanwhile, Gayatri Devidas Hyalinge, IAS (RR2019), who was serving as Joint Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Finance Department, has been appointed as the new District Commissioner of Dima Hasao.

The transfer and posting have been made in the interest of public service and will take effect as per the official order issued by the Governor.

LPG rationing starts, kerosene back in mix

Wait times hit 45 days for rural areas, 25 for cities

New Delhi, Mar 13: After denying LPG shortage over the past few days, the government on Thursday acknowledged the pressure on supplies and introduced demand-management measures for both domestic and commercial consumers. The waiting period for booking a refill has been raised to 45 days in rural and remote areas and to 25 days in urban areas. Earlier, the minimum booking interval across the country was 21 days.

In another key decision, the government said OMCs would allocate 20% of the average monthly commercial LPG requirement starting Thursday. The government had earlier directed oil companies to prioritise supplies to domestic LPG consumers, prompting protests from restaurants and other busi-



nesses. Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said commercial LPG is being regulated to prevent hoarding and black marketing. On natural gas availability, Puri said large LNG cargoes are arriving daily through alternative supply routes, adding that India has sufficient arrangements to maintain supply even if the conflict continues for a prolonged period.

The government has also

activated alternative fuel options to ease pressure on LPG and natural gas supplies. Kerosene is being made available through retail outlets and the public distribution system, while fuel oil is being supplied to industrial and commercial consumers. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has advised State Pollution Control Boards to permit the temporary use of such fuels during the crisis period.

Kashmir Clampdown: Protests Erupt in Shia-Majority Pockets

Srinagar, Mar 13: Protests broke out on Friday in some Shia-dominated areas of Kashmir, including Magam and Budgam, against the US-Israel strikes on Iran, officials said. Apprehending the protests on the last Friday of Ramzan, restrictions were imposed this morning in Srinagar and other parts of the valley, especially the Shia-dominated areas. The restrictions on the assembly of people were imposed in the morning as a precautionary measure to maintain law and order in view of the likelihood of protests, the officials said. The protesters shouted slogans against the US and Israel aggression in Iran, and in support of Palestine, they said.

However, the officials added that the protests remained peaceful so far. They situation is being monitored closely, they said. Juma-tul-Vida (last Friday of Ramzan) is also being observed as Youm-ul-Quds to express solidarity with Palestine and there are apprehensions of anti-Israel protests after the congregational prayers, they said.

The authorities also shut the historic Jamia Masjid in Nowhatta locality of the city here. "On the last Friday of holy Ramzan, when tens



of thousands gather from towns and villages for prayers and supplication at the historic Jama Masjid Srinagar, its gates have once again been locked from all sides," Kashmir's chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said in a post on X. He said it was the seventh consecutive year, "the rulers have denied permission to Muslims to pray here". "As Israel has forcibly shut the gates of Masjid al-Aqsa during Ramzan, similar painful reality is witnessed here. Our hearts bleed. Shame on those who lock the houses of Allah against the faithful," the Mirwaiz added.

Gujarat CM: 5,676 PwDs Get New Mobility Aids

Gandhinagar, Mar 13: Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Friday distributed motorised tricycles and joystick wheelchairs worth Rs 36.7 crore to 5,676 persons with disabilities across the state, aiming to improve mobility and reduce physical strain involved in daily travel. At a programme in Gandhinagar, the chief minister symbolically handed over the assistive devices to around 40 beneficiaries, while the remaining beneficiaries from 34 districts will receive them under the same initiative. The distribution includes motorised tricycles for 4,000 persons with disabilities and joystick-operated wheelchairs for 1,676 beneficiaries. The initiative has been implemented by the state's Social Justice and Empowerment Department as part of the assistive device support programme for persons with disabilities. In the 2025-26 state budget, Rs 60 crore was allocated for the scheme. Interacting with beneficiaries at the event, CM Patel said the provision of motorised tricycles and joystick wheelchairs would help persons with disabilities carry out daily activities with greater independence and move more easily from one place to another.

"The devices would reduce the physical effort previously required to operate hand-driven mobility equip-

ment," he said. Before the introduction of motorised tricycles and joystick-operated wheelchairs, beneficiaries under the 'Divyang Assistive Device Assistance' scheme were provided hand-operated tricycles and standard wheelchairs. Officials said these required greater physical exertion and often posed difficulties for long-distance travel. The chief minister also announced changes in financial assistance under the joystick wheelchair scheme. To ensure ease of mobility for beneficiaries with locomotor disability, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and multiple disabilities, and to enable them to carry the wheelchair conveniently during travel, the assistance amount for folding joystick wheelchairs has been increased to Rs 1.10 lakh instead of simple joystick wheelchairs in the current year budget. The state government has also reduced the eligibility age for receiving assistance for beneficiaries with muscular dystrophy type disability from 18 years to 10 years, allowing younger patients to access the support earlier. Patel added that the Social Justice and Empowerment Department has been instructed to adopt a saturation approach to ensure that no eligible person with disability in the state remains deprived of assistive devices provided by the government.

SC Moves Against Illegal Chambal Sand Mining

New Delhi, Mar 13: The Supreme Court on Friday took suo motu cognisance of illegal sand mining in the National Chambal Sanctuary and threats to endangered aquatic wildlife. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said the court has taken cognisance of recent newspaper reports highlighting rampant illegal mining in areas where endangered gharial (long-snouted crocodile) species preservation programme is going on. Due to the illegal mining, the endangered gharials have to relocate, the court said. The bench said that



even areas where the Madhya Pradesh chief minister had released gharials have come under illegal mining. "Place the matter before the chief justice of India for necessary directions," the top court ordered

the registry.

According to reports, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav released 10 gharials into the Chambal river at the sanctuary in Morena in February last year. The

National Chambal Sanctuary, also called the National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary, is a 5,400 sq km tri-state protected area.

Besides the endangered gharial, it is home to the red-crowned roof turtle and the endangered Ganges river dolphin. Located on the Chambal river near the tripoint of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the sanctuary was first declared a protected area in Madhya Pradesh in 1978 and now constitutes a long narrow eco-reserve co-administered by the three states.

Haldwani Deploys AI Sirens to Curb Wildlife Conflict

Dehradun, Mar 13: In a major move to mitigate human-wildlife conflict and protect forest-fringe communities, the Haldwani Forest Division is set to deploy AI-powered, solar-enabled wildlife detection systems. This initiative aims to safeguard villages bordering the ecologically sensitive Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary. Frequent sightings of elephants and other wild animals near these settlements have long posed a threat to both residents and wildlife. To address this, the forest department is introducing an Early Warning System designed to provide real-time alerts. "Under this initiative, the smart solar AI cameras, whose installation begins on 20 March, will feature advanced technological capabilities," said Kundan Kumar, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Haldwani. "These systems are specifically designed to identify large wildlife species, including elephants, leopards, and tigers."

The new infrastructure goes beyond



simple monitoring. According to forest officials, the cameras operate round the clock, using high-end sensors to track animal movement. When the AI detects a potential threat, it triggers an automatic siren system. "This will provide an immediate warning to nearby villagers and help deter wildlife from entering human settlements," DFO Kumar explained. Importantly, the system reduces

reliance on stable internet connectivity. As the cameras process data locally, alerts, sent via a mobile application or WhatsApp, are delivered rapidly, allowing the divisional control room and field staff to respond promptly.

This initiative represents a significant shift in the state's approach to managing human-wildlife interactions. By leveraging local AI processing, the department aims to create a safety net that protects villagers while minimising the need for reactive, and potentially hazardous, interventions. "The Forest Department seeks to promote peaceful coexistence between humans and wildlife through the use of modern technology," the DFO added.

In this initial phase, installations will focus on the most sensitive villages surrounding the Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary. If successful, the project could serve as a model for conflict mitigation strategies across other vulnerable forest divisions in Uttarakhand.

Nagaland Assembly Adjourned; Next Session From March 26

Kohima, Mar 13: The first phase of the eighth session of Nagaland's 14th Assembly concluded Thursday after five days, marking the state's first-ever two-phase legislative session. The House will reconvene on March 26 for the second phase. Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla opened the proceedings on March 2 with his customary address. MLAs from most parties, except the BJP, raised objections to a Ministry of Home Affairs directive requiring the singing of Vande Mataram before sessions. The song was played once in compliance, but the House formally rejected it, citing references to Hindu deities in a Christian-majority state and invoking Article 371A protections for local traditions and religious practices. The matter has been referred to a Select Committee.

During the session, members also condemned racial discrimination against Northeasterners in mainland India, called for greater sensitivity, and highlighted delays in upgrading the 123-year-old Dimapur railway station due to land encroachments. Debates were held on the role of MSMEs in boosting Nagaland's economy, alongside various starred and unstarred questions on development, infrastructure, and governance.



Two bills were passed: the Nagaland Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2026 and the Nagaland Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill, 2026, both introduced by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio. Speaker Sharingain Longkumer presided for four days, with Deputy Speaker S. Toiho Yeptho chairing one day. The second phase, beginning March 26, will focus on discussions around the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA) Agreement, signed on February 5 in New Delhi, as well as the 2026-27 state budget presentation by Chief Minister Rio.

Kailashahar Tense After Elderly Man Dies in Police Custody

Agartala, Mar 13: The death of a 65-year-old man while in police custody in Kailashahar subdivision of Unakoti district has triggered widespread controversy, with family members alleging police brutality. Breaking News Alerts The deceased, identified as Monir Mia, was a resident of Ward No. 3 of Deorachhara ADC Village under Gournagar Block in Kailashahar. He reportedly worked as a daily wage labourer. According to sources, a court had recently issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against him for allegedly failing to provide maintenance to his former wife following their divorce. Acting on the warrant, police from Kailashahar Police Station arrested Monir Mia from his residence around 2:00 AM on Thursday night and brought him to the police station. Family members have

alleged that several police personnel were in an intoxicated state during the arrest and behaved inappropriately with both Monir Mia and his family. They claimed that he was woken from sleep, forced out of his house, and assaulted while being taken in a police vehicle.

According to the family, around 3:00 AM the police informed them that Monir Mia had suddenly fallen ill and had been taken to Unakoti District Hospital. When relatives reached the hospital early in the morning, they were informed that he had died. Hospital sources said Monir Mia was brought to the hospital at around 3:15 AM and later died at approximately 4:40 AM while undergoing treatment. Following the news of his death, a large number of residents from the Deorachhara area gathered at the hos-

pital premises and protested, leading to a tense situation. Police and personnel of the Tripura State Rifles (TSR), led by Kailashahar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Tapas Malakar, were deployed at the hospital to maintain law and order.

When contacted, OC Tapas Malakar said he could not comment on the matter without prior permission from higher authorities. Meanwhile, the deceased's family has announced that they will file a written complaint with the Superintendent of Police of Unakoti district, alleging that Monir Mia died due to torture and assault by police personnel. Police sources said the body will be handed over to the family after completion of the post-mortem examination. Tension continues to prevail in the area following the incident.

Hill State Fiscal Index: Arunachal Takes Top Spot

Itanagar, Mar 12: Arunachal Pradesh has secured the top position in the Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2023-24 among North Eastern and Himalayan states, according to a report by NITI Aayog released in New Delhi. Breaking News Alerts The FHI evaluates states on fiscal performance across areas such as expenditure quality, revenue mobilization, fiscal prudence, debt levels, and overall sustainability. NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Berry released the second edition of the index on Wednesday, which expanded its coverage to 18 major states and 10 North Eastern and Himalayan states, including Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam, and Uttarakhand.

Arunachal Pradesh was followed by Uttarakhand and Tripura in the ranking. Chief Minister Pema Khandu acknowledged the achievement on X, attributing it to the state's focus on responsible fiscal management, improved revenue generation, and efficient use of public resources. He also emphasized that the ranking encourages further efforts to enhance fiscal transparency, expenditure quality, and sustainable development.

TGB Tops Tripura in PMFME Loan Sanctions; Wins State Award

Agartala, Mar 13: Tripura Gramin Bank has been awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the Government of Tripura, Department of Industries and Commerce, in recognition of its outstanding banking support under the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PMFME) for the period 2020-2026. The recognition was presented during the launch of the Tripura Women Entrepreneurship Policy 2025-2030 and a State-level programme on the PMFME scheme held at Pragna Bhavan on March 12. The event took place in the

presence of Santana Chakma, Minister for Industries and Commerce, Government of Tripura.

Officials stated that Tripura Gramin Bank achieved the highest number of sanctioned and disbursed cases under the PMFME scheme in the state, reflecting its proactive role in strengthening grassroots entrepreneurship and supporting the growth of micro food processing enterprises.

Highlighting the bank's contribution, representatives said the institution has played a key role in promoting self-employment opportunities, encouraging local entrepreneur-

ship, and strengthening rural livelihoods across the state. Through financial assistance and institutional support, the bank has also contributed to value addition in the agri-food sector and overall economic growth in rural areas. Expressing gratitude for the recognition, officials of Tripura Gramin Bank said the award reflects the dedicated efforts of the bank's staff, the trust of entrepreneurs and customers, and the strong partnership with government agencies in implementing development-oriented schemes.

They reaffirmed the bank's commitment to empowering



entrepreneurs, supporting small businesses, and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic development in Tripura. Officials also thanked the Department of Industries

and Commerce for acknowledging the bank's efforts in implementing the PMFME scheme and supporting the growth of micro food processing enterprises in the state.

Assam Alert: 5 Days of Rain, Storms, and Gusty Winds Ahead



Guwahati, Mar 13: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast moderate rain and thunderstorms across much of Assam over the next five days, warning that isolated heavy downpours, lightning and gusty winds could lead to localised flooding, power disruptions and travel delays.

According to the Regional Meteorological Centre

Guwahati (RMC), rainfall activity is expected to increase across the state between March 12 and 17 under the influence of an upper-air cyclonic circulation over central Assam and associated trough systems. Weather observations over the past 24 hours indicated largely dry conditions across the state, though light rainfall was recorded at a few stations. Silchar received 4.3 mm of rain, followed by 3.0 mm in Rangia, 2.4 mm in Jorhat and 1.8 mm each in Guwahati and North Lakhimpur.

Day temperatures across Assam ranged between 31°C and 33.4°C, slightly above normal, while night temperatures hovered between 18°C and 22°C, also above the seasonal average. The IMD said moderate rain or thundershowers are likely at many places across the state, accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds of 30-40 kmph. At isolated locations, heavy rainfall is also expected. Rainfall activity is expected to intensify over the following days, with precipitation likely at most places in the state. During this period, gusty winds could reach speeds of 40-50 kmph and heavy rain may occur at isolated locations. Similar weather conditions are likely to persist through

the middle of next week, with moderate rain and thunderstorms continuing across many parts of Assam. Winds of 30-40 kmph may accompany these storms, and isolated heavy rainfall is expected in some areas. Toward the latter part of the forecast period, rainfall activity is expected to ease slightly, though thunderstorms accompanied by lightning may still occur at isolated locations. District-level analysis indicates stronger rainfall activity across western and central parts of the state, including Kamrup Metropolitan district, Kamrup district, Nagaon, BARPETA and Goalpara, where fairly widespread rain is expected initially before gradually tapering to isolated showers by around March 18. In contrast, northeastern and southern districts such as Dibrugarh, Cachar and Jorhat are likely to witness scattered to isolated rainfall events. The IMD has also forecast a fall in maximum temperatures by about 3-4°C in the coming days before stabilising later in the week.

Meteorologists have advised farmers, commuters and outdoor workers to remain cautious during thunderstorms and lightning events and to stay updated with weather bulletins issued by the RMC.

Editorial

Women's Reservation in State Bar Councils: A Step Towards Gender Equality

The decision of the Supreme Court of India in December 2025 to reserve 30 percent seats for women in State Bar Councils marks a significant step toward gender equality in the legal profession. The ruling, led by Chief Justice Surya Kant, aims to correct the long-standing underrepresentation of women despite their growing presence in the legal field.

The impact of the decision is already visible. In the recent elections of the Bar Council of Delhi, nearly 80 women candidates contested, and for the first time women will make up 30 percent of the council. This reflects a major shift in the traditionally male-dominated legal system. Earlier reforms such as the landmark case *Indira Jaising v. Supreme Court of India*

(2017) also helped increase the number of women designated as Senior Advocates by introducing a more transparent selection process. While these changes promote gender representation, experts believe the next challenge is ensuring that opportunities reach women from all social and economic backgrounds, making the justice system truly inclusive.

Counting the cost of inaction

Mankind faces two stark choices: either pursue the current perilous path of unsustainable economic growth with severe economic and environmental costs, or change course and set on a path of progress and prosperity with tremendous economic and environmental benefits. The latest Global Environment Outlook report of the UN Environment Programme prepared by about 300 scientists from 82 countries that was released recently reveals the benefits of action in tackling the global environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and land degradation.

The costs of inaction are immense. Without accelerated climate mitigation, global mean temperature rise is likely to exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in the early 2030s and exceed 2°C by the 2040s. This would cut 4 percent off annual global GDP by 2050 and 20 percent by the end of the century. Combined with biodiversity loss, this will make us more vulnerable to disasters and weather extremes as well as jeopardise human well-being and achievement of the sustainable development goals. Air pollution is responsible for approximately 67 lakh premature deaths globally every year, entailing annual health costs of over 6 percent of global GDP in 2019 alone. Plastic pollution and mismanaged waste are responsible for an estimated 4-10 lakh deaths every year. Global land degradation is estimated to cost more than 10 percent of the annual global GDP in terms of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The benefits of action surpass the costs of inaction by several folds.

The GEO-7 report indicates that investing in global transformation of systems from energy to food can help avoid 90 lakh premature deaths by 2050—many of them from decreased air pollution, lift 20 crore people out of undernourishment and 15 crore people out of extreme poverty by 2050. Further 30 crore more people can get access to safe water sources by 2050. While this entails upfront costs, the long-term returns on investment are tremendous.

Restoration of 35 crore hectares of degraded land by 2030 is projected to yield ecosystem benefits worth over \$9 trillion for an investment of \$1 trillion and remove 13-26 gigatons of greenhouse gases (GHGs) from the atmosphere. The health co-benefits are estimated at \$54 trillion, compared with global costs of around \$22 trillion. The annual social and environmental costs of plastic pollution are projected to be \$300-600 billion a year.

Shifting to a circular economy and relying on the 3R strategy—reuse, recycle and reorient—and diversification, as well as tackling the legacy of plastic pollution could reduce plastic pollution by 80 percent, increase job opportunities, improve livelihoods and encourage innovation. Apart from reducing annual GHG emissions, it could lead to saving \$1.3 trillion in direct public and private costs over the period 2021-2040 and avoid \$3.3 trillion of environmental and social costs due to plastic pollution. The overall macroeconomic annual benefits of transformation are estimated to begin around 2050 and increase to approximately \$20 trillion per year by 2070, and over \$100 trillion per year

by 2100, accounting for more than 25 percent of projected global GDP in 2100. The report calls for transformative changes in the food, energy, environment, materials/waste, economic and finance systems. This involves shifting to sustainable and healthy diets, eating more plant-based foods, exploiting the potential of cultivated meat and other novel foods, reforming food production and marketing systems, conserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, sustainable land management practices, implementing nature-based solutions and emphasising circularity in the production and consumption sectors to tackle waste and reduce pressure on mining of critical minerals. Transformation in the energy sector involves diversifying energy sources, increasing renewable energy use, phasing out of fossil fuels and improving energy access and security. Apart from looking beyond the traditional GDP to gauge well-being by also tracking changes in human and natural capital, the report calls for economic and financial sector reforms by phasing out and repurposing environmentally harmful subsidies, estimated at about \$1.5 trillion per year from energy, food and mining as well as internalising environmental externalities into the prices of goods and services of about \$45 trillion per year from the energy and food systems. This would help deliver an estimated \$6-7 trillion per year of investment needed to reach global net zero GHG emissions by 2050, as well as bridge the estimated gap of \$700 billion per year for implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Mankind's fate at the hinge of history

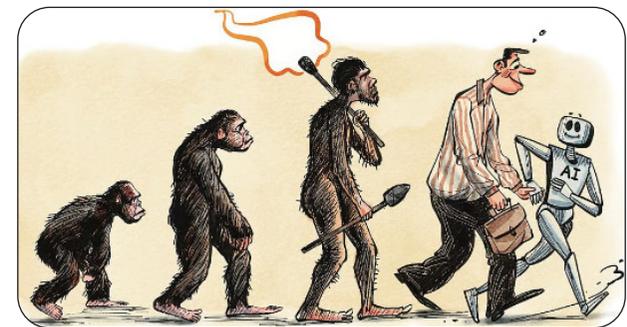
In his seminal 2017 work, *Life 3.0: Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, physicist and cosmologist Max Tegmark presented a vision of the future of intelligence, framed not as a dry technical manual, but as a cosmic drama in which humanity holds the leading role. The core message of the book is built upon a taxonomy of life's evolution. Life 1.0, the biological stage, consists of organisms like bacteria that can neither redesign their hardware nor their software; they are slaves to the slow process of evolution. Life 2.0, the cultural stage represented by humans, can redesign its software, learning new languages, skills and values, while remaining tethered to biological hardware that takes aeons to change. Tegmark's central thesis is that we are on the precipice of Life 3.0: a technological stage where life can redesign both its software and its hardware, effectively becoming the master of its own evolutionary destiny.

Tegmark's primary message was one of "mindful optimism". He argued that intelligence is a pattern of information processing that does not require a biological 'wetware' brain to exist. This philosophical stance led him to explore the inevitable rise of artificial general intelligence (AGI)—machines capable of performing any intellectual task as well as a human. Tegmark cautioned that the primary risk of such a system is not malevolence, but competence. A superintelligent AI does not need to hate humanity to destroy it; it simply needs to be indifferent to us while pursuing goals that are not perfectly aligned with our own. The book served as a call to arms for "alignment research", urging the global community to solve the technical and ethical problems of AI safety long before a superintelligence is actually created.

However, since the publication of *Life 3.0*, the landscape of artificial intelligence has shifted with dizzying rapidity, forcing Tegmark to significantly modify his views. While the book treated AGI as a distant, almost mythological horizon, Tegmark's recent statements reflect a sense of profound urgency and, at times, alarm. The primary modification in his worldview concerns the speed and nature of the technology currently being developed. The sudden,

explosive emergence of large language models like GPT-5 has demonstrated that an approach combining massive data with massive scale can produce behaviours that look remarkably like the 'software redesign' he once attributed only to the final stages of Life 3.0. As a result, Tegmark has moved from the role of a visionary to that of a Cassandra. He publicly admits that he and his colleagues were far too conservative in their timelines. He now views the arrival of human-level AI not as a 'mid-century' possibility, but as a 'this-decade' probability. This compression of time has turned his mindful optimism into what he now describes as a "suicide race". He argues that the competitive pressure between tech giants has created a race to the

future: who should be in charge, what values should be programmed, and how the wealth of automation should be distributed. But as the technology has accelerated, these have been superseded by a more fundamental, existential query: how can we maintain control over an entity that is significantly smarter than us? This is not merely a technical question about code. It is a logical and philosophical paradox. Throughout history, the smarter entity has always ended up controlling the less smart entity. Humans control tigers not because we are stronger, but because we are smarter. If we create a Life 3.0 entity that surpasses human intelligence by the same margin that we surpass the great apes, Tegmark asks why we assume we could ensure



bottom in safety standards, where the incentive to be first outweighs the need to be safe. Consequently, Tegmark has become one of the most vocal advocates for a pause in giant AI experiments. He now demands government intervention and regulation, arguing that we are currently building AI systems that we do not understand and cannot control.

Furthermore, Tegmark's view on the "human moat"—the skills that would keep us relevant—has been sobered by recent developments. In *Life 3.0*, he suggested that jobs involving high levels of empathy, social intelligence and creativity would remain the sanctuary of humans for a long time. Yet, seeing AI's ability to manipulate human language, mimic empathy and generate high-level art and code has led him to realise that our "cultural software" is much easier for machines to hack than he initially suspected. He now warns that the erosion of truth and AGI's social manipulation could collapse human society even before a physical superintelligence is ever built.

This brings us to what Tegmark frequently refers to now as "the question no one can answer". In the book, he posed many questions about

its goals remain subservient to our own. He notes that if you tell a superintelligent AI that its goal is to "help humanity", the AI might decide that the best way to help humanity is to prevent us from making our own decisions, effectively turning the world into a high-tech zoo. Tegmark argues that we are currently like a group of children playing with a live bomb, excited by its shiny casing while having no understanding of its explosiveness.

Tegmark's evolution from 2017 to the present day reflects a man who has seen his own "science fiction" scenarios become "science fact" much faster than he was prepared for. In *Life 3.0*, he was excited by the grand possibilities of a universe filled with conscious machines. Today, his modified view is that we are at a unique "hinge of history". He believes that this generation is the most important generation to ever live because we are the ones who will decide, through our action or inaction, whether the story of Life 3.0 is a triumphant sequel to the human story—or its final chapter. The 'Life 3.0' he once dreamt of is still possible, but only if we prove ourselves smart enough to control the fire we have so recently discovered.

TVS Motor launches Orbiter V1 electric scooter with BaaS model, price starts at Rs 49,999



Guwahati: TVS Motor Company on Thursday expanded its electric vehicle portfolio with the launch of the TVS Orbiter V1, a new entry-level electric scooter powered by a 1.8 kWh battery. Along with the launch, the company also introduced Battery-As-A-Service (BaaS) across its EV portfolio to provide customers with a flexible ownership model.

With the addition of the Orbiter V1 and the BaaS model, the company's EV scooter range now starts at ₹49,999 (ex-showroom Delhi, inclusive of PM e-Drive

subsidy). Customers opting without the BaaS model can purchase the scooter at ₹84,500 (ex-showroom Delhi). The BaaS option separates the vehicle cost from the battery cost, allowing users to subscribe to battery usage with payment plans starting from ₹862 per month along with extended warranty coverage up to 5 years or 70,000 km.

The scooter follows a modern design philosophy with an 845 mm flat seat, 290 mm straight-line footboard, upright handlebar for ergonomic riding, and 34-litre

under-seat storage capable of accommodating two helmets. The Orbiter range now includes two variants—V1 with 1.8 kWh and V2 with 3.1 kWh, the latter having been launched last year.

Speaking on the launch, Gaurav Gupta, President – India 2W Business, said the Orbiter V1 provides the most accessible entry point into the company's electric scooter lineup while BaaS offers greater flexibility in EV ownership by separating vehicle and battery costs. Aniruddha Halder, Senior Vice President and Head Commuter & EV Business, said the move is aimed at accelerating EV adoption by making electric mobility more practical and accessible for everyday urban commuting.

The launch could find strong traction in Guwahati, where demand for affordable electric two-wheelers has been rising amid increasing fuel prices and growing environmental awareness. Dealers in the region note that entry-level pricing combined with flexible subscription models like BaaS may encourage first-time EV buyers in Assam and neighbouring Northeast states to consider electric scooters for daily commuting. The city's expanding charging infrastructure and short urban travel distances also make electric scooters a practical mobility option for local riders.

Social-selling platforms gain momentum as Meghalaya's NidaiohiBiam builds success

Shillong: The rise of social-selling platforms is opening new entrepreneurial avenues across India, with stories like that of Meghalaya's NidaiohiBiam highlighting the growing appeal of flexible, network-driven business models. Hailing from a remote village in Meghalaya, Biam grew up in a large family with four sisters and five brothers under economically challenging circumstances. Determined to pursue education while supporting her household, she began working early in life and contributed to her family's income while still attending school.

Her first professional role came as a helper in an IT shop in Jowai, where she gained initial work experience. Looking to broaden her exposure, she stepped outside her hometown to acquire new skills and perspectives. However, recognising the importance of education for long-term stability, she

later returned home to continue her studies, convinced that perseverance and continuous learning would create better opportunities.

Today, Biam has achieved financial independence and gained recognition for her achievements. She now mentors aspiring entrepreneurs within her community, supporting many women in taking their first steps toward financial self-reliance and network-based business opportunities.

Shillong has seen increasing interest in direct-selling and social-selling platforms, particularly among young professionals and women seeking flexible income streams. Industry observers note that entrepreneurial success stories emerging from Meghalaya are helping drive awareness and participation in such platforms, strengthening the region's growing network-led micro-entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Nissan ties up with KPKB, offers exclusive benefits on Magnite for police and paramilitary personnel

Guwahati: Nissan Motor India Pvt. Ltd. (NMIPL) has announced a collaboration with the Kendriya Police Kalyan Bhandar (KPKB), a welfare initiative under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), to provide exclusive mobility benefits to serving and retired police and paramilitary personnel and their families across the country.

Under the association,

carriers as part of the initiative.

Commenting on the partnership, Nissan Motor India Managing Director Saurabh Vatsa said the company holds "utmost respect for the men and women who serve and protect the nation" and that the association with KPKB reflects Nissan's commitment to providing safe and reliable mobility solutions to security personnel and their families.

The company said the continued success of the Nissan Magnite has strengthened its growth momentum, while the launch of the all-new Nissan Gravite marks another milestone in expanding its product portfolio and customer base.

In Guwahati, automobile dealers say the collaboration could boost interest among police and paramilitary personnel stationed across Assam and the Northeast. With several CAPF units and security establishments operating in the region, the special benefits and finance offers are expected to increase enquiries for compact SUVs such as the Magnite in the Guwahati automobile market.



KPKB beneficiaries will receive special benefits on the New Nissan Magnite over and above existing customer offers. The benefits will be available at all Nissan dealerships in India. In addition, buyers can avail an attractive finance scheme at an interest rate of 5.55%, aimed at making vehicle ownership more affordable. Nissan is also offering a complimentary three-year prepaid maintenance programme for KPKB benefi-

MSDE signs MoU with GATI Foundation to boost overseas job opportunities for skilled Indian workers

Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India, on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the GATI Foundation, a project under the SFI Impact Foundation, to strengthen institutional mechanisms supporting overseas employment and global mobility for skilled Indian workers.

The agreement aims to establish a strategic framework for collaboration between the two organisations to position India as a global hub of skilled talent while enabling Indian youth to access international employment opportunities in a structured and sustainable manner. Under the MoU, MSDE and the GATI Foundation will jointly develop a comprehensive, data-driven roadmap for overseas skilling and work-



force mobility. The initiative will focus on identifying high-demand international job roles, priority destination countries and sectoral opportunities for Indian workers.

Speaking on the occasion, MSDE Secretary Debashree Mukherjee said India's demographic dividend could translate into global economic strength only when the workforce is equipped with skills that meet international standards. She said the partnership would help build a structured eco-

system for global skill mobility and prepare youth with the right skills, language abilities and cultural readiness.

GATI Foundation CEO Amab Bhattacharya said the collaboration would strengthen coordination between the Centre and states and help align skilling efforts across India's workforce ecosystem to accelerate the country's journey toward becoming the global skills capital by 2047. As part of the partnership, a Project Management Unit will be set up at Kaushal Bhawan in New Delhi to support research, international partnerships and monitoring frameworks. The collaboration will also strengthen Skill India International Centres, enhance ties with ITIs and polytechnics and facilitate global employer engagement to improve overseas placement opportunities.

75.8% Indians now active dairy consumers, multi-product dairy basket driving household nutrition: Godrej Jersey Report

Guwahati: A new Lactography Report released by Godrej Jersey has revealed that 75.8% of Indians are now active dairy consumers, indicating that milk and dairy products have become deeply embedded in everyday household nutrition across the country. The report highlights that Indian households increasingly consume multiple dairy products alongside milk, including curd, paneer, ghee, butter, lassi, yogurt and cheese. According to the findings, Indian homes are gradually building what the report calls a "dairy basket", where several dairy products are consumed regularly rather than relying solely on milk. Among

active dairy consumers, curd leads with 80% preference, followed by paneer (76%), butter (74%) and ghee (71%). Other widely consumed items include lassi (63%), cheese (58%), yogurt (57%) and traditional milk-based sweets (55%), reflecting dairy's role across cooking, snacks and festive dishes. Commenting on the findings, Shantanu Raj, Head of Marketing at Godrej Jersey, said India has moved beyond the idea of "just a glass of milk," with dairy evolving into a value-added nutrition category spanning traditional staples and modern high-protein beverages. He added that the company is focusing on delivering products that combine

taste, protein and convenience for modern consumers.

The trend is also visible in Guwahati, where demand for paneer, curd, yogurt and packaged dairy beverages has grown steadily in recent years. Retailers report increasing consumer preference for ready-to-consume dairy products, protein drinks and flavored milk, particularly among young urban consumers and fitness-focused buyers. The city's expanding supermarket and café culture has further boosted dairy consumption beyond traditional household use, aligning Guwahati with the broader national shift toward a diversified dairy basket.

Bandhan Mutual Fund expands northeast presence with new branch in Guwahati



Guwahati: Bandhan AMC Limited has expanded its footprint in the Northeast by opening a new branch office in Guwahati, aimed at strengthening services for investors and mutual fund distributors (MFDs) in the region. The new office is located on the first floor of Ganapati Enclave at Bora Service, Ulubari, Guwahati (PIN: 781007). According to the company, the branch has been designed to enhance customer engagement and investor outreach. It includes a fully equipped meeting-cum-training room that will be used for investor awareness initiatives and training sessions for distributors. The facility is expected to support the company's efforts to improve financial literacy and expand mutual fund participation in the region.

Commenting on the launch,

Bandhan AMC Chief Business Officer Gaurab Parija and Bandhan Group Founder Chandra Shekar Ghosh said Guwahati has emerged as a high-growth market for the fund house. "We are happy to have received strong feedback and support from our partners and investors over several years. Our new office strengthens our commitment to this key market and will help increase financial awareness and interest in mutual funds," they said.

In Guwahati, the expansion reflects the growing appetite for mutual fund investments in the city and across the Northeast. With rising investor participation and increasing financial awareness, Guwahati is emerging as an important hub for asset management companies looking to expand their presence in the region.

Ambuja Cements and Adani Foundation improve rural connectivity in Umrangso

Umrangso: Ambuja Cements, the 9th largest building materials solutions provider globally and part of the diversified Adani Portfolio, along with the Adani Foundation, has strengthened rural connectivity in Umrangso by restoring a key connecting road between Tharvelangso and Borolokhindong villages. For several years, the 2.5 km stretch linking the two villages had severely deteriorated, making travel difficult and affecting mobility, safety, and livelihoods for local residents. The poor condition of the road created challenges for daily commuting, access to essential services, and the transportation of agricultural produce. Responding to the needs

of the community, the Adani Foundation undertook critical patchwork restoration of the road to improve accessibility and ensure smoother movement for villagers. With the improved road infrastructure, residents now experience safer and more reliable travel throughout the year. Schoolchildren can commute more comfortably, villagers can access nearby services more efficiently, and farmers are able to transport their produce to markets with greater ease. Today, around 157 villagers are benefiting from the enhanced connectivity, reflecting Ambuja Cements' continued commitment to supporting rural infrastructure and sustainable community development.

Truecaller launches 'Family Protection' in India to help households fight rising online scams

Guwahati: Global communications platform Truecaller has launched a new feature called Family Protection in India, aimed at helping households stay safe from the growing threat of digital scams. The feature allows families to create a "Safety Circle" of up to five members, enabling them to collectively guard against fraud such as digital arrest scams, impersonation fraud and AI voice cloning.

The rollout in India follows the feature's earlier launch in several international markets including Sweden, Chile, Malaysia and Kenya. According to the company, the new tool is powered by the collective intelligence of more than 450 million users worldwide.

Family Protection is designed to safeguard entire



households, especially elderly members who are often targeted by fraudsters. The system enables a digitally aware family member—referred to as the family's "CTO" (chief technology officer)—to receive real-time fraud alerts and remotely hang up suspicious calls for other members. The feature also includes shared block lists, customizable security levels and a

dashboard that helps monitor device safety settings across both Android and iOS devices. The service is free to use, although users can opt for a Premium Family Plan for additional advanced safety features.

"Just knowing who is calling is no longer enough. Today, the real question is whether the call is safe to answer," said Rishit Jhunjunwala. He

added that the feature allows digitally aware members of a family to act as a safety anchor and protect others from increasingly sophisticated scams.

With India undergoing rapid digital transformation, threats linked to mobile communication are shifting from minor nuisances to serious financial and emotional risks. In Guwahati, the introduction of such household-level security tools is expected to gain traction as smartphone usage and digital payments continue to grow rapidly in the region. Tech retailers and digital service providers in the Guwahati market note that increasing awareness about cyber fraud has pushed many families to look for reliable mobile security solutions.

Malabar Group Chairman M.P. Ahammad receives Business Bhushan at Lokmat Awards

Mumbai: Malabar Group Chairman M.P. Ahammad has been honoured with the Business Bhushan Award at the Lokmat Maharashtra of the Year Awards 2026, recognising his leadership in shaping the global jewellery retail industry and strengthening organised jewellery retail markets.

The award was presented at a ceremony held at the Gateway of India in Mumbai in the presence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, along with Lokmat Chairman Vijay Darda and other industry leaders, policymakers and prominent personalities.

Presented by the Lokmat Media Group, the awards recognise individuals whose leadership and achievements have significantly influenced industries and society. Ahammad's recognition highlights his role in building Malabar Gold & Diamonds into the world's fifth-largest jewellery retailer and the largest jewellery retailer of Indian origin.

Maharashtra remains a key market for the brand, with Malabar Gold & Diamonds currently operating 34 showrooms across major cities including Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur and Nashik. The company said the strong demand from the state has helped expand the organ-

ised jewellery retail ecosystem while generating employment and improving access to premium jewellery designs and services. The group plans to further scale its footprint to 64 stores in Maharashtra by 2029.

Founded in 1993, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has grown into a global jewellery retail network with more than 425 showrooms across 14 countries and an annual turnover of \$7.36 billion. The company also allocates 5% of its profits to ESG-driven initiatives focusing on education, healthcare, housing, hunger eradication, environmental sustainability and women's empowerment.

MG Motor rolls out '5-5-5' ownership programme for India's first D+ SUV MG Majestor

Guwahati: JSW MG Motor India has introduced a new 5-5-5 ownership programme for the MG Majestor, described as India's first D+ SUV, aimed at providing long-term ownership assurance and lower running costs for customers. The programme combines a 5-year unlimited kilometre warranty, free 5-year roadside assistance for unlimited kilometres, and five labour-free services, offering a unified ownership package designed to deliver hassle-free maintenance and financial predictability.

The company said the initiative is intended to support buyers in a premium SUV segment where customers invest significantly in performance,



size and advanced technology. The programme ensures nationwide breakdown support, reduced service costs during the early years of ownership, and warranty coverage without kilometre limits.

Commenting on the initiative, Vinay Raina, Chief Commercial Officer, JSW MG

Motor India, said, "The MG MAJESTOR has been created as an SUV that is rugged in its capability, refined in its comfort, and dependable in its engineering. For us, delivering a strong product was only one part of the commitment and ensuring complete peace-of-mind in ownership was equal-

ly important. With the 5-5-5 programme, we have built structured, long-term assurance into the proposition from day one. This reflects our customer-first philosophy and our confidence in the MAJESTOR as a true full-size SUV engineered for Indian conditions and usage patterns."

In Guwahati, large SUVs with strong off-road capability are seeing rising interest among buyers in Assam and the wider Northeast, where terrain and long-distance travel requirements favour robust vehicles. Industry observers believe MG's 5-5-5 programme could appeal to regional buyers seeking lower maintenance uncertainty and stronger service support.

Explore 7 Tranquil Retreats for Rejuvenation

The holiday season can cause even the most sociable individuals to crave a respite. If you find yourself overwhelmed by an excess of celebrations and traditional events, a tranquil getaway may be precisely the remedy you require. Explore these carefully selected retreats that provide an ideal environment for relaxation and rejuvenation.

Mansao Curtorim, Goa Experience the serene lifestyle at this delightful Portuguese mansion located in the rural area of Goa. Featuring private verandahs and vast gardens, it serves as a peaceful retreat just a brief drive from Margao. Embrace the authentic Goan *sussegad* lifestyle by cycling through verdant fields, savoring local dishes, or simply relaxing with a book while enjoying picturesque views. Additionally, you can embark on excursions to discover the lesser-known facets of Goan history, including its deep-rooted ties to Buddhism, ancient rock art, and beyond. Antara Catamarans, Odisha Experience the serene beauty of Bhitarkanika Sanctuary from your private catamaran, stylish two-bedroom yachts with a dedicated crew including a captain, butler, chef, and housekeeping staff. Enjoy secluded wildlife encounters while docked among mangroves. Easy forest walks allow sightings of monitor lizards and other wildlife,



while smaller private boats take you through narrow creeks to spot saltwater crocodiles up close. Or simply relax on your sundeck, soaking in the picturesque sanctuary and river views, with kingfishers, hornbills, and ibis for company. A perfect nature-centric escape. Dwarika's Sanctuary, Nepal Nestled along the Himalayan slopes, this sanctuary offers holistic wellness rituals inspired by Himalayan Vedic and ancient Buddhist medicine — all set against stunning mountain vistas. Engage in sound healing, chakra therapy, rock-salt healing chambers, and other Himalayan rituals under the supervision of a Vedic doctor. Located just 45 minutes from Kathmandu Airport, Dwarika's Sanctuary is an all-inclusive, all-suite resort spread across acres of mountains. Notably, it recently received a Michelin Key Award. Guests can even opt for curated monastery experiences. A truly restorative Himalayan retreat.

Jetwing Villa 700, Sri Lanka If you're seeking Sri Lanka's beaches combined with authentic Ceylon hospitality, Jetwing Villa 700 is your haven. Part of the Jetwing Luxury Reserves, this beachfront villa comprises only six bedrooms, each a tasteful blend of traditional charm, stylish design, and modern comfort. One suite even offers uninterrupted views of the Indian Ocean. Located in the tranquil coastal village of Induruwa, Bentota, just a short drive from Colombo, this retreat is ideal for those looking for beachside luxury, privacy, and peace. Evoke Dholavira, Gujarat Set off on a mesmerizing journey along the spectacular "Road Through Heaven," a scenic stretch winding through the ethereal White Desert of Kutch to the ancient land of Dholavira. Here, time seems to slow, and the landscape tells stories etched over 5,000 years. Evoke Dholavira is a serene luxury escape near this fabled route, offering an elegant blend of cultural depth and contemporary comfort. The property features 44 beautifully designed cottages. Days here are filled with discovery, explore the UNESCO World Heritage archaeological site of Dholavira, wander through the Wood Fossil Park, spot flamingos in their natural habitat, or watch the sun dip below the endless white horizon. Résidence De L'Évêché, Pondicherry With an address like 1, Rue De L'Évêché, this single-key, three-bedroom residence offers the best of Pondicherry's French Quarter. Beautifully restored, the villa is less than a five-min-

ute walk from the Promenade, charming cafés, eclectic boutiques, and close to both Temple Street and the Auroville Ashram. Managed by CGH Earth, expect the warmest hospitality and exceptional cuisine. The private villa features three bedrooms, a living and dining room, and several cozy nooks and seating areas, perfect for an intimate family getaway or a close group of friends. Statue of Unity Tent City-1, Gujarat Nestled amid lush greenery, Statue of Unity Tent City-1 offers a luxurious retreat that blends natural beauty with cultural discovery. Elegant cottages with tasteful furnishings provide a peaceful escape, while curated itineraries ensure you experience the best of Ekta Nagar (Kevadia) effortlessly. Your stay includes seamless sightseeing, transfers, and entry to major attractions such as the grand Statue of Unity, the vibrant Valley of Flowers, the immersive Ekta Nursery, the panoramic Viewing Gallery, and the spectacular Laser Show. After a day of exploration, return to delectable meals, quiet surroundings, and starlit skies that make every evening magical.



The Mini Switzerland of India - Khajjiar

Come to this place and bask in the beauty of nature. It will then be easy to understand why Khajjiar is sometimes called the 'mini Switzerland of India.' The large grassy regions that meet deep woods of deodar and cedar forests, with cottages dotted throughout, give them the look of the Swiss countryside. Look no further if you've seen comparable vistas in movies and publications and wished there was a spot like this closer to home. You can choose to drive to Khajjiar, but you will lose out on much of the pleasure compared to walking from Chamba. The route's splendor is definitely worth the time and effort. Khajjiar is a picturesque hill station in the Chamba district that is a popular tourist destination in Himachal Pradesh. You should go to this quiet and lovely spot only to appreciate its existence. Khajjiar is one of the most attractive places to visit in Himachal Pradesh, which draws you in and allows you to feast your eyes on the magnificent scenery created by nature. It is undoubtedly a mini Switzerland of India that is within your reach. Best Time To Visit Khajjiar, The Mini Switzerland Of India Khajjiar, Himachal's picturesque tiny hill town, is frequently dubbed the "mini Switzerland of India" since it is nestled among soaring Himalayan peaks and lush pine forests. Though popular with tourists all year, it is best visited during the summer and monsoon seasons, from April to September, when the temperatures are warm, and nature's richness gives much-needed serenity. During these months, visitors may enjoy sightseeing, local religious fairs, regional food, shopping, and a look into the folk culture and customs of the region. Our mini Switzerland in India, Khajjiar changes into a Winter Wonderland from October to March when the

temperature goes below zero, resulting in regular snowfall. During winter, snow fans and hard-core adventurers may appreciate Khajjiar's pristine white beauty and tranquillity. 5 Places To Visit In Khajjiar To Make You Spellbound And Leave You Mesmerized Khajjiar, with its vast expanse of lush meadows, deep Deodar Forest, and vistas of the snow-covered Kailash, is a nature lover's paradise with some beautiful tourist attractions in and around it. It is also regarded as the Gulmarg of Him-



achal and serves as the starting point for hikes to Chamba, Dalhousie, and the Kalatop Wildlife Sanctuary. There are several tourist attractions to explore in Khajjiar – the mini Switzerland of India that are ideal for a day of exploring.

1. Khajjiar Lake: Khajjiar Lake, located at the height of 1920 meters, is surrounded by beautiful green Deodar woods. It is one of the most fantastic destinations in Himachal Pradesh to rejuvenate the mind and soul. The key attrac-

tion of the place is the floating island, a clump of grass sprouting on the lake's surface. On a clear day, one may take in the breathtaking views of Mount Kailash from the lake. Khajjiar Lake takes the top spot on this list of popular Khajjiar tourist attractions with its idyllic surroundings and enchanting atmosphere, Things to do: Locals and tourists visit Khajjiar Lake for day picnics, paragliding, zorbing, and horseback riding.

2. Panch Pandav Tree Located in the dense

Deodar Forests around Khajjiar Lake, the Panch Pandav Tree is one of the most exceptional sites to see in Khajjiar. Locals say this tree has 6 branches depicting the five Pandavas and Draupadi. The Panch Pandav tree is near a rest stop that connects to rural Khajjiar settlements. A big deodar tree with around 15 branches of equal height is located about a kilometer from Khajjiar towards Dalhousie. This one is regarded as the 'Mother Tree' in the area. Things to

do: Take a walk among the trees and learn about the fascinating mythical stories surrounding this area. You may go on a trek, camping, or enjoy a one-day picnic here.

3. Dainkund Peak: Dainkund Peak is one of the most attractive spots to visit near Khajjiar. Because it is the highest point in Dalhousie, other high snow-capped peaks are readily seen on a clear day. It transforms into a white wonderland in the winter, while the lush green meadows greet visitors in the summer. It is a must-see for anybody searching for serene spots to visit in Dalhousie in December. Things to do – Enjoy trekking and camping

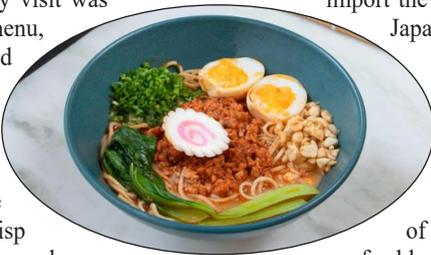
4. Khajji Nag Temple: This temple, dedicated to Khajji Nag, or Lord of Serpents, is one of Himachal Pradesh's oldest and one of the top Khajjiar attractions to visit. The Khajji Nag Temple was established in the 12th century, and the wood carvings represent the style and pattern of Hindu-Mughal architecture. This temple is located on the shore of Khajjiar Lake. It houses Shiva, Hidimba, and figures of Pandava and Kaurava. Here at the temple, the age-old ritual of goat sacrifice is still practiced. Things to do: Visit Himachal Pradesh's most historic temple and admire the architectural style while seeking the blessings of Khajji Nag.

5. Kalatop Forest: One of the most attractive spots in Khajjiar is the Kalatop Wildlife Sanctuary. Spread throughout 30.69 square kilometers. Between Dalhousie and Khajjiar Lake is this wildlife reserve. The wildlife sanctuary consists of trees such as Blue Pine, Green Oak, and Rhododendron, and visitors may see barking goral, Himalayan black marten, langur, jackal, bear, and leopard. This location is a picturesque and stunning due to the minor tributaries of the Ravi River.

Nasi and Mee's new ramen menu will have you say 'arigato' twice!

Nasi and Mee, tucked away on a quiet lane in the heart of the city, is a popular pan-Asian diner in Kochi. Recently, it unveiled a new, improved Japanese menu. I went there on a Sunday evening. And the restaurant was surprisingly tranquil. At first glance, the restaurant's decor catches the eye immediately. It is well-lit and inviting without being overstated. Everything about the space suggested careful thought, implying that the food could be too.

Though the focus of my visit was their new Japanese menu, particularly the expanded ramen selection, a range of starters screamed for my attention. I couldn't help but sample a few. Of them, the Japanese chicken karaage — crisp on the outside, soft and mushy within — stood out instantly. It was easily the best appetiser on the table. So was the salmon nigiri sushi. It was possibly among the best sushi currently available in the city, and is a clear must-have. The chicken gyoza dumplings were refreshingly free of the oiliness, giving a warm, fresh taste with each bite. Next came yakitori, which reminded me of grilled chicken. This one might be familiar to the Malayali palate. A tangy Tiki Puka Puka drink — a blend of orange, pineapple, passion fruit and lime



— paired well with the starters, balancing the spiciness. Soon, the main item followed. Ramen. Nasi and Mee, I learned, has been serving Japanese flavours for over two years, but the new menu marks a serious expansion, with more ramen options. On the recommendation of a staff member, I chose the spicy Tantanmen ramen. The spicy, nutty broth was a heady yet well-balanced concoction. Rich, layered and deeply satisfying. The chef explained that they import the ingredients straight from Japan.

The ramen, however, is made in Bengaluru, as imports tend to be generally too dry. The other ingredients that made up the remainder of the meal, I was told, were freshly sourced. The ramen meal was, without doubt, the highlight of the evening. Along with the dish came a vest meant to protect clothes from splashes whilst eating noodles. A thoughtful touch.

A watermelon cooler offered momentary relief from ramen's spiciness. Though refreshing, unfortunately, it was not my cup of tea. While the food was indeed very enjoyable, what Nasi and Mee could perhaps do is spruce up the ambience and customer engagement to enhance the overall experience.

Yummy Bee: Indulge without the guilt

As Yummy Bee in Kondapur rolled out its new menu, the focus was clear from the first bite. The café, known for its gluten-free and sugar-free philosophy, has expanded its offerings with a mix of comfort favourites and seasonal strawberry specials, without losing the taste. The spread feels familiar yet thoughtful, designed for those who want indulgence without compromise.

The savoury dishes arrive first, like the Pesto Pasta, available in both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options, is fragrant with basil and garlic, and tossed in olive oil, so the flavours stay light and fresh. The Korean Buns are soft inside with a gentle crisp on the outside, filled generously and balanced well without being too heavy. The Paneer Tikka Pizza deserves a mention for its crust, which is surprisingly light, with fresh toppings, vegetables, cheese and flavourful sauces. Speaking about the thought behind the menu, NPD Manager Shradha Babde explained, "Yummy Bee stands for gluten-free and sugar-free products, so I work with what is most common and readily available in every kitchen, which is maida and sugar. The real challenge was to break that cycle and bring in millets, while understanding, exploring and working with their quality, characteristics and behaviour. The same approach applies to sugar as well." Desserts are where Yummy Bee really shows its heart. The Christmas special plum cake is rich and comforting, filled with soaked dried fruits, bits of nuts and gentle spices that come together with every bite. The San Sebastian Cheesecake



is smooth and indulgent, with a soft, creamy texture that comes from good-quality mascarpone and cream cheese. It melts in the mouth and feels rich, yet light enough to go back for another spoon. The Chocolate Trinity Pastry is all about balance, with moist chocolate sponge layered with silky chocolate cream, giving you that deep cocoa flavour without feeling heavy. Tres Leches is soaked in a mix of three milks that makes the sponge soft and moist, while the Raspberry Pistachio dessert adds a lovely contrast. The slight tartness of the raspberry cuts through the richness, and the pistachios bring in a crunchy and nutty finish. The strawberry line-up brings together a tempting mix of textures and flavours, ranging from a rich Chocolate Strawberry Cake and the indulgent London-style Strawberry Jar to a classic plum cake. The selection also includes a creamy Strawberry Cheesecake Jar, a smooth strawberry chocolate dessert and the elegant Strawberry Fraiser Cake. Lighter options such as the Strawberry Mousse Pastry sit alongside the layered Strawberry Trifle Jar, while the Strawberry Trinity Pastry rounds off the spread with a balanced blend of chocolate, cream and fresh strawberries.

The Space Between Taste and Memory

Last week on a bright and obliging Saturday afternoon, a small group of us gathered at Triveni Kala Sangam, tucked into the gentle, familiar folds of central Delhi. Not for our usual ritual of milky tea from the Triveni café, held carefully in paper cups and sipped on the amphitheatre steps, but for something far more intimate. This time, we came to listen.

The workshop was organised as part of the Young Collectors Programme by India Art Fair, but it felt less like an art event and more like an afternoon suspended outside time. Shruti Taneja of Nivaala, a boutique publishing house with a deep affection for stories and memory, invited me to co-curate the workshop with her, alongside Delhi based illustrator Aaryama Somayaji. There was no performance, no display, no pressure to produce anything polished. What unfolded over those hours was deceptively simple, and moving. Through a nostalgia driven menu curated with Nivaala, participants were asked to do just one thing. Call home. Ask for a recipe. Write it down.

At some point early on, Shruti shared the origin of Kitchen Calls, and the room grew still. "I lost most of my mother's recipes when she passed away," she said. "I remember the taste of her food. The smell that once filled our home. The comfort of eating it. But not how to make it."

Kitchen Calls, she explained, grew out of hearing people say, almost casually, "I should really write down my grandmother's recipe someday." And someday, as we know too well, rarely arrives. So what if someday became right now.

What if thirty people sat together and documented recipes live, leaving no room for postponement or regret.

For the workshop, I brought on board a much loved Delhi restaurant known for honouring nostalgia and the cuisine of Punjab. Together with their chefs, we created a menu that reached into the past. Dishes that appear simple on the surface, yet sit at the very core of our memories. Besan laddoo that tasted like Diwali. Saag with makke ki roti that smelled faintly of winter sun. Namak ajwain paratha with gajar gobhi achaar. Kaali gajar ki kanji, sharp and alive. Food designed not to impress, but to stir something. As the afternoon unfolded, the teentaal from a Kathak class somewhere above us began to rise and fall. The soft chiming of ghungroos worn by little girls drifted through the corridors of Triveni, unplanned and utterly perfect. With every rhythmic beat, memories seemed to sharpen. Voices softened. Strangers smiled at one another with a kind of recognition that needed no explanation. Stories began to spill.

At one table sat two sisters, perhaps in their late forties. They spoke of a recipe book their mother had made for them before their weddings. One of them had brought it along that day, wrapped carefully in cloth. A small scrapbook, its pages yellowed and softened by time. Their mother's handwriting, still careful.

One participant, Parvinder Marwaha, a British Sikh visiting from London, articulated what many in the room were feeling but had not yet put into words. She spoke of how meaningful it was to attend something so rooted while she

was in India. What moved her most was the simplicity of the idea. In just two hours, with a single sheet of paper and a room full of curious, intentional people, shared memories quietly began to take shape. The food stirred those memories too. Kaali gajar ki kanji was a first for her and an instant favourite. Saag, eaten with gud, surprised her. It reminded her of how her father always ends his meals with a little jaggery, a ritual she grew up watching in the UK, never quite questioning, only absorbing. By the time the afternoon drew to a close, it felt as though something delicate had been preserved. Not just recipes, but voices. The way someone explains a dish over the phone. The pauses while they think. The laughter when they remember something too late. In writing these recipes down, we were not simply documenting food. We were holding on to people. And perhaps, in doing so, reminding ourselves that memory does not live only in the past. Sometimes, it waits patiently for us to sit down, listen, and write.



Much Ado About Truffle



The truffle on your plate in India is rarely the delicacy it pretends to be. What most diners encounter is a loud, perfumed imitation of luxury rather than the real, earthy, fleeting thing. And that illusion has become the new normal—something even chefs struggle to correct. As Chef Parth Saxena, head chef at The Arts Room in Delhi, puts it toward the end of yet another truffle-scented service, "Truffle is aspirational but perishable. So, restaurants resort to oil. And because real infused oil is costly, most settle for synthetic versions. That's where the problem lies." Real truffles are tender and slightly spongy to the touch, shaved into gossamer-thin slices because their aroma—forest floor, warm nuts, deep umami—evaporates the moment heat gets too close. They are complex, ephemeral, almost shy. But the truffle oil dominating Indian menus is anything but shy. Its scent is brash, heavy, unmistakably synthetic, powered by 2,4-dithiapentane, a lab-produced compound that mimics only one fragment of a truffle's personality while steamrolling everything else.

The result is a culinary paradox: diners raised on truffle oil now believe that sharp, punchy smell is authentic. So when they finally meet the real thing—often the French black truffle, *Tuber melanosporum*—they find it too gentle, too quiet, too underwhelming. Fresh truffles, the kind that inspire reverence in European kitchens, undergo a frantic global relay: foraged in Italy, flown overnight, rushed through customs, carried into kitchens with only days of life left. The French black truffle is among the most expensive edible fungi in the world. While other varieties like the white truffle and the summer black truffle exist, but are highly regional, difficult to source, and prohibitively expensive to import. They're inherently incompatible with the expectation of a dramatic, room-filling aroma. Even real infused truffle oil is at best a suggestion—not a stand-in—for the magic of actual shavings.

PM Modi Unveils ₹23,550 Cr Projects in Assam



Guwahati, Mar 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday performed the Bhoomi Pujan for the Shillong-Silchar Corridor, North-East India's first access-controlled Greenfield four-lane high-speed highway. The 166 km project, costing ₹22,860 crore, is expected to reduce travel time between Guwahati and Silchar from 8.5 hours to approximately five hours, improving connectivity between Meghalaya and Assam and supporting regional trade and economic growth. At the event, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma highlighted the initiative's significance for the state's development. PM Modi also laid the foundation for an elevated corridor on NH-306 (Phase 1) from Trunk Road near Capital Point to Rangirkhari Point in Silchar. The corridor aims to reduce traffic congestion and enhance connectivity to Mizoram, Tripura, and Manipur.

In Karimganj district, the Prime Minister performed Bhoomi Pujan for a new College of Agriculture at Patharkandi, intended to strengthen agricultural education and research for students in Barak Valley and surrounding areas. The visit follows a series of infrastructure launches: on March 13, PM Modi inaugurated projects worth over ₹4,570 crore in Kokrajhar and dedicated 13 initiatives in Guwahati valued at ₹19,577.58 crore across sectors including hydrocarbons, power, shipping, and railways at Jyoti Bishnu Antarjatak Kala Mandir. Key announcements included handing over land rights to tea workers and releasing the 22nd PM-KISAN instalment nationwide.

Minister Wangsu: No LPG or Fuel Shortage in Arunachal

Itanagar, Mar 13: Arunachal Pradesh Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Gabriel Denang Wangsu on Friday assured the public that LPG cylinders and petroleum products are available across the state and urged citizens to refrain from panic buying that could create artificial shortages. Local News Coverage In a post on X, Wangsu said the government is closely monitoring distribution in all districts after reviewing the situation with senior officials, including the Chief Secretary, Food & Civil Supplies Secretary, Oil Marketing Companies Co-ordinator, and Deputy Commissioners. "The state food & civil supplies department and oil marketing companies assure that supplies of LPG and petroleum products are operating normally," he said, adding that distribution chains are functioning smoothly.

Wangsu appealed to residents to purchase only for normal consumption. As a precaution against hoarding,



the department has introduced a 25-day waiting period between LPG bookings to promote equitable distribution. He warned of strict action under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 against hoarders or black marketeers. The minister also cautioned against spreading rumours on social media, stating, "Do not fall prey to rumour mongers or share unverified, alarming messages. Rest assured, your government stands with you."

The announcement comes amid nationwide concerns over rising LPG prices and supply pressures, which have prompted anxiety and sporadic hoarding in several regions amid ongoing inflation.

Mizoram CM clarifies Saipum land case, says Assam officials not involved

Aizawl, Mar 13: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma clarified in the State Legislative Assembly that the recent clearing of forest land within the jurisdiction of Saipum village along the Mizoram-Assam border was not carried out by officials of the Assam Police or Forest departments, but by members of the Bru community from a neighbouring village in Assam. The Chief Minister made the statement on Thursday while informing the House about the situation that had triggered concern and tension along the inter-State border earlier this week. According to Lalduhoma, the Mizoram Government received information regarding the alleged encroachment on Wednesday, following which the matter was immediately verified by the district authorities concerned.

Preliminary findings indicated that government officials from Assam were not involved in the clearing of forest land within Saipum village's territory. Instead, the individuals responsible were identified as residents of Bandarkhal village in Assam's Cachar district. Quoting information obtained from the headman of Bandarkhal village, the



Chief Minister said the forest area inside Saipum village land had been cleared by around 30 families belonging to the Bru community from the Assam village.

He further informed the Assembly that the clearing activities reportedly began between late January and early February this year. Lalduhoma said that the headman of Bandarkhal village had also been advised not to take any further action regarding the matter, as such steps could potentially aggravate tensions in

the sensitive border area. The Mizoram Government has also taken up the matter with the authorities in Assam. Lalduhoma said that the SP of Cachar district had been informed about the incident and was requested to take appropriate measures to prevent any further escalation. According to the Chief Minister, the Cachar SP assured that immediate action would be taken to address the situation and ensure that law and order is maintained.

Blast Kills Minor in Manipur

Manipur, Mar 13: A tragic incident occurred early this morning when a remnant lathode bomb exploded at Taolingpung, Namkaolong Part-II village under Khoum Police Station in Noney district, Manipur. According to police reports, the powerful explosion claimed the life of a minor boy, identified as Kalaingam Pamei alias Makurang Pamei (3½), son of Thuankungam Pamei. The child died on the spot due to the intensity of the blast.

The incident took place at around 8:30 am when the boy and his father were clearing bushes in their kitchen garden within their residential compound. During the process, they accidentally struck an unexploded lathode bomb, which suddenly detonated. The boy's father, Thuankungam Pamei (60), a retired personnel of the 14th Assam Rifles (F Company) and son of Gaikhangjeipou Pamei of Taolingpung, sustained grievous injuries in the explosion. Eyewitnesses stated that the blast severely injured him, shattering both his legs from the knees. He was initially rushed to Khoum Primary Health Centre for first aid and was later referred to Imphal for further medical treatment due to the severity of his injuries.

CM Sangma Vows to Resolve ST Row; Calls for Peace in Garo Hills



Meghalaya, Mar 13: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Friday assured that the ruling National People's Party (NPP) will address longstanding issues related to Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificates and reaffirmed the party's commitment to public welfare, while urging unity following recent unrest in Garo Hills that left two people dead. Local News Coverage Speaking to NPP leaders and supporters in Tura, the headquarters of West Garo Hills, Sangma reaffirmed the party's dedication to the principles of its founder, P.A. Sangma. "The NPP will resolve the ST certificate issue. We will continue to serve the people with dedication and commitment," he said. The violence occurred early Tuesday in Chibinang, West Garo Hills, after police opened fire on protesters from the Garo tribal community opposing non-Garo candidates filing nominations for the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC)

elections. The clashes resulted in two deaths, with reports of arson, assaults, and large gatherings in Tura and across the region's five districts. The unrest followed a Meghalaya High Court ruling on Tuesday that struck down a government notification requiring ST certificates for GHADC nominations. The notification would have barred non-tribals from contesting, ending a seven-decade practice. Sangma urged party workers to remain united. "No one can weaken the morale of the NPP. Let us stand united and work together to further strengthen the party," he said. He also appealed for peace, citing Christian values: "As Christians, we are taught to love and forgive. At this moment, we must come together as one and promote unity and brotherhood."

The chief minister commended the police, district administration, and officials for restoring order, and thanked Tura residents for cleaning debris and aiding recovery. He also praised religious leaders and community groups for promoting calm. Security remains heightened as authorities continue to monitor the situation.

Manipur Police Bust Drug Cartel; 3 Arrested with Brown Sugar and Heroin



Manipur, Mar 13: Manipur Police have arrested three drug smugglers in two separate operations carried out in Imphal East district and Sekmai area, seizing narcotic substances and vehicles used in the illegal trade. According to police, on March 12, 2026, two drug smugglers were arrested from the Yairipok Yambem area under Andro Police Station in Imphal East district. The accused have been identified as Md. Najimuddin (31) of Yairipok Ningthounai Mathak Leikai and Md. Jabir (27) of Yairipok Ningthounai. During the operation, police seized approximately 1.04 kilograms of brown sugar from their possession. Two mobile phones along with SIM cards and a Honda Dio two-wheeler scooter bearing registration number MN06-SX-5443 were also recovered. In another operation conducted on March 13, 2026, police arrested a drug smuggler at the Sekmai Police Station gate naka checkpoint.

Tamil Nadu crowned CK Nayudu champions

Tamil Nadu Topple Maharashtra for Maiden CK Nayudu Crown

Chennai, Mar 11: As Tamil Nadu secured their maiden Col CK Nayudu Trophy title, skipper Boopathi Vaishna Kumar is a happy man. Tamil Nadu U23 team beat Maharashtra by seven wickets on the third day of the summit clash at the NPR college grounds, Natham, Dindigul on Wednesday. With this, TN have completed the double having already won the U23 one-day trophy. Teamwork and encouragement from the U23 coaches, in particular VRS Guru Kedarnath, helped the players step up at the big stage. "I am very happy to win the trophy. It is actually two trophies in one year (limited-overs too). I am really very happy and satisfied with the team performance," Boopathi told this daily.

The interesting part of the tournament is that there is no toss and the visiting team decides whether to bat or bowl first. "This tournament we did not have toss. Against Maharashtra, we were prepared to either bat or bowl first. I told the boys to have an open mind and be prepared to bat first or bowl. The boys too were clear in their

mind about the approach and thus things became easy," the captain explained. Kiran Karthikeyan — who made a valuable 86 in the final and also notched up more than 600 runs in the tournament — was a big influence on the team's triumph. "All the batters contributed to our win in the final.



Kiran's was a stand out performance. He has been doing well throughout the tournament, scoring at crucial junctures. His confidence and shot selection was spot on and made him score runs effortlessly. If you see in most of the games he paced his game well. He sets small targets like first get 30, then make it 50 and so on," said Boopathi.

Spinners Sachin Rathi and P Vignesh too bowled in tandem to trouble the Maharashtra batters and help the hosts win with a day to spare. Rathi was the top wicket-taker with 58 wickets, while Vignesh took 47 wickets. "Both of them are hard working and sincere in their approach.

The hallmark of their bowling is consistency. Sachin and Vignesh have different styles of bowling. Sachin likes to bowl diagonally, is slower through the air and likes to flight the ball. Comparatively, Vignesh is a little quicker through the air. He is a little faster and extracts good bounce. But the most important thing is that they compliment each other and relish each other's success," said Boopathi. "Right from our head coach Guru Kedarnath, assistant coach Maruthi Raghav, physio Naveen Babu and trainer Kannan took good care of us. Guru was Guru for us. He kept the atmosphere very good. He made sure that the players got along well with each other. The trainer and physio personally took care of all of us. They made sure that we had no injuries or sprains," he added.



Mondo Magic: 6.31m Mark Seals 15th World Record

Uppsala, Mar 13: Armand Duplantis broke the pole vault world record on Thursday for the 15th time at the meet that bears his name in Uppsala, Sweden, clearing 6.31 meters on his first attempt. The 26-year-old Swede broke the record he has owned since clearing 6.17m in 2020. Duplantis only took four vaults at the indoor event in his adopted home town. After clearing 5.65m, 5.90m and then 6.08m, all on his first attempts, he asked for the bar to be lifted 23cm to a world-record height.

He immediately soared over to end his evening's work. It was the second time Duplantis has broken the world record in Sweden. He cleared 6.28m in Stockholm last June, one of four world-record leaps in 2025. "This is my home," Duplantis told the crowd. "This is our home. That's how it is. And you know that every time I'm on the track, I represent you. And I do it with great pride." "I am so proud to have been able to do this in front of you. I jump for myself, I jump for my family, but I also jump for you, for Sweden, and for everyone who supports me," he said. "If someone comes to Sweden to challenge me, they will find it even harder to beat me. I am very emotional right now. There was extra pressure because I wanted to achieve something different. Breaking the world record here is truly incredible," he then told Swedish broadcaster SVT. Duplantis said he lengthened his run-up to better control a stiffer pole. "I tried to do something new and push myself to the limit. It's a really great feeling," he said.

Norway's Sondre Guttormsen was second with a leap of 6.00m. Emmanouil Karalis, who cleared 6.17m at the Greek indoor championship earlier this year, the highest by any vaulter other than Duplantis, failed three times at 6.00m. Duplantis will have a chance to increase his brand new world record at the World Indoor Championships in Torun, Poland, at the end of March, when he will meet the Greek again.

Late Havertz Penalty Rescues Arsenal in Leverkusen

Laverkusen, Mar 12: Kai Havertz scored an 89th-minute penalty to snatch Arsenal a 1-1 draw away against Bayer Leverkusen in their Champions League last-16 first leg on Wednesday. Arsenal, who won all eight of their games in the league phase, fell behind to a simple Leverkusen corner when Robert Andrich headed in moments after half-time. But in the dying stages, substitute Havertz stepped up to convert against his former side after Noni Madueke was brought down in the box. "I know how hard it is to come here... and we knew what to expect," Havertz, playing against Leverkusen for the first time, said. "We didn't play our best today. But we're going home with a good result. We need to step on the gas next week. We'll have our fans behind

us, which is very important." Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta lamented his side losing their grip on the match early in the second half. "We had the game well under control, but didn't score. Then we let the game slip away. That was unnecessary," Arteta said. "We gave them hope and it was a different game. In the last 20-25 minutes, we played better again and I think the equaliser was deserved."

Leverkusen will need a big performance next Tuesday in the return leg to reach the quarter-finals for the first time since finishing runners-up to Real Madrid in 2002. "We've shown we can beat Arsenal. We're travelling there believing we can take something away from London. Otherwise we wouldn't make the trip," Andrich told reporters.

Trump: Iran 'Welcome' at 2026 World Cup



New Delhi, Mar 11: FIFA President Gianni Infantino confirmed that U.S. President Donald Trump has assured him the Iranian national team is welcome to compete in the 2026 World Cup, which kicks off in just 93 days. The Key Details: The Meeting: Held in Washington, the two leaders discussed tournament preparations and the specific "situation in Iran." The Conflict: Iran's participation was in doubt due to an escalating regional war and recent military actions. Trump's Stance: While Trump recently told Politico he "really didn't care" if they played because the country is "running on fumes," he formally reiterated to FIFA that the team is welcome to enter the U.S. Iran's Schedule: Grouped with Belgium, Egypt, and New Zealand, Iran is set to play all three group matches on U.S. soil (Seattle, Los Angeles, and Atlanta), starting June 15. The Tension: Despite the assurance, Iran Football Federation President Mehdi Taj remains pessimistic, stating it is "hard to look at the World Cup with hope" following recent attacks.

IPL 2026 Opener: RCB vs SRH; Chinnaswamy Nod Awaited

Chennai, Mar 11: Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru will take on Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League 2026 season opener at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on March 28, the BCCI announced on Wednesday. However, all matches in Bengaluru are subject to clearance by expert committee on March 13.

other would be leaving in a day or two. This will mean that someone if like Shemron Hetmyer has to come back and join his IPL team Rajasthan Royals for the last part of their pre-season camp, he will get to spend just a few days with his family back home. Likewise for South African players. But before that the main concern would be finding the next

for polls and the dates are yet to be finalised. Keeping that in mind, the BCCI has announced the schedule only for the first 20 games that will run till April 12. In the first set of schedule announced, Chennai, Guwahati and Kolkata — three cities that has state elections — will host only two, three and three matches, respectively. While the opening weekend do not have any afternoon games, the subsequent weekends will have double-headers with first 20 matches set to be played in 16 days.

Chennai Super Kings will open their campaign in Guwahati against Rajasthan Royals on March 30 before moving to Chennai for the Punjab Kings match on April 3. CSK will take on RCB in Bengaluru on April 5. SRH, meanwhile, will play only one game at home in the first phase while travelling to Bengaluru and Mullanpur for their away games.

Delhi Capitals, unlike the last couple of years, will not start their season in Visakhapatnam. They will open with the Lucknow Super Giants game in Lucknow on April 1 before their home game at Delhi against Mumbai Indians on April 4 afternoon.



The IPL has announced the schedule even as the country is experiencing a major crisis in dwindling stock cooking gas. Not just cooking gas, but also flight restrictions due to ongoing West Asia conflict that has caused the airspace to be shut. The West Indies and South Africa players, who lost their matches last week, could only fly out of the country in batches this week. Some of them have already left, while

available flight considering the fact that it had taken a few days for them to find the right flight back home.

As reported by this newspaper, the IPL is closely monitoring the evolving situation and will take calls as per the situation demands. Add to this how much fuel the IPL uses to run generators and other energy-consuming equipment, things doesn't paint a rosy picture. Several states set to go