

# NORTH EAST BUSINESS MIRROR

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## IT Workers Fix Roads Neglected By Authorities

**Bengaluru:** After the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) failed to maintain the road connecting Kadubeesana-halli and Varthur in the Karnataka capital, a group of IT professionals, students, and residents have taken matters into their own hands to clean and fill potholes. The BBMP claimed they did not have sufficient funds, forcing the group to fix the roads. Since videos and pictures of their effort circulated online, people praised the locals but criticized the civic authorities for their negligence. According to the report, soon after news of the road conditions reached the Chief Minister's Office and Karnataka Deputy CM DK Shivakumar, he asked BBMP officials to address the issue. Although BBMP sent a cleaning machine, it only cleared a small portion of the road before residents stepped in.

## Clubs unite to urge widening of road

**Agartala:** In order to widen the road from Agartala Motor Stand to GB Pant Hospital via Ujan Abhaynagar the representatives of 5 different clubs together handed over a deputation to the Smart City Commissioner Shailesh Kumar Yadav and it was accepted by him as well.

The 5 clubs are namely Netaji Club, New Star Club, Blood Sun Club, Barnali Sangha Club and Saiba Sangha Club. The representatives of these clubs said that the road from Agartala Motor Stand to GBP Hospital via Ujan Abhaynagar is absolutely narrow and it is this road which is used by many common people for various important works.

There are many people who go to the GBP hospital through this road for any sort of emergency medical services along with the VIP road while large number of people can use the road to connect with the VIP road while moving to the airport as well. Hence it is very much necessary to widen the road and it would be of great help for many people in future.

## Birla's UltraTech buys 23 per cent stake in Chennai-based India Cements for Rs 1,889 crore



**Mumbai:** AV Birla group's UltraTech Cement has scooped up a 23 per cent stake in Chennai-based India Cements for ₹1,889 crore — which follows a rash of acquisitions by the Adani group as the consolidation in the industry gathers pace. Describing the deal as a “financial investment”, UltraTech said it will acquire up to 7.06 crores of equity shares of India Cements.

According to the block deal data on the BSE, the shares were purchased in the price range of ₹265.05-283.3.

The sellers are Gopikishan Shivkishan Damani, Kiran Devi Damani, Radhakishan Shivkishan Damani and Shrikanta Devi Damani, as per the data. R.K. Damani's Derive Investments and Derive Trading and Resorts Pvt Ltd also offloaded the shares of India Cements. Damani is the founder of India's top retail chain DMart.

UltraTech will become the second largest shareholder in ICL, which has a manufacturing capacity of 16 million tonnes (mt).

The deal comes within two weeks after Adani Group, the second largest cement maker in the country, announced the acquisition of Hyderabad-based Penna Cement at an enterprise value of ₹10,422 crore this month, which will add 14mt, taking its capacity to 93mt. UltraTech has a consolidated capacity of 152.7mt.

Since UltraTech has acquired 23 per cent in India Cements, it will not have to make an open offer for the shareholders of India Cements.

Sebi rules mandate an open offer of 26 per cent if a company acquires more than 25 per cent of a listed firm. Though the Birlas consider the acquisition as “financial”, speculations are swirling over a possible hostile takeover at a later stage.

The promoters of India Cements, led by N. Srinivasan, holds only 28.42 per cent — the difference is only 5 per cent which can also be acquired from the open market. With both Birla and Adani expanding their capacities, market circles said other small- and medium-sized cement firms could be potential targets.

UltraTech's move would thwart any attempt by Adani to get a stake in India Cements, they said. The stock markets gave a thumbs-up to the deal with shares of both India Cements and UltraTech Cement ending on a higher territory. While the UltraTech share settled at ₹11,714.80, a gain of 5.07 per cent over the last close, India Cements shot up nearly 11.50 per cent to finish at ₹293.15 on the BSE. “It is becoming clearer that larger incumbents are vying for a slice of the pie in South India,” said Choice Broking's Ashutosh Murarka, according to Reuters.

## Centre leaves interest rates on small savings schemes unchanged for July-September quarter

**Mumbai:** The government on Friday left the interest rates on small savings schemes unchanged for the quarter beginning July 1, 2024. “The rates of interest on various small savings schemes for the second quarter of 2024-25, starting from July 1, 2024, and ending on September 30, 2024, shall remain unchanged from those notified for the first quarter (March 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024) of 2024-25,” said a finance ministry notification.

Deposits under the Sukanya Samridhi scheme will attract an interest rate of 8.2 per cent, while the rate on a three-year term deposit remains at 7.1 per

cent.

The interest rates for popular PPF and post office savings deposits scheme have been retained at 7.1 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively.

The interest rate on the Kisan Vikas Patra will be 7.5 per cent, and the investments will mature in 115 months. The interest rate on the National Savings Certificate (NSC) will remain at 7.7 per cent. Like the current quarter, the Monthly Income Scheme will earn 7.4 per cent.

The government notifies the interest rates on small savings schemes, majorly operated by post offices and banks, every



quarter.

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority has permitted the T+0 settlement for National Pension System (NPS) subscribers effective July 1. Contributions received by bank until 11am (T) on any settlement day will be invested on the same day and the subscribers will get the benefit of same-day NAV.

## Nine-hour work day at Bengal IT sector

**New Delhi:** The Bengal government is extending the daily working hours for IT industry employees to make the IT services sector more attractive in the state. At present, there is a cap of 8.5 work hours a day, which will be expanded by an additional 30 minutes to 9 work hours a day, effective from July 1, 2024.

However, the maximum limit of 48 work hours a week will stand. A notification is expected to be issued by the state government shortly. With 9 hours a day, the industry is expected to benefit by 2.5 hours per week, which will also help them bag more overseas contracts and compete with other states that offer similar working hour flexibility.

State IT minister Babul Supriyo on Friday said that the decision to extend the work hours was a long-standing demand for the industry and the state was also keen to see



if this can be extended for the benefit of the industry. “This will be a big boost for the IT industry in Bengal. Instead of 8.5 hours a day, employees will now be able to work for 9 hours a day,” Supriyo said. The IT industry has broadly welcomed the move.

“It would make Bengal more attractive for IT companies and increase employer flexibility. It also formalizes the prevalent practices in the industry,” said Arnab Basu, advisory leader, PricewaterhouseCoopers Pvt Ltd, president-designate and chairperson of the IT committee,

Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

“It is a welcome move and is in line with the international standards. This will not only help increase the productivity of employees but also help in improving their skills, which is a win-win for both companies as well as for IT employees in Bengal,” said Kalyan Kar, vice president, Sector V Stakeholders Association.

“The goal is to have Calcutta and Bengal as the next happening place in terms of the IT sector,” the minister said at an event organised by the Bengal Chamber on Friday.

## Tea worker sagitation spreading in Kailasahar

**Agartala:** The tea garden workers of Manuvalley tea garden have come in support of the tea garden workers of Jagannathpur Tea garden of Kailasahar on Wednesday, as some parts of the tea garden was vandalised by a group of miscreants on Saturday midnight.

The tea garden workers protested in front of the Manuvalley tea garden office at Chandipur Assembly Constituency and demanded that the miscreants who tried to vandalise the Jagannathpur tea garden must be arrested and proper punishment must be served to them.

It was on Saturday night that a bulldozer was used to vandalise the tea garden while 30-40 thousand tea leaves were destroyed. There were four entry points to the tea garden which were destroyed as soil was reaped from these points and big holes were made as well. There are tea garden workers of four other tea gardens in Kailasahar who also work in Jagannathpur tea garden. The Jagannathpur tea garden is under Laxmi Tea Company and along

with Manuvalley tea garden there are 6 tea gardens which come under Laxmi tea garden. As all the tea garden workers work under the same tea company and this incident has made life difficult for the other tea garden workers hence they want proper steps to be taken against the miscreants. The tea garden workers informed that if any step is not taken against the miscreants then mass demonstration will be seen in the days to come.

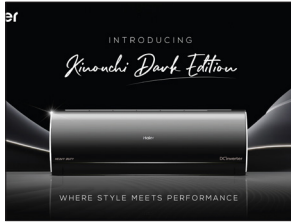


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## Haier India Introduces the Kinouchi Dark Edition Air Conditioner

**Guwahati:** Haier Appliances India, the No.1 global major appliances brand for 15 consecutive years, announced the launch of the new Kinouchi Dark Edition Air Conditioner - the perfect combination of innovative technology and premium aesthetics. Curated to provide the best in class customer experience, the new air conditioner boasts advanced technologies like Supersonic Cooling in 10 seconds, Frost Self-Clean Technology, HEXA Inverter Technology, Intelli Convertible 7-in-1, and much more. Haier Kinouchi Dark Edition air conditioner in India available at a starting price of INR 46,990.

Available in 1.6 tons and 1.0 tons, it will be available across all retail channels. Committed to producing innovative products for Indian consumers, Haier India has constantly evolved to meet consumer demands for inspired living. With a focus on



customer-driven innovation, the brand is focused on delivering a premium experience for consumers with the new launch. The brand's launch showcases its commitment to providing ultimate comfort to Indian homes through innovation and design, with the new air conditioner being locally manufactured, strengthening its 'Make in India, Made for India' stance. Commenting on the new launch, Mr. NS Satish, President, Haier Appliances India said, "With this the air conditioner, we're presenting consumers with a premium product with advanced features, ensuring they can combat the summer heat with both efficiency and style."

## Tata Motors Dominates SUV Market with Nexon and Punch Models

**Guwahati:** Tata Motors, one of India's leading automotive manufacturers, ended FY24 on a high, with its two products, Punch and Nexon, emerging as the best-selling SUVs in the country. Tata Nexon grabbed the pole position, dominating this segment three years in a row, despite aggressive competition in the segment, with Punch being a close second. Tata Nexon also recently achieved the magnificent 7 lakhs sales milestone in its 7th year making it the most loved SUV of India.

The compact SUV segment has shown remarkable growth over the years, making it the most competitive and contested segments and Tata Motors is committed to be one of the leaders in this space. It is evident from the company's consistent investment in various innovations for the Nexon and Punch.

## Turkish Airlines Named "Most Sustainable Flag Carrier Airline"

**Guwahati:** Turkish Airlines, the national flag carrier of Türkiye, continues to set an example in the aviation sector with its pioneering sustainability initiatives. Once again, Turkish Airlines has been honored with the "Most Sustainable Flag Carrier Airline" award by World Finance, marking the prestigious recognition for the third consecutive year.

Turkish Airlines is addressing climate crisis challenges by implementing voluntary carbon offset platforms, Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), sustainable in-flight products, waste management practices, and a

sustainable travel experience for its passengers.

Turkish Airlines has been awarded the Most Sustainable Flag Carrier Airline award for the third consecutive year, demonstrating its commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. The airline aims to become one of the world's top three in digitalization and aims to become a Carbon-Neutral Airline by 2050. In 2022, it incorporated Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) into its climate change mitigation plans, expanding its use to new routes in 2023. Commenting on the award, Turkish Airlines



Chairman of the Board and Executive Committee, Prof. Ahmet Bolat, said, "We will continue to add new routes to our SAF-powered network and pursue our commitment to sustainable practices throughout our operations."

## Samsung unveils the next generation of Galaxy Z smartphones

**Guwahati:** Samsung announced that it will launch the next generation of Galaxy Z smartphones and ecosystem devices at its global launch event on July 10. The Galaxy Unpacked event will be hosted in Paris — where the iconic cultural nexus and trend epicenter becomes the perfect backdrop for the rollout of our latest cutting-edge innovations, Samsung said in a statement.

Galaxy is introducing a new phase of mobile AI, integrating Galaxy AI into the latest Galaxy Z series and the entire Galaxy ecosystem, aiming to provide a world of possibilities for users. Won-joon Choi, EVP and Head of Mobile R&D, Samsung Electronics said, "Our foldables are the most versatile and flexible form factor in Samsung Galaxy and when combined with Galaxy AI, these two complementary technologies will together unlock all new possibilities".

Ahead of Samsung's invitation for Global Unpacked, one of its key executives had said that Samsung will optimize the Galaxy AI experience for the upcoming foldable devices to

deliver a completely new and unique AI experience.

Dr. S. Jaishankar at the Africa Day Celebrations: India Reaffirms Africa as Top Priority

Foreign Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar highlighted India's growing ties with Africa, emphasizing diplomatic expansions and developmental initiatives during Africa Day celebrations in New Delhi. Jaishankar, emphasized the country's unwavering commitment to Africa, stating that as the world's largest democracy and fifth-largest economy, it views Africa as a natural and indispensable partner. He expressed joy in addressing Africa Day celebrations in New Delhi.

Highlighting bilateral engagements, Jaishankar mentioned India's efforts to strengthen people-to-people ties, including the extension of e-visa facilities to 33 African countries and the inauguration of 16 new diplomatic missions across the continent. This expansion brings the total number of Indian missions in Africa to 45, underscoring India's enhanced diplomatic presence.

## S. Jaishankar raises concerns over Myanmar border violence, calls for cooperation

**Guwahati:** Foreign Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met with Myanmar's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister U Than Shwe to address the escalating violence along the Myanmar-India border. Expressing deep concern, Dr. Jaishankar stated the need for cooperation to ensure the safety of Indian citizens stranded in Myanmar's Myawadi town.

During the meeting, discussions highlighted the adverse impact of ongoing instability in Myanmar on neighboring regions. Dr. Jaishankar utilized the platform to advocate for enhanced security measures and the safe return of affected individuals. "India remains committed to engaging all stakeholders to mitigate these challenges," he affirmed.

Highlighting the multifaceted concerns, including illicit activities like drug trafficking and arms smuggling, Dr. Jaishankar stressed the urgency of addressing these issues collaboratively. The minister also pressed for credible security assurances to safeguard Indian projects in Myanmar, underscoring India's support for Myanmar's return to democratic governance.

Myanmar has been in political turmoil since a military coup in February 2021, triggering widespread protests and armed conflicts. The resulting instability has strained relations between the two nations, particularly along shared borders such as in Assam, where concerns persist over security and cross-border impacts.

## Škoda Auto India Unveils Affordable Range for Kushaq and Slavia Models

**Guwahati:** Škoda Auto India, in continuation to its initiatives of making the brand more accessible, announced the Kushaq and Slavia with higher value, enabling enhanced accessibility to its line-up of cars that are 5-star rated and fully safe for both adults and children.

The Kushaq and Slavia, previously known as Active, Ambition, and Style, have been rebranded as Classic, Signature, and Prestige. The Kushaq offers the Onyx at the value end and the Monte Carlo at the premium end. All-new pricing applies to all engine and transmission options of the Kushaq and select variants of the Slavia. Both cars are powered by a 1.0 TSI petrol with a six-speed manual and automatic, and a 1.5 TSI petrol with a six-speed manual and seven-speed DSG. Both come with six airbags as standard and have achieved a full 5-star rating under the Global NCAP tests.

The Kushaq and Slavia are now available



at a starting price of Rs. 10.69 lakh, marking a new strategy to increase accessibility to a wider customer base. The new pricing strategy is expected to be further enhanced by the launch of a compact SUV in early 2025, resulting in increased value through operational efficiencies and economies of scale. Petr Janeba, Brand Director, Škoda Auto India, said: "We have been in India for nearly a quarter of a century, and our commitment to this market is absolute."

## MSMEs embrace digital future: Vi Business Study

**Guwahati:** Vi Business announces groundbreaking insights from its 'ReadyForNext MSME Growth Insights Study Vol 2.0, 2024'. Released on World MSME Day, the study surveyed 1.6 lakh MSMEs across 16 sectors, revealing that nearly 60% of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in India plan to digitize their operations by 2025.

The study highlights the increas-

ing digital maturity among MSMEs, with sectors like IT-ITES, Financial Services, and Transportation leading the charge. Despite challenges such as knowledge gaps and financial constraints, MSMEs are leveraging technologies like cloud computing and IoT to enhance productivity and market reach. Notably, 40% of IT & ITes, Retail, and Construction sectors have adopted IoT solutions.

In the northeastern market, such as in Shillong, businesses are also gearing up for digital transformation. The study emphasizes the pivotal role played by senior leadership in driving digital initiatives, correlating higher digitalization rates with increased turnover.

Furthermore, Vi Business has launched an enhanced Digital Assessment Tool in English and Hindi to assist MSMEs in assess-

ing their digital readiness. This tool, part of Vi's #ReadyForNext initiative, evaluates businesses on digital customer engagement, workspace efficiency, and overall digital strategy. Arvind Nevatia, Chief Enterprise Business Officer at Vodafone Idea, commented on Vi Business's commitment to supporting India's digital economy and helping MSMEs unlock their growth potential.

# Khanna launches new campaign #FindYourGood

**Guwahati:** Honest Tea, a ready-to-drink beverage with organic green tea announces their newest #FindYourGood campaign in collaboration with celebrated author, columnist, and wellness enthusiast Twinkle Khanna. The newly launched film depicts Twinkle Khanna finding her calm amidst daily chaos, with #HonestTea, made from organic green tea, sourced from the famous Makaibari Tea estate.

Honest Tea is launching a campaign to encourage people to define their own way of relaxation, offering two delicious flavors: Lemon-Tulsi and Mango. The campaign will be launched through social films and digital activations, with a campaign film created by WPP Open X. The film captures a



relatable moment where Twinkle confronts her to-do list, enjoying a cup of Honest tea and stating, "it's up to you to decide what's good for you." Twinkle Khanna said, "Stimulated by the importance of finding joy and balance in the everyday, Honest Tea's campaign strives to bring about a positive transformation in the well-being of the modern woman."

Honest Tea is currently available on e-commerce platforms in select cities- Bangalore, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, Pune and Gurgaon, at the price point of Rs 60. For more details visit Honest Tea's Instagram page - @honestteaindia. The campaign film can be viewed on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IScK-b3ZUg4>.

## Minister Jayant Chaudhary highlights entrepreneurial training at NIESBUD

**Guwahati:** Jayant Chaudhary, Union Minister of State for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, visited the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) today, commending the extensive entrepreneurial training initiatives underway. Over 3000 ex-servicemen have undergone training at NIESBUD, reflecting its commitment to fostering entrepreneurship.

Chaudhary interacted with trainees and trainers and visited an exhibition showcasing products made by jail inmates and successful entrepreneurs. These exhibits, part of EDP training in Lucknow and Varanasi jails,

demonstrate the transformative impact of skill development.

The Minister met ex-servicemen currently in the Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) under the Directorate General Resettlement (DGR), Ministry of Defence. This initiative equips retiring Armed Forces personnel with entrepreneurial skills for gainful post-retirement employment. Chaudhary praised their dedication and resilience.

Master Trainers from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Haryana are also being trained under the World Bank-funded SANKALP Scheme at NIESBUD, focusing on capacity building and men-

toring new entrepreneurs. Additionally, Chaudhary reviewed a program for Fair Price Shop owners, designed in collaboration with the Department of Food and Public Distribution, covering aspects of entrepreneurship, credit sources, and digital marketing.

In Kolkata, the entrepreneurial spirit is thriving. Local markets are increasingly turning to NIESBUD for training and mentorship. Entrepreneurs are focusing on digital marketing and global trends to stay competitive. This surge in interest highlights the importance of entrepreneurship in driving economic growth in the region.

## Veedol signs Sourav Ganguly as brand ambassador to bolster market expansion

**Guwahati:** Veedol, a premier lubricant brand from Tide Water Oil Co. (India) Ltd., has appointed cricket legend Sourav Ganguly as its brand ambassador. This strategic alliance aims to enhance Veedol's brand visibility and fortify its market presence across India.

With a nearly century-old legacy, Veedol operates in over 70 countries and is esteemed as the "Professional's choice" in the lubricant sector. The brand boasts a diverse range of lubricants for both the Automotive Aftermarket (Retail) and Institutional (B2B) segments. As of March 31, 2024,

Veedol reported a consolidated revenue of Rs 1931 crore, underscoring its market strength.

"We are delighted to have a cricketering icon like Sourav Ganguly join us," said Mr. Arijit Basu, Managing Director of Tide Water Oil Co. (India) Ltd. "His leadership and determination align perfectly with Veedol's values, and this partnership will propel us forward."

Sourav Ganguly expressed enthusiasm for the collaboration, emphasizing a shared commitment to excellence: "Veedol represents high-quality performance, a principle



I hold dear. Together, we aim to inspire and connect with our audience."

Veedol's market presence spans 2-wheelers, passenger cars, agriculture, and commercial vehicles. The brand is particularly robust in rural areas and is now focusing on urban markets, including the dynamic Guwahati market, known for its thriving trade activities.

## ICICI Bank unveils 'SmartLock'

**Guwahati:** ICICI Bank announced that it has launched 'SmartLock', a unique safety measure to enable its customers to lock/unlock multiple banking services instantly, without seeking the help from a customer care executive through phone or e-mail.

The 'SmartLock' feature on iMobile Pay allows customers to lock/unlock access to internet banking, UPI, credit and debit cards, and other banking services with a single click. This innovative measure in the Indian banking sector allows customers to deactivate specific banking services and deactivate them in case of fraudulent transactions. The feature also allows scheduled standing instructions and E-mandates to be executed even when a banking service is locked by the customer. Speaking on the initiative, Mr. Sidhartha Mishra, Head – Digital Channels and Partnerships, ICICI Bank said, "The introduction of 'SmartLock' is a part of various 'safe banking' initiatives of the Bank."

To use the 'SmartLock' feature on iMobile Pay, log in, click on the feature in the home screen, select the desired banking services, and swipe to confirm. For more information and to download the app, visit the Google Play Store or Apple App Store. Customers can link their bank account with the app, generate a UPI ID, and start transacting.

## Grand Shopsy Mela sees 50% surge, attracts millions across India

**Guwahati:** Shopsy by Flipkart has concluded the fifth edition of its Grand Shopsy Mela, recording a 50% surge in daily demand. Held from June 11-16, the event drew 43% new customers, predominantly first-time e-commerce shoppers, with 70% of customers finding deals below Rs. 200.

The Mela showcased an extensive selection of over 16 crore products, catering to tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Fashion, household items, kids' collections, and budget mobiles topped the demand charts. Cities like Lucknow, Patna, Nagpur, Kanpur, and Visakhapatnam were major contributors, with growing interest from Cuttack, Guwahati, Bhagalpur, and Bankura.

Exciting deals and innovative features like voice search, image search, and an AI chatbot enhanced the shopping experience. Deals included



trendy t-shirts starting at Rs. 79, kurtis from Rs. 80, and men's shoes from Rs. 129. Sellers from Rajkot, Ghaziabad, Panipat, and Jaipur experienced 2x-3x growth, particularly in the household category.

Prathyusha Agarwal, Business Head of Shopsy, highlighted the event's success, stating, "Our mission to deliver exceptional value remains strong as we continue to innovate and adapt to consumer preferences."

Shopsy aims to maintain its growth trajectory by offering affordable, value-based products, reinforcing its status as a leading hyper-value e-commerce platform in India.

## Lisa Takes Center Stage with 'Rockstar' - New Single and Video Out Now!

**Aizawl:** LISA (Lalisa Manobal) releases her new single, "Rockstar," via LLOUD Co./RCA Records. "Rockstar" showcases LISA's ability to effortlessly flow between dexterous raps and high-energy pop vocals as she sings, "Gold teeth sitting on the dash she a rockstar. Make your favorite singer wanna rap baby lala." The new single was produced by Ryan Tedder and Sam Hamae. Listen to "Rockstar" HERE.

LISA has released the official video for "Rockstar," directed by Henry Schofield and cho-

reographed by Sean Bankhead. "Rockstar" is LISA's first solo single. The video, shot in Bangkok, showcases Lisa's authentic Thai culture and street life, showcasing her true rockstar spirit with captivating choreography.

LISA teased her new single on social media, setting a Guinness World Record by gaining 1 million followers in 2 hours and 18 minutes. The single was announced last week to fanfare and excitement from Rolling Stone, Billboard, and other publications.

## Toyota Kirloskar Motor Introduces the URBAN CRUISER TAISOR SUV

**Guwahati:** The All-New Toyota URBAN CRUISER TAISOR is Toyota Kirloskar Motor's latest addition to its robust SUV lineup in India. This dynamic SUV seamlessly blends style, advanced features, and power-packed performance, making it a perfect choice for Indian customers seeking both prestige and practicality. With its modern styling and cutting-edge technologies, the URBAN CRUISER TAISOR reinforces Toyota's commanding presence in the SUV category.

Toyota's "T GLOSS" brand offers high-quality car detailing services for the All-New Urban Cruiser Taisor,

including ceramic coating, underbody coating, silencer coating, and internal panel protection, aimed at enhancing the vehicle's appearance and providing environmental protection. Toyota has launched its second Company Owned Toyota Used Car Outlet (TUCO) in New Delhi, under the brand name "Toyota U-Trust," to provide customers with high-quality, safe used cars while ensuring convenience, transparency, and peace of mind during the buying and selling process. The Toyota Smiles Plus package offers customizable prepaid maintenance and a 3-year/100,000 km warranty. The starting price for the

product is ₹7,73,500, with bookings starting at ₹11,000 and deliveries starting in May 2024.

The Toyota SUV boasts distinctive exteriors, featuring a premium front grille, 16" machined alloy wheels, and dynamic All Black Painted Alloy Wheels on S+ and G variants, and offers exceptional performance and fuel efficiency in 1.0L Turbo, 1.2L Petrol, and E-CNG options. The Toyota iCONNECT system offers advanced technology for a convenient travel experience. The vehicle also offers comprehensive safety features like 6 airbags and EBD.

## Ecuador beat Jamaica to keep Copa America's hopes alive



**Las Vegas:** Ecuador kept their hopes of qualifying for the Copa America quarter-finals alive with a 3-1 win over Jamaica in Las Vegas on Wednesday that left the 'Reggae Boyz' on the brink of elimination. Ecuador went ahead in the 13th minute via a Jamaica own goal, when Piero Hincapié's cross from the left was deflected off Kasey Palmer's shin into the net. The South Americans doubled the lead via a Kendry Paez penalty kick just before the interval after a handball by Gregory Leigh, before Alan Miranda killed off the contest in the 91st minute with a goal from a classic counter-attack. Jamaica halved the deficit shortly after half-time, scoring their first-ever Copa America goal in their eighth match in the tournament following a corner. Ethan Pinnock's effort was blocked by the Ecuador defence but the rebound fell to Michail Antonio, who rifled the ball into the net.

# India Women aim for strong performance in historic Test against South Africa

**Chennai:** The Indian women's cricket team, buoyed by a successful ODI series, faces South Africa in a rare Test match starting Friday at Chennai. This one-off Test, the first between these two teams in a decade, spotlights several debutantes ready to make their mark in the longest format. With women's Test cricket playing a less frequent role in the international schedule, the match is an exciting opportunity for newcomers Uma Chetry, Priya Punia, Saika Ishaque, Arundhati Reddy, and Shabnam Shakil, who look to transfer their limited-overs skills to the red-ball game. India's preparations are underpinned by recent

successes, including back-to-back home Test wins against England and Australia in December 2023. These victories highlighted the prowess of seasoned players like Smriti Mandhana and Harmanpreet Kaur, who leads the side with significant experience.

The Indian squad is keen to replicate their performance from their last encounter against South Africa in 2014, a match they won by an innings and 34 runs. The push for more red-ball cricket is evident, with discussions around a potential Women's Test Championship hinting at a promising future for the format.



Coach Amol Muzumdar emphasized the importance of adapting to Test cricket and mentioned the possibility of a Women's Test Championship, which could enhance the significance of these matches. South Africa, having played just one Test in the past two years—a loss against Australia—also introduces

several potential debutantes. The team will depend on the all-round abilities of Sune Luus and Delmi Tucker to challenge the hosts.

With the match staged at Chepauk, known for its spinfriendly conditions, players like Deepti Sharma and Sneha Rana could play pivotal roles for India. South Africa's hopes in the spin department rest with Nonkululeko Mlaba, who could exploit the favorable pitch conditions. As both teams prepare, the historic venue is set to witness another chapter of women's cricket, blending the excitement of new talents and the strategic depth of Test cricket.

## Kapil Dev Appointed President of Professional Golf Tour of India

**New Delhi:** Kapil Dev, India's World Cup-winning former cricket captain, has been appointed as the new President of the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI). This new role for the cricket legend marks his deeper involvement in the sport of golf, a discipline he has passionately engaged in post his cricketering career.

At 65, Kapil, previously the Vice President of PGTI, was unanimously chosen to succeed H R Srinivasan. Known for his significant golfing skills as an amateur, with a handicap nearly reaching scratch, Kapil is poised to lead the organization to new heights.

"I have been involved with PGTI for many years, and it is an honor to be elected President by my peers," Kapil stated. He expressed excitement over working more closely with fellow golfers, many of whom he regularly plays rounds with. Kapil's efforts in promoting golf in India in-

clude his role in introducing the Kapil Dev Grant Thornton Invitational at the DLF Golf and Country Club, which boasts one of the highest prize purses on the tour.

Apart from his administrative roles, Kapil is a familiar face in international celebrity golf events such as the Dunhill Links, where he competes with global stars. "This role offers me a chance to give back to the sport that has been a major part of my life for over thirty years," Kapil remarked. "Golf is a lifelong sport, and I aim to use my position to enhance its profile and accessibility."

Kapil's tenure in cricket was illustrious, with 131 Test matches and 225 one-day internationals to his name. He led India to its first World Cup victory in 1983, a feat highlighted by his iconic 175 not out. Post-cricket, Kapil's transition to golf has seen him become a significant ambassador for the sport in India.

## Harmanpreet Singh to Captain India at Paris Olympics



**New Delhi:** Harmanpreet Singh has been appointed as the captain of the Indian men's hockey team for the upcoming Paris Olympics, with Hardik Singh serving as the vice-captain. Hockey India announced the 16-member squad on Wednesday, which includes five first-time Olympians alongside seasoned players.

The squad features prominent names such as the veteran goalkeeper PR Sreejesh and midfielder Manpreet Singh, both preparing for their fourth Olympics. They are part of a team that aims to build on their bronze medal win at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

India is placed in Pool B, facing stiff competition from teams like Belgium, Australia, Argentina, New Zealand, and Ireland. The top four teams from the pool will progress to the quarter-finals. The Indian team's preparation is in full swing at the SAI Centre in Bengaluru, where they are undergoing intensive training ahead of the Olympics.

The new entrants making their Olympic debut in Paris are Jarmanpreet Singh, Sanjay, Raj Kumar Pal, Abhishek, and Sukhjeet Singh. The team has

seen some changes since Tokyo, with players like Rupinderpal Singh and Birender Lakra retiring and Surender Kumar not being selected. The team's defense will rely on players like Harmanpreet Singh, Jarmanpreet, Amit Rohidas, Sumit, and Sanjay, while the midfield features Rajkumar Pal, Shamsheer Singh, Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, and Vivek Sagar Prasad. The forward line will include Abhishek, Sukhjeet, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Mandeep Singh, and Gurjant Singh.

India's alternate players for the Paris Olympics are Nilakanta Sharma, Jugraj Singh, and goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak. Craig Fulton, the head coach, expressed his confidence in the selection, emphasizing the depth of talent within the team and the rigorous preparation the players have undergone. He highlighted the team's readiness to adapt to various playing styles and situations.

"Our focus has been on building a cohesive team that is prepared to take on the world's best and achieve the highest honors. We are determined to play with heart, skill, and determination," Fulton stated.

## South Africa's World Cup Journey From Heartbreak to Triumph



**New Delhi:** The narrative surrounding South Africa's cricket team at ICC events has long been one of missed opportunities and heart-wrenching defeats. Historically tagged as "chokers," their journey has been fraught with near misses and dramatic losses in crucial knockout matches. However, a new chapter was written in Tarouba, Trinidad, where the Proteas, undefeated, clinched a spot in their maiden T20 World Cup final by overcoming Af-

ghanistan. Here's a recap of some of the most poignant moments from South Africa's past ICC campaigns:

1992 ODI World Cup semifinal against Australia: Misfortune struck with rain affecting the match outcome, altering the run-chase equation from 22 runs needed off 7 balls to an impossible 22 off just one ball. 1996 ODI World Cup quarterfinal against West Indies: Despite entering as favorites, South Africa succumbed to the brilliance

of Brian Lara and the cunning of West Indian spinners, ending their campaign with a 19-run defeat.

1999 ODI World Cup semifinal against Australia: In an iconic match, Lance Klusener's heroics turned to despair in a tragic run-out that resulted in a match tie, allowing Australia to advance due to earlier results. 2007 to 2015 World Cups: South Africa's struggles continued through multiple tournaments, including a dismal 149 all out against Australia in 2007 and a surprising collapse against New Zealand in 2011. They consistently faltered at critical moments, contributing to their infamous label.

2013 Champions Trophy semifinal against England: The Proteas were dramatically reduced to 80/8 before being easily bested by England, highlighting their recurring

struggles in knockout phases. 2014 T20 World Cup semifinal against India and 2015 ODI World Cup semifinal against New Zealand: These matches added to the series of painful exits, with South Africa failing to capitalize on moments that mattered most.

2022 T20 World Cup and 2023 ODI World Cup: Even more recently, South Africa's old habits surfaced with an unexpected loss to the Netherlands in 2022 and another semifinal defeat to Australia in 2023. Despite these setbacks, South Africa's latest victory not only advances them to the T20 World Cup final but also marks a significant shift away from their past narrative. As they prepare for the final, there is renewed hope that this generation of Proteas can finally change their legacy from one of heartbreak to that of champions.