

# NORTH EAST BUSINESS MIRROR

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## Sensex declines 485 points to 76,557 in early trade; Nifty drops 144 points to 23,167

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined in early trade on Friday after a three-day rally dragged by Infosys and Axis Bank.

Also, continuous foreign fund outflows and muted global trends added to the markets' decline. The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex declined 485 points to 76,557.79 in early trade. The NSE Nifty dropped 144.75 points to 23,167.05.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Infosys dropped over 5 per cent despite raising its annual sales forecast for a third time this fiscal year.

Infosys Ltd, India's second-largest IT services firm, on Thursday reported 11.46 per cent rise in the third quarter net profit on pick-up in demand, which also prompted the company to raise its annual sales forecast for a third time this fiscal year.

Axis Bank also fell by over 5 per cent post-earnings announcement. Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Tech, IndusInd Bank and ICICI Bank were the other big laggards



from the pack.

In contrast, Reliance Industries traded over 2 per cent higher after the firm reported a 7.4 per cent rise in December quarter net profit as retail business rebounded, telecom earnings surged on higher tariffs and mainstay oil and petrochemicals business delivered consistent performance. Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Nestle and Asian Paints were among the other gainers.

"There are two positives for the market today: One, the declining trend in the dollar index and the US bond yields continue. Second, the Q3 results from the big boys

RIL and Infosys are better than expected.

"These two stocks have the potential to lead a minor recovery in the market. Even though the declining dollar index and US bond yields are positive, the declines are not adequate to arrest the sustained selling by FIIs. Therefore, any significant recovery in the market will be sold into," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. In Asian markets, Seoul, and Tokyo traded lower while Shanghai and Hong Kong quoted in the positive territory.

US markets ended lower on Thursday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) off-loaded equities worth Rs 4,341.95 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.42 per cent to USD 81.63 a barrel.

The 30-share BSE index climbed 318.74 points or 0.42 per cent to revisit 77,000 level at 77,042.82 on Thursday. On the similar lines, the Nifty rallied 98.60 points or 0.42 per cent to 23,311.80.

## Rupee gains 3 paise to 86.58 against US dollar in early trade

**Mumbai:** The rupee rose 3 paise to 86.58 against the US dollar in early trade on Friday on the back of softening American currency.

Higher crude oil prices and volatile global trends failed to prevent the withdrawal of foreign funds from domestic equities, capping a significant recovery in the Indian currency, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.60 and touched a high of 86.55 before trading at 86.58 against the greenback in initial deals, 3 paise higher from its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee depreciated 21 paise to close at 86.61 against the US dollar. The local unit had settled with a gain of 13 paise at 86.40 against the dollar on Wednesday, a day after rebounding 17 paise from its lowest-ever level of 86.70 against the greenback.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02



per cent lower at 108.80. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.39 per cent but stayed elevated at USD 81.61 per barrel in futures trade.

Analysts attributed the volatility in crude oil prices and dollar index to the geopolitical uncertainties ahead of the regime change in the US, which is expected to be followed by some restrictive trade policies under President Donald Trump.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex was trading 348.64 points, or 0.45 per cent, lower at 76,694.18 points, while the Nifty was down 99.45 points, or 0.43 per cent, at 23,212.35. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) off-loaded equities worth Rs 4,341.95 crore on Thursday.

## Axis Bank Q3 net profit up 4 per cent, cautions on retail asset quality issues

Axis Bank reported a 4 per cent growth in its December quarter net profit at ₹6,304 crore, impacted by asset quality pressures from the retail segment.

Executives at the country's third largest private sector lender said the bank sees a degree of indebtedness in certain segments of the borrowers, which led to taking a deliberate call on slowing loan growth to 9 per cent in the October-December period.

The bank, however, does not have any clarity on how long the ongoing challenges will last, an executive said, adding that the tepid GDP growth is among the factors in the macro environment having a bearing on repayments.

The core net interest income grew by 9 per cent to ₹13,483 crore and the net interest margin declined by 8 basis points on year to 3.93 per cent. Its gross slippages came at ₹5,432 crore, of which ₹4,923 crore came from the retail segments including unsecured lending and agricultural loans.

Amitabh Chaudhry, the managing director and chief executive of the lender, said retail asset quality is among the three focus areas for the bank along with deposit quality and costs in the current cycle and exuded confidence that things will "stabilise" over the next few quarters. The bank, which is first among the major lenders to disclose the December performance, said retail assets grew 11 per cent and home loans, the mainstay, grew by only 3 per cent.

Among the unsecured loans, personal loans and credit card segment assets grew 17 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, and executives explained that these growth rates are calls taken after deliberation. The corporate advances grew just by 3 per cent, while those to small and medium enterprises were up 15 per cent.(PTI)



## Gold jumps Rs 700 to Rs 82,000 per 10 grams; nears record high

**Mumbai:** Rising for the third consecutive day, gold prices on Friday surged Rs 700 to trade near a record high at Rs 82,000 per 10 grams in the national capital due to persistent buying in the local markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal had settled at Rs 81,300 per 10 grams on Thursday. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity continued to shine for the third straight day by jumping Rs 700 to Rs 81,600 per 10 grams against Rs 80,900 per 10 grams in the previous close.

However, silver prices declined Rs 500 to Rs 93,500 per kg on Friday. The metal had ended at Rs 94,000 per kg in the previous trading session.

On October 31 last year, gold of 99.9 per cent purity and 99.5 per cent purity hit a record high of Rs 82,400 and Rs 82,000 per 10 grams, respectively, in the local markets.

"Gold witnessed minor profit booking from higher zones on MCX, retreating towards Rs 78,800," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

The decline comes as white flags emerge in the Middle East, signalling easing tensions, and the recent positive data from the US, including CPI, retail sales, and the

Federal Reserve's dovish outlook, appear to have been largely priced in, Trivedi added.

Silver contracts for March delivery plummeted Rs 1,093 or 1.18 per cent to Rs 91,710 per kg on the MCX on Friday. Globally, Comex gold futures fell USD 21.10 per ounce or 0.77 per cent to USD 2,729.80 per ounce. "Gold dipped slightly below USD 2,750 per ounce ahead of upcoming US housing and industrial production data," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP of Commodity Research at Kotak Securities, said.

Fed Governor Christopher Waller on Thursday said if economic data continues to weaken, the central bank might implement three or four rate cuts this year further stoking the optimism for rate cut expectations which lent support to the metal. Additionally, Comex silver futures quoted 1.47 per cent lower in the Asian market hours at USD 31.26 per ounce.

Further, uncertainties surrounding US President-elect Donald Trump's trade policies and tariff plans should contribute to limiting losses for the safe-haven asset, according to commodities experts. The US dollar remains on track to register gains for the third straight day as traders now look to the US macro data for a fresh impetus, they added.(PTI)

## India's forex reserves dropped by \$8.714 billion to \$625.871 billion, RBI reports

**Mumbai:** India's forex reserves dropped by USD 8.714 billion to USD 625.871 billion in the week ended January 10, the RBI said on Friday.

Earlier, the overall kitty dropped by USD 5.693 billion to USD 634.585 billion in the week ended January 3, the Reserve Bank of India said.

The reserves have been on a declining trend for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatilities in the rupee. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September.

For the week ended January 10, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 9.469 billion to USD 536.011 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves increased by USD 792 million to USD 67.883 billion during the week, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by USD 33 million to USD 17.781 billion, the apex bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was down by USD 4 million at USD 4.195 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.





## Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit takes place from 25th to 26th February 2025

**Guwahati:** Under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the Assam government has intensified efforts to attract global investments ahead of the Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit, scheduled to take place from 25th to 26th February 2025. To this end, high-level delegations have been sent to ASEAN, BIMSTEC, and European Union-associated regions to host roadshows promoting Assam's vast economic potential. Following successful roadshows in Mumbai and Delhi, the international campaign began on 9th January in Bangkok, where Ambassador Nagesh Singh welcomed Shri Keshab Mahanta, Assam's Minister for Revenue and Disaster Management, IT, and Science & Technology. Shri Mahanta met with Thailand's Ministry of Tourism & Sports, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, and Board of Investment, along with other key stakeholders. The delegation then proceeded to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where they organized another roadshow to showcase Assam's investment potential. The event attracted over 150 businesses which had representatives from diverse industries, including semiconductors, infrastructure, tourism, oil palm, and IT. Shri Mahanta also held meetings with prominent business chambers in Malaysia. Addressing the attendees, the Deputy High Commissioner, Subhashini Narayanan, invited them to explore Assam's opportunities and become integral to its growth story.

## NSDC recognizes with the Great Place to Work® Certification for the second time in a row

**Guwahati:** National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has been recognized with the Great Place to Work® Certification for the second time in a row, affirming its commitment to fostering an exceptional workplace culture for its employees. Awarded in the Non-Profit and Charity category, this certification reflects NSDC's continuous dedication to employee satisfaction and organizational excellence. Ved Mani Tiwari, CEO of NSDC and Managing Director of NSDC International, stated, "We are committed to nurturing an environment that promotes learning, innovation, and equitable opportunities for all." He also mentioned that NSDC celebrates its identity as a diverse and inclusive community, emphasizing the importance of mutual trust and respect throughout the organisation, which is essential for a productive and rewarding work environment.

The Great Place to Work® is a global leader in workplace culture, helping organizations create a consistently and overwhelmingly positive employee experience. In India, the Great Place to Work® collaborates with over 1400 organizations annually, spanning 22 diverse industries. NSDC has significantly contributed to India's skilling ecosystem by facilitating the implementation of several successful upskilling initiatives and vocational institutions which have elevated the benchmarks of skilling in India.

## Enjoy the harvest season with nutritious California almonds

**Guwahati:** The Harvest Season has been celebrated with great fervor across India, known by various names such as Makar Sankranti in Bengal, Pongal in the South, and Lohri, Bihu, or Baisakhi in other regions. While traditions and names may differ, the joy of preparing festive desserts and dishes unites everyone in celebrating the season's bounty. In 2025, let's embrace a healthier approach to the festive feasts by incorporating California Almonds—the most popular almonds in the world. Being the King of Dry Fruits, California Almonds are rich in 15 essential nutrients, including protein, healthy fats, dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals, offering numerous health benefits.

Ritika Samaddar, Regional Head—Dietetics, Max Healthcare—New Delhi, said, "Festivities are all about joy and celebration, with desserts often taking center stage." Fitness Master and Pilates Instructor Yasmin Karachiwala, said, "Staying active during the festive season is just as crucial as making mindful food choices." During the Harvest Season, as festivities unfold, adding almonds to festive meals enhances both flavor and nutrition.

## Toyota Kirloskar Motor establishes its 67th T-TEP and STAR scholarship initiative

**Aizawl:** Continuing its commitment to the nation's 'Skill India' and 'Make in India' missions, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) has announced the launch of its 67th Toyota Technical Education Program (T-TEP) and the "Scholarship program for Technical Education and Recognition" [STAR] initiative under T-TEP at Government Industrial Training Institute (ITI), Aizawl, Mizoram. Reaffirming TKM's unwavering commitment to fostering skill development and enhancing employability opportunities across the area. The initiative is a collaboration between

TKM, the Government of Mizoram, and dealership partner Zote Toyota, underscoring their shared commitment to enhancing youth employability and fostering skill development. The launch event was graced by Chief Guest Mr. Lalngchinglova Hmar, Minister of State - Labour, Employment, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Dept. Government of Mizoram.

Mr. Lalngchinglova Hmar, Minister of State - Labour, Employment, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Dept. Government of Mizoram, said, "It is truly encouraging



to see TKM's continued commitment to uplifting the skills and employability of youth in Mizoram and beyond." Mr. Lalngchinglova Hmar, Minister of State - Labour, Employment, Skill Development

& Entrepreneurship Dept., Government of Mizoram, said, "It is truly encouraging to see TKM's continued commitment to uplifting the skills and employability of youth in Mizoram and beyond."

## Škoda Kylaq secures a 5-star rating in Bharat NCAP crash test

**Guwahati:** Škoda Auto India's Kylaq, its first sub-4m SUV, has achieved the prestigious 5-star safety rating in the Bharat NCAP (New Car Assessment Programme). This makes the Kylaq the first Škoda vehicle to participate in Bharat NCAP testing, continuing the brand's legacy of safety excellence established by the Kushaq and Slavia. Both Škoda Auto India's 2.0 cars have achieved 5-star safety ratings in their respective Global NCAP crash tests for both adult and child occupant protection.

Petr Janeba, Brand Director, Škoda Auto India, said, "Safety is intrinsic to the Škoda DNA, and since 2008, every Škoda car has been crash-tested globally and in India, with a 5-star safety rating." The Škoda Kylaq exemplifies the brand's commitment to passenger safety, featuring over 25 active and passive safety technologies as standard across all variants. Built on the robust MQB-AO-IN platform, the Kylaq combines advanced engineering and innovative features tailored to Indian roads and driving conditions. The Kylaq now carries this tradition forward, showcasing Škoda's dedication to delivering world-class safety standards tailored specifically for the Indian market.

## Trident Group launches Karamyogi drive to recruit 3,000 skilled workers across India



**Guwahati:** Trident Group, a global leader in textiles and paper manufacturing, has unveiled its Karamyogi Recruitment Drive to hire 3,000 skilled individuals nationwide. Focused on fostering inclusivity and socio-economic development, this initiative is a significant step towards the company's vision of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India).

The drive primarily targets Madhya Pradesh (Budhni) and Punjab (Dhaura and Sanghera), emphasizing opportunities for women and individu-

als with sports backgrounds. Offering a starting salary of ₹50,000 per month for an 8-hour workday, the recruitment campaign promises dignified wages and better work-life balance. The initiative is set to benefit over 15,000 family members indirectly while contributing to local economies, tax revenue, and skill development.

In Guwahati, the drive has sparked considerable interest, with its competitive salaries and structured work environment appealing to the region's growing skilled workforce. As Guwahati emerges as a hub for skilled talent, industry insiders anticipate this initiative could encourage similar drives, boosting economic prospects in the Northeast.

"The Karamyogi recruitment drive aligns with our vision to create meaningful work opportunities while empowering communities," said PoojaLuthra, CHRO of Trident Group.

The recruitment process involves online registration, offline assessments, and skill evaluations, with roles spanning Operations, Engineering, and Administration.

## DSP Mutual Fund launches India's first BSE Sensex Next 30 Index Fund and ETF

**Guwahati:** DSP Mutual Fund has launched the DSP BSE Sensex Next 30 Index Fund and DSP BSE Sensex Next 30 ETF, marking India's first investment products focused on the BSE Sensex Next 30 Index. These open-ended equity schemes aim to offer investors exposure to 30 companies just below the BSE SENSEX, showcasing potential for robust growth and market leadership.

The BSE Sensex Next 30 Index includes high-growth large-cap companies often under-represented in traditional large-cap indices. Diversified across sectors, the index allocates 18% each to Consumer Discretionary and Commodities, 19% to Financial Services,

and 10% each to Energy and Healthcare. This segment provides a balanced mix of stability and growth opportunities for long-term investors.

Speaking on the launch, Anil Ghelani, CFA, Head of Passive Investments & Products at DSP Asset Managers, said, "This fund offers a differentiated approach within the large-cap space, ideal for investors seeking diversification and long-term wealth creation." The New Fund Offer (NFO) is open from January 10 to January 24, 2025.

In Guwahati, investors are showing increasing interest in diversified equity schemes like DSP's new offerings. Financial advisors in the region empha-



size the fund's appeal due to its low overlap with existing large-cap indices, making it an attractive option for long-term portfolios. Guwahati's rising participation in equity markets highlights a growing appetite for innovative financial products.

Backed by a 25-year legacy, DSP Mutual Fund continues to innovate, offering products aligned with investor needs while promoting wealth creation through responsible investing.



## JSW MG Motor launches India's first electric roadster and Limousine

**Guwahati:** JSW MG Motor India has expanded its electric vehicle (EV) portfolio by unveiling the MG Cyberster and MG M9 under its new luxury brand channel, MG Select, at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. With these launches, the company aims to redefine accessible luxury in the EV market. Pre-reservations for both models have commenced.

The MG Cyberster, India's first all-electric roadster, combines the heritage of classic roadsters with cutting-edge design and technology. Its scissor doors and aerodynamic

Kammback design, paired with a lightning-fast acceleration of 0 to 100 kmph in just 3.2 seconds, make it a futuristic offering. Meanwhile, the MG M9, India's first electric three-row presidential limousine, redefines luxury with reclining otoman seats, 8 massage modes, and a touchscreen armrest, ensuring a premium experience for discerning buyers.

Speaking at the event, Parth Jindal, Director of JSW MG Motor India stated the company's commitment to sustainable mobility and luxury, while CEO Emeritus Rajeev Chaba

highlighted the strategic focus on accessible luxury through MG Select.

In Guwahati, the MG Windsor has seen remarkable success, becoming a favorite among EV buyers. With its stylish design and efficiency, the Windsor has made a significant impact in the region's growing EV market, reflecting Guwahati's shift towards sustainable mobility.

MG Select also plans to open exclusive experience centers in 12 cities, blending innovation and sophistication to enhance the luxury EV segment in India.

## Seagram's Royal Stag BoomBox returns for its third edition



**Shillong:** Seagram's Royal Stag BoomBox returns for its third edition, has blended Bollywood's iconic melodies with contemporary hip-hop beats. With this season being produced by Mirchi, the immersive music festival showcased its upcoming lineup at an exclusive media preview in Mumbai on January 14th, 2025. This unique cultural fusion continues to redefine the intersection of traditional and modern Indian music, embodying the brand's 'Living it Large' philosophy.

Music has been a key consumer engagement pillar for the brand. Royal Stag BoomBox audaciously brings together Bollywood's timeless melodies with hip-hop's raw energy, creating the original sound of today's generation, Generation Large. The festival's unique format creates

a distinct sound that resonates with today's youth—a tribe that makes rather than follows trends. The festival will tour across four major youth centers—Hyderabad, Mumbai, Gurugram, and Guwahati—featuring headline musical acts alongside cutting-edge interactive experiences. Kartik Mohindra, Chief Marketing Officer and Head of Global Business Development at Pernod Ricard India, said, "The universal language of music, especially in live experiences, has this remarkable power to unite people and create moments of pure magic." Speaking about the third edition of Royal Stag BoomBox, Ajay Gupte, CEO-South Asia, Wavemaker said, "The overwhelming success of previous iterations proved we are tapping into something truly special."

## Vi users can watch live Darshan of the Maha Kumbh Mela

**Guwahati:** The Maha Kumbh Mela, a once-in-12-years spiritual phenomenon spanning 156 km with 22 pontoon bridges, has been held from 13th January to 26th February, 2025, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. This massive event is expected to have a footfall of 40 crore pilgrims this year, making it one of the largest human gatherings. To make The Maha Kumbh Mela accessible to all, leading telecom operator Vi has partnered with Shemaroo to live-stream it on Vi Movies & TV.

Vi customers can experience the Shahi Snans on Makar Sankranti (January 14), Mauni Amavasya (January 29), and Maha Shivratri (February 26), as saints and devotees take holy dips in the sacred waters. Users can also access exclusive recorded content, anchored tours of Akharas, cultural performances of folk music and devotional songs, as well as stories of the colossal infrastructure supporting millions of pilgrims. This initiative underscores Vi's commitment to leverage technology for connecting people. Devotees can embark on this spiritual journey on the Vi Movies & TV App or Vi App under the Vi Movies & TV Tab and live stream the content anytime, anywhere—powered by Shemaroo.

## Angel One alerts investors to fraudulent social media groups and unauthorized schemes

**Guwahati:** Angel One Ltd, a leading fintech company, has raised an alarm about the rise of fraudulent social media groups impersonating its brand. The company revealed that several unauthorized groups, operating on platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram, are using its name and logo, as well as the images of its senior executives, to deceive the public. These groups are engaging in illegal activities such as providing unregistered securities advice and making false claims about returns.

"We urge investors to be cautious and verify the authenticity of any communication claiming to be from us. Unauthorized investment advice and promises of guaranteed returns are strictly prohibited," said a company spokesperson. Angel One emphasized that it does not engage in such practices and clarified that all legitimate transactions should be conducted through its official



platforms only.

In Guwahati, investors in the region are advised to exercise caution as such scams are gaining traction across various parts of India. Guwahati investors must be particularly vigilant, ensuring they rely on authorized sources for any financial dealings and avoid unofficial social media groups or apps.

Angel One also encourages investors to report suspicious activities through the Cybercrime portal and law enforcement agencies to safeguard their financial security.

## Guwahati's hairstylist makes the city proud by making it to the top thirty finalist

**Guwahati:** BhaskarJyoti Saikia of Pink Villa Salon, Ambikagirinagar, has placed Guwahati on the national map by securing a spot among the top 30 hairstylists in the Godrej Professional Spotlight. This initiative, led by Godrej Professional, celebrates exceptional hairstyling talent and equips participants with the tools to excel in the competitive salon industry.

The grand finale in Mumbai showcased 30 finalists who presented hair colour looks inspired by Godrej Professional's Surreal Collection. Bhaskar's innovative style, backed by masterclasses from industry leaders like YianniTsapatori, stood out. Additionally, the finalists received government-recognized certifications under the National Skill Qualification Framework, enabling them to access professional loans and further career opportunities.



In Guwahati, Bhaskar's success is a testament to the city's evolving grooming market, where demand for premium hairstyling and salon services is on the rise. Local businesses are now poised to leverage such achievements, positioning the city as a hub for creative professionals in the beauty and wellness sector.

AbhinavGrandhi, General Manager at Godrej Consumer Products Ltd, lauded the initiative for empowering hairstylists through education and exposure. With support from the Beauty & Wellness Sector Skill Council, Godrej Professional Spotlight is set to redefine standards in India's beauty industry.

## JSW MG Motor India showcases its new-age technologies and forward-thinking initiatives

**Guwahati:** JSW MG Motor India, in line with its vision of Drive. Future, has showcased its new-age technologies and forward-thinking initiatives on the second day of the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. Solidifying its technological leadership, JSW MG Motor India demonstrated its competencies in CASE (Connected, Autonomous, Shared, and Electric) technology. With a focus on innovation, sustainability, and customer-centric initiatives, the

brand presented pragmatic solutions that elevate mobility for the modern era.

Taking the vision of Drive. Future to the next level, JSW MG Motor India showcased a diverse range of powertrain options, including Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), and Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) models. These include innovative models with strong battery management,

the IM5 and IM6, a premium plug-in hybrid electric vehicle MG HS, the grand SUV MG MAJESTOR, D+ Segment SUV, the Comet BLACKSTORM and the luxurious MG7 Trophy Edition, among others. Rajeev Chaba, CEO Emeritus, JSW MG Motor India, said, "Our vision of Drive. Future is rooted in leveraging advanced technology to transform mobility into a sustainable, connected, and customer-centric experience."

## Swiggy launches 'Swiggy Serves' to tackle food wastage and hunger

**Guwahati:** Swiggy (Swiggy Ltd, NSE: SWIGGY/BSE: 544285), India's pioneering on-demand convenience platform, has launched "Swiggy Serves", a flagship program aimed at minimizing waste across its value chain and addressing hunger. As part of this campaign, Swiggy announced its inaugural partnership with the Robin Hood Army (RHA), a volunteer-driven organization. Together, Swiggy and RHA aim to create a meaningful impact by redistributing surplus food from Swiggy's restaurant partners to underserved commu-

nities. Through this collaboration, the two organizations have set an ambitious goal of providing 50 million meals by 2030, by leveraging technology to reimagine food redistribution.

The pilot phase of the Swiggy Serves-RHA partnership has already delivered encouraging results. Over 2,000 meals have been redistributed across 33 cities, with more than 126 restaurant partners joining the initiative. Speaking at the launch, Rohit Kapoor, CEO, Swiggy Food Marketplace, shared, "At Swiggy, we've always seen



ourselves as experts in logistics and consumer experience." On their partnership with Swiggy, Neel Ghose, Co-Founder, Robin Hood Army, shared, "Robin Hood Army is thrilled to come together with Swiggy for this shared mission of reducing hunger."



## NorthEast United Play Out Gripping 1-1 Draw with FC Goa

**Guwahati:** NorthEast United FC played out an intense 1-1 draw with FC Goa in a thrilling Indian Super League (ISL) match at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium on Tuesday. The Highlanders came from behind to level the score, with FC Goa initially taking the lead in the 65th minute through Moham-mad Yasir, only for NorthEast's Jithin MS to equalize in the 76th minute. The match was closely contested, with both sides displaying moments of attacking flair and defensive resilience. This draw marked the 11th stalemate between the two teams, the most in ISL history.

NorthEast United started the match with plenty of energy, as the likes of Guillermo Fernandez and Alaaed-dine Ajarai made attacking runs to keep FC Goa's defense busy. However, the first major oppor-tu-

nity came for FC Goa when Dejan Drazic delivered a pinpoint cross to Armando Sadiku in the penalty area. Unfortunately, Sadiku's header lacked power and did not trouble NorthEast goalkeeper Gurmeet Singh. Ajarai came close to scoring minutes later, receiving a long pass from Buanthanglun Samte and being through on goal. However, his attempt was tipped over the bar by FC Goa's goalkeeper Hritik Tiwari, keeping the game scoreless. Despite absorbing pressure from the hosts, FC Goa ended the first half strongly and carried that momentum into the second half. NorthEast, however, lacked the final touch to break down the sturdy Goa defense.

In the 59th minute, NorthEast's assistant coach Naushad Moosa made two substitutions, bringing on Nestor Albiach and Ninthoinganba



Meetei for Guillermo Fernandez and Muthu Mayakkannan, respectively. Nestor almost made an immediate impact, combining with Ajarai, but the ball was cleared off the line by FC Goa's Odei Onaindia.

The breakthrough came for FC Goa in the 65th minute against the run of play. Jay Gupta sent a long ball into the penalty area, and Mohammed

Yasir, after a quick exchange with Brison, hammered the ball into the bottom right corner to give FC Goa the lead. NorthEast responded quickly, using the counterattack to find an equalizer. Ajarai, holding up the ball well, played a brilliant through pass to Jithin MS, who calmly slotted the ball past Hritik Tiwari in the 76th minute to make it 1-1.

### NCA's Sitanshu Kotak Named India's Batting Coach; Abhishek Nayar Under Pressure

**New Delhi:** Former Saurashtra batter Sitanshu Kotak has been appointed as India's new batting coach ahead of the limited-overs series against England and the Champions Trophy next month. This change follows scrutiny of assistant coach Abhishek Nayar's performance during the recent tour of Australia, where India's batting issues, particularly technical shortcomings, were exposed. Kotak, a longstanding member of the National Cricket Academy (NCA), has extensive experience as a batting coach and has toured with both the senior and A teams in recent years. The BCCI believes that Nayar's expertise hasn't been beneficial to the players, especially with India's batting woes being evident in Australia, where Virat Kohli's struggles with the ball outside the off stump became a recurring issue. India lost the five-match series 1-3.

Known for his dogged approach to batting, Kotak has an impressive domestic record, having scored over 8,000 first-class runs, including 15 centuries, in 130 appearances. He is renowned for his cover drive and flick shots, which were his signature strokes during his playing days. This appointment is seen as a temporary measure as the India A shadow tour and the series against England are scheduled, but Kotak's experience and longstanding relationship with the NCA make him a trusted figure in the batting department.

## Pant Makes Himself Available for Delhi's Upcoming Ranji Tie Against Saurashtra

**New Delhi:** India wicket-keeper-batter Rishabh Pant has confirmed his availability for Delhi's upcoming Ranji Trophy match against Saurashtra, scheduled to begin on January 23 in Rajkot, according to Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) secretary Ashok Sharma. Pant, who last played a Ranji Trophy match during the 2017-2018 season, will join the Delhi squad directly in Rajkot for the crucial encounter.

However, there is still uncertainty regarding the participation of Virat Kohli, who has not played in the Ranji Trophy for Delhi since 2012. Both Pant and Kohli have been named in Delhi's probable for the re-remainder of the season, but Kohli's availability remains unclear. Shar-



ma expressed hope that Kohli would play but mentioned that they have not received any confirmation from him yet. "Yes, Pant has confirmed his availability for the next Ranji game and will join the squad in Rajkot directly. About Virat Kohli, we want him to play, but we haven't

heard from him. Harshit Rana has been selected for the T20 squad, so he is unavailable," Sharma said to PTI.

The issue of players like Rohit Sharma and Kohli returning to red-ball cricket has sparked significant debate, especially following India's disappointing

series loss in Australia. Cricket legends like Sunil Gavaskar and Ravi Shastri have voiced their support for the duo to play in domestic matches to regain form. While Rohit Sharma's training session with Mumbai on Tuesday has fueled speculation about his availability, it remains to be seen if he will join the next round of Ranji Trophy matches starting January 23.

Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal are also expected to feature for their respective state teams. The inclusion of these star players in Delhi's squad is subject to their availability. Delhi currently sits in fourth place in Group D with 14 points from five games and will be looking to build on its performance in the upcoming matches.

## Gukesh Faces First Test in Tata Steel Chess After Becoming World Champion

**Wijk Aan Zee :** Grandmaster D Gukesh will face his first major challenge since becoming world champion when the Tata Steel Chess tournament kicks off on Friday. After winning the World Championship in December in Singapore, Gukesh took a break from competitive chess, missing the World Rapid and Blitz Championship in New York. He will return to action for the first time on Saturday, following his victory over China's Ding Liren.

The Tata Steel Chess tournament, often referred to as the "Wimbledon of Chess," will see five Indians competing in this pres-

tigious event for the first time. Gukesh, now the World Champion, will aim to continue his form. The tournament is one of the oldest and most renowned, dating back to 1938.

Arjun Erigaisi, the highest-rated Indian in the competition, will also compete. Arjun has been in stellar form in 2024, becoming only the second Indian after Viswanathan Anand to cross the 2800 ELO-rating mark. Along with him, R Praggnanandhaa, Vidit Gujrathi (who had to withdraw, replaced by P Harikrishna), and Leon Luke Mendonca (a rising star from the Challengers section) will represent India.

The 14-player, 13-round event will also feature top players like Fabiano Caruana, defending champion Wei Yi, and a strong contingent from other countries, including the Russian-turned-Slovenian Vladimir Fedoseev, and Dutch grandmasters Anish Giri, Jorden van Foreest, and Max Warmerdam. Gukesh, who almost won the 2024 edition, will look to make an impact in this year's competition. His performance will be closely watched, as will the other Indians in the tournament, with R Vaishali and Divya Deshmukh competing in the Challengers section.

### Playing Domestic Cricket Best Way to Regain Form: Yuvraj on Rohit, Kohli

**New Delhi:** Former India batter Yuvraj Singh has emphasized the importance of domestic cricket for players struggling to regain form, particularly in the wake of India's loss to Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. The debate over whether star players like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli should return to Ranji Trophy matches has gained momentum, as both batters faced difficulties with their form during the series. Yuvraj, speaking at the launch event of the Celebrity Cricket League, stated, "Domestic cricket is important. I have always felt that if you have time and you are not performing, you should definitely come and play domestic cricket. That is the best way to get practice and game time. I feel domestic cricket is very important if you have the time and if you are not injured.

"While the discussion has intensified, with figures like Sunil Gavaskar, Ravi Shastri, and India head coach Gautam Gambhir stressing the significance of domestic cricket for regaining form, the two stars have had varying levels of involvement. Rohit Sharma has been training with Mumbai's squad ahead of the re-summation of the Ranji Trophy on January 23, whereas Virat Kohli has not yet shown signs of playing in the tournament for Delhi. Other players, including Rishabh Pant, Yashasvi Jaiswal, and Shubman Gill, have confirmed their availability for their respective teams in the domestic circuit.

Yuvraj also praised Rohit's decision to rest himself from the final Test in Sydney due to his poor form, noting that many players could learn from such decisions. He added that critics often change their views based on one series, and he preferred to look at the long-term progress of the team. "Rohit Sharma has won the T20 World Cup as captain, led India to the ODI World Cup final, and steered Mumbai Indians to five IPL titles. How many captains have stepped down from a match to give someone else a chance? Not many," Yuvraj pointed out.