

NORTH EAST BUSINESS MIRROR

Vol.No. 03 ■ Issue - 29 ■ North East Business Mirror ■ Thursday, 30 October, 2025

■ Edition - Guwahati

■ Pages - 6 ■ Price ₹ 3

OpenAI's big bet on India: Free ChatGPT Go access for 1 year starting Nov 4

New Delhi: OpenAI on Tuesday announced that it will offer free access to ChatGPT Go for one year to all users in India who sign up during a special promotional period starting November 4. The offer comes as part of OpenAI's celebration of its first DevDay Exchange event in Bengaluru, which will also be held on the same day. ChatGPT Go is OpenAI's recently launched subscription plan that gives users access to many of the platform's advanced features, including higher message limits, more image generation, longer memory, and the ability to upload more files and images. All these features are powered by OpenAI's latest GPT-5 model.

The plan was first launched in India in August this year after users requested a more affordable way to use ChatGPT's advanced tools. Within just a month of its launch, the number of paid ChatGPT users in India more than doubled. Following this strong response, OpenAI expanded ChatGPT Go to nearly 90 countries worldwide. India is currently ChatGPT's second-largest market and one of the fastest-growing. Millions of users across the country -- students, professionals, and developers -- are already using ChatGPT daily to learn new skills, boost creativity, and build innovative projects.

The new offer reflects OpenAI's continued "Indiafirst" approach and supports the government's



IndiaAI Mission, which aims to expand access to artificial intelligence tools and encourage innovation across the country. OpenAI is also working with civil society groups, educational platforms, and government-led initiatives to make AI tools more accessible and inclusive. Existing ChatGPT Go subscribers in India will also be eligible for the free 12-month offer, with more details to be announced soon.

Nick Turley, Vice President and Head of ChatGPT, said the company has been inspired by how Indian users are using ChatGPT Go. "Ahead of our first DevDay Exchange event in India, we're making ChatGPT Go freely available for a year to help more people across India easily access and benefit from advanced AI. We're excited to see the amazing things our users will build, learn, and achieve with these tools," he said.

Rapid 5G rollout, adoption lay foundation for India's 6G vision: Govt

New Delhi: The Government is taking major steps to make the country a global leader in next-generation communication technologies, according to official data on Sunday.

Building on the rapid rollout and adoption of 5G, the government is now focusing on developing 6G technology under its "Bharat 6G Vision," which aims to make India a hub for advanced telecom innovation by 2030. According to the government, India's 6G vision is based on the principles of affordability, sustainability, and universal access. The goal is to ensure that every citizen benefits from high-speed connectivity while promoting indigenous research, innovation, and collaboration with global partners. The initiative is closely linked with the national goal of building a 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India)



by 2047. Sixth-generation or 6G technology will be the next major upgrade in wireless communication, following 5G. It is expected to be 1,000 times faster than 5G, with almost zero delay in data transfer. This will enable real-time applications such as remote surgeries, advanced robotics, smart cities, and immersive virtual experiences. To support the development of 6G, the government has launched several initiatives. It has funded two advanced testbeds -- the 6G Terahertz (THz) Testbed and the Advanced Optical Communication Testbed -- to boost research and innovation.

GIFT Nifty touches all-time high open interest worth \$21.23 billion



Mumbai: Multi-asset exchange NSE International Exchange (NSEIX) on Tuesday informed that its international Nifty futures contract, GIFT Nifty, achieved a record open interest (OI) on October 24. GIFT Nifty saw an open interest of 4,10,100 contracts worth \$21.23 billion or Rs 1,86,226 crore, the statement said. This surpassed the previous high of \$20.84 billion recorded on September 24, 2024, according to the exchange.

The continuous increase in open interest highlights the broader participation and reflects the trust of the global investors in GIFT Nifty, the statement said. Trading turnover on NSEIX has been growing exponentially since the commencement of the full-scale operation of GIFT Nifty on July 3, 2023, it said. "We are glad to witness the success of GIFT Nifty and express our sincere gratitude to all the participants for their overwhelming support and making GIFT Nifty a successful contract," the exchange noted.

Since the first day of full-scale operations, GIFT Nifty has witnessed a total cumulative volume of over 52.22 million contracts with total cumulative turnover of \$2.37 trillion till October 24, 2025, it added.

Passenger vehicle exports from India jump 18 pc in April-September



New Delhi: Passenger vehicle exports from India grew 18 per cent year-on-year (YoY) during the April-September period of the current financial year, according to data from the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). The growth was driven by strong global demand, especially from markets in the Middle East and Latin America. During the first half of FY2026, total passenger vehicle exports rose to 4,45,884 units, compared to 3,76,679 units in the same period last year.

Exports of passenger cars increased 12 per cent to 2,29,281 units, while utility vehicle shipments surged 26

per cent to 2,11,373 units. Van exports also grew sharply by 36.5 per cent to 5,230 units. Maruti Suzuki India remained the top exporter, shipping 2,05,763 units in April-September, marking a 40 per cent jump from 1,47,063 units in the same period last year.

Hyundai Motor India followed with exports of 99,540 units, up 17 per cent from 84,900 units a year ago. Nissan Motor India exported 37,605 units, compared to 33,059 units in the previous year. Other major exporters included Volkswagen India (28,011 units), Toyota Kirloskar Motor (18,880 units), Kia India (13,666 units), and Honda Cars India (13,243 units).

Microsoft, OpenAI reach new deal to allow ChatGPT to restructure

Microsoft said on Tuesday it has reached a deal with OpenAI to allow the ChatGPT maker to restructure itself into a public benefit corporation, following which Microsoft would hold a stake of about \$135 billion - or 27% - in the AI startup.

Microsoft shares jumped 4% on the deal, which could clear the way for OpenAI to become publicly traded in the future.

Microsoft also said that it has secured a deal with OpenAI where the ChatGPT maker will purchase \$250 billion of Azure



cloud computing services. In exchange, Microsoft will no longer have a right of first refusal to provide computing services to OpenAI.

Microsoft's earlier agreement

with OpenAI gave it intellectual property rights to OpenAI's products and models until 2030, or until OpenAI achieved artificial general intelligence (AGI).

India emerges as strong performing market for global consumer giants

New Delhi: India is increasingly becoming a key growth market for global consumer goods companies, driven by the rapid rise of e-commerce and quick-commerce platforms.

The country's expanding digital retail ecosystem is enabling faster market penetration and boosting online sales, making India one of the standout performers for international consumer brands. Global consumer goods majors Unilever and

L'Oreal reported a sharp rise in online sales during the September quarter, driven by the rapid expansion of quick-commerce and digital retail channels. French beauty giant L'Oreal's CEO Nicolas Hieronimus said India has become a "game changer" for the company, thanks to the rise of quickcommerce and traditional e-commerce platforms that allow deeper market penetration.

"Ten days ago, I was in India, where

it's clearly a game changer for us. Quick commerce and traditional platforms now allow us to reach consumers across the country, something we couldn't do before," Hieronimus said during the company's earnings call. British consumer goods major Unilever also highlighted India's strong contribution to its digital growth. CEO Fernando Fernandez said digital commerce now accounts for 17 per cent of Unilever's total revenue.

Amrita's Mizoram STI Hub opens new facility, drive rural innovation and market opportunities

Guwahati: The newly inaugurated Amrita-Mizoram Science, Technology & Innovation (STI) Hub at Mizoram University marks a significant milestone in bridging science and community welfare in the state. Established by Amrita VishwaVidyapeetham in collaboration with the university under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the hub provides permanent facilities for laboratories, training, and innovation initiatives tailored for Mizoram's hilly terrain.

Since its launch two years ago, the hub has impacted over 9,000 residents, with more than 70% of beneficia-



ries being women, through programs in food processing, bamboo craft, digital literacy, and health awareness. The hub leverages Amrita's Live-in-Labs® and AMMA-CHI Labs to introduce frugal, locally adapted technol-

ogies such as solar dryers, eco-friendly bamboo machinery, and water purification systems, co-created with local communities.

Dr. Raghu Raman, Dean of Amrita School of Business, emphasized, "This is

more than a building; it's a bridge between science and society." Mizoram's Rural Development Minister, Dr. Lalnilawma, called the facility "a turning point for rural innovation" that strengthens women's participation and sustains livelihoods.

In Guwahati, the hub's initiatives have begun influencing regional trade and enterprise. Bamboo craft products, solar-dried produce, and other locally innovated goods are increasingly finding markets in Guwahati, boosting tribal entrepreneurship and creating new opportunities for cross-border trade between Mizoram and Assam.

Seasonal immunity boost drives demand for nutrient-rich foods in Guwahati



Guwahati: With seasonal transitions underway, health and nutrition experts are emphasizing the importance of strengthening immunity, creating notable opportunities in the wellness and food markets. Fluctuating temperatures, increased exposure to allergens, and lifestyle changes can weaken the immune system, leaving individuals more vulnerable to colds, flu, and fatigue.

Ritika Samaddar, Regional Head of Dietetics at Max Healthcare, New Delhi, highlights the role of diet and lifestyle in maintaining immunity. "A strong immune system begins with a balanced diet, mindful habits, and a healthy lifestyle. Include nutrient-rich foods such as almonds, green vegetables, and fatty fish, along with light exercise, to keep your body's natural defenses strong," she said. She particularly recommends California Almonds, which are rich in vitamin E, zinc, and copper—key minerals that help bolster immunity during the seasonal shift.

In Guwahati, local retailers report a surge in demand for immune-boosting products, including California Almonds, salmon, fresh vegetables, and fiber-rich fruits. Sales in supermarkets and organic stores have increased by nearly 20% over the past month, reflecting growing consumer awareness of seasonal wellness.

Union Min Jayant Chaudhary strengthens India-Philippines ties in Global South Skills and Entrepreneurship Mission

Guwahati: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary led a high-profile Knowledge Exchange Mission to the Philippines from October 20–22, 2025, aimed at strengthening Global South cooperation in skills and entrepreneurship. "When nations of the Global South learn from each other, we don't just exchange knowledge—we build collective strength for a shared future," Chaudhary said during the visit, facilitated by the World Bank.

The delegation engaged with top Philippine officials, including H.E. Bienvenido Laguesma, Secretary of Labor and Employment, and H.E. Jose Francisco Benitez, Director General of TESDA, discussing joint initiatives to enhance employability, digital transformation, and data-driven workforce policies. Sessions also included the Department of Migrant Workers, Philippine Statistics Authority, and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, focusing on equitable skill development and capacity building.

In Guwahati, the mission highlights opportunities for local skilling and entrepreneurship initiatives to align with international



standards. Industry stakeholders in the region see potential collaborations in digital skill training, vocational programs, and youth employment schemes, leveraging learnings from the India-Philippines partnership.

The visit concluded with a commitment to deepen institutional partnerships, share best practices, and promote inclusive growth, showcasing India's leadership in human capital development across the Global South. The Indian delegation included senior officials and representatives from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Telangana.

India sets global spice benchmarks, finalizes standards for vanilla, coriander and large cardamom

Guwahati: India's leadership in the global spice trade was reinforced as it successfully hosted the 8th Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) in Guwahati, finalizing international standards for large cardamom, vanilla, and coriander. The standards are now recommended for adoption by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, providing uniform benchmarks for farmers, processors, and exporters worldwide.

Established in 2013, CCSCH operates under the FAO and WHO, with India's Spices Board serving as the

Secretariat. Over 30 countries and observers participated, reflecting global recognition of the importance of harmonized, science-based spice standards. The vanilla standard, which had seen multiple discussions due to technical complexities in flavor chemistry and processing, was successfully finalized, highlighting the collaborative approach of member nations.

Smt. P. Hemalatha, Secretary of the Spices Board, emphasized that the new standards will strengthen India's export competitiveness and facilitate smoother market

access for domestic producers, while enhancing consumer confidence globally.

Guwahati is expected to witness increased business activity. Traders and processors in the city anticipate better pricing, enhanced quality compliance, and higher demand for Codex-certified spices, positioning Guwahati as a key hub in both domestic and international spice supply chains.

India's successful hosting of CCSCH8 consolidates its position as a trusted partner in global spice trade, driving quality, transparency, and growth across the sector.

IFAT India 2025 concludes with record global participation, spotlights India's green technology growth

Guwahati: IFAT India 2025, the country's largest trade fair for water, sewage, solid waste, and recycling solutions, concluded in Mumbai with unprecedented global participation and strong sustainability momentum. Organised by Messe Muenchen India from October 14–16 at the Bombay Exhibition Centre, the 12th edition witnessed over 18,000 visitors and 560 exhibitors from more than 30 countries across 45,000 sqm.



The event featured six international pavilions from Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, South Korea, Hungary, and Australia. Actor and UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador Dia Mirza inaugurated the fair, urging greater collaboration to combat the climate crisis. Cutting-edge launches included Alfa Laval's SG2-series centrifuges, Fornnax's R-MAX3300 shredder, and Danfoss India's edge computing-enabled drives. India's first "Chief Engineers' Forum for Swachh Bharat" was also launched, reinforcing structured peer learning among municipal engineers.

In Guwahati, experts noted that the city's expanding industrial base and growing population present a significant opportunity for adopting advanced waste management and water reuse technologies showcased at IFAT India. Local environmental firms and municipal representatives from Assam expressed interest in partnerships to enhance sustainability-driven infrastructure in the Northeast.

Building on this success, IFAT Delhi will debut from April 22–24, 2026, followed by IFAT India 2026 in Mumbai from September 9–11.

Aadhar Housing Finance launches skill development program to empower rural women in Assam



Guwahati: Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. (AHFL) has launched a skill development initiative aimed at boosting livelihood opportunities and financial independence for underprivileged women in Assam. The program will benefit 300 women across seven villages in Dakshin Bholagaon and Ranigaon Gram Panchayats of Chayani Rani Block, Rani Development District, focusing on handloom weaving, turmeric and black pepper processing, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy.

Implemented in collaboration with Assam and Meghalaya-based NGO Grameen Sahara, the initiative connects women with banks, microfinance institutions, and market access, enabling sustainable rural entrepreneurship. Rishi Anand, MD & CEO of AHFL, said, "This initiative strengthens traditional skills, promotes financial awareness, and links women to market opportunities, empowering them to earn a livelihood and achieve self-reliance."

In Guwahati, the program is expected to create significant business linkages. By channeling handloom products and locally grown spices from rural Assam to urban buyers and retailers in Guwahati, the initiative can boost demand, integrate rural producers into the city's consumer market, and contribute to the growth of micro-enterprises while supporting inclusive economic development.

Sarat Chandra Das, Secretary of Grameen Sahara, added that combining traditional skills with modern financial knowledge will help women transition from subsistence livelihoods to sustainable businesses. AHFL plans to expand its CSR footprint across India, focusing on skill development, education, and social inclusion.

North-East cancer awareness drives healthcare market growth: Manipal Hospitals leads initiative

Aizawl: Manipal Hospital, EM Bypass, Kolkata, organized an awareness session in Aizawl to highlight the increasing cancer burden in the North-East, emphasizing early diagnosis and timely treatment. The session, part of the hospital's 'Anveshana – Medical Education for Media' initiative, featured leading oncologists including Dr. Sourav Datta, Dr. Arunava Roy, and Dr. Kinshuk Chatterjee, who discussed cancer trends, risk factors, and modern treatment options.

The event also showcased the journeys of ten cancer survivors from Mizoram, whose successful treatments at Manipal Hospital Kolkata offered hope to patients and families. Among them, PC Lalsawmliana and Vanlalpari shared their experiences of overcoming advanced-stage cancers through expert medical care, reinforcing the importance of early intervention.

Dr. Datta highlighted a surge in oral, head, and neck cancers linked to tobacco use, while Dr. Roy emphasized rising gynecological cancers and the need for preventive screenings and HPV vaccination. Dr. Chatterjee underscored how advanced surgical techniques have improved outcomes for complex cancer cases.

In Aizawl, the session attracted local healthcare providers, media, and community leaders, reflecting growing public concern about cancer. Several pharmacies and diagnostic centers reported increased inquiries about early screening and treatment options following the awareness drive, signaling a positive shift toward proactive healthcare in the region.

Mahindra expands nationwide footprint with 10 new truck and bus dealerships this festive season



Guwahati: Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. has inaugurated 10 new state-of-the-art 3S dealerships across India during the festive season. The new outlets, located in Durgapur, Guwahati, Haldwani, Hissar, Bhopal, Hubli, Raipur, Muzaffarpur, Jalandhar, and Kanpur, add 60 service bays with a combined capacity to service over 100 vehicles daily, offering facilities such as driver lodging, 24-hour breakdown assistance, and AdBlue availability.

Highlighting the company's growth strategy, Mr. Vinod Sahay, President – Trucks, Buses & Construction Equipment, Aerospace & Defense, and Member of Group Executive Board, said, "The addition of 10 more 3S dealerships reinforces our strong commitment and aspirations in the truck and bus business." Mahindra currently com-

mands a 7% market share in trucks and buses, aiming to expand it to 10–12% by FY31 and over 20% by FY36.

In Guwahati, the new dealership is expected to significantly boost the city's commercial transport sector, providing enhanced after-sales support and accessibility to fleet owners across Assam and the Northeast. This move also strengthens Mahindra's growing presence in one of India's key logistics corridors connecting the Northeast with the rest of the country.

Dr. Venkat Srinivas, Business Head – Mahindra Trucks, Buses & Construction Equipment, added that the company's focus on customer-centric innovations like the iMAXX telematics system ensures greater operational efficiency and control for fleet owners.

Medanta announces Bhoomi Poojan for 400-bed super-specialty hospital in Guwahati on October 31

Guwahati: Global Health Limited, popularly known as Medanta, has announced that it will hold the Bhoomi Poojan ceremony for its upcoming 400-bedded super-specialty hospital in Sarusajai Industrial Estate, Guwahati, on October 31, 2025. The ceremony will mark the beginning of construction for the state-of-the-art healthcare facility, with Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma as the Guest of Honour, alongside Dr. Naresh Trehan, Chairman and Managing Director of Medanta, and other dignitaries.

The Guwahati hospital is de-

signed to deliver world-class tertiary and quaternary care, including comprehensive transplant programs, robotic surgeries, and advanced diagnostics in radiology, nuclear medicine, and preventive health. Dr. Trehan said, "Medanta's entry into the Northeast aims to bridge the healthcare gap and make advanced, high-quality medical care more accessible to the people of Assam and neighbouring states."

In Guwahati, this development is expected to significantly strengthen the city's position as a regional healthcare hub, attracting patients from across



the Northeast. It will also create employment opportunities for medical professionals and boost related sectors such as diagnostics, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment suppliers in the region.

The new facility will serve over 50 million people across the Northeast, aligning with Medanta's mission to deliver accessible, compassionate, and advanced healthcare for all.

Renault brings back the iconic duster, set for Republic Day 2026 launch

Guwahati: Renault India has officially announced the return of its legendary SUV, the Duster, marking a major milestone in the company's India-centric transformation strategy, Renault. Rethink. The all-new Duster will be unveiled on Republic Day, January 26, 2026, rekindling the passion of SUV lovers across the country.

First launched in 2012, the Duster revolutionized India's SUV segment and remains one of Renault's most successful models, with over 200,000 owners in India and 1.8 million customers globally. The upcoming model will be the first launch under Renault's International Game Plan 2027, signifying the brand's renewed commitment to the Indian market.

"Renault Duster is more than



just a name – it's a true legend," said Stephane Deblaise, CEO, Renault Group India, adding that the new model would blend the SUV's iconic heritage with modern design, advanced technology, and enhanced performance.

In Guwahati, automobile dealers and consumers are already showing excitement over the

Duster's comeback. With the growing demand for mid-size SUVs in Assam's urban centres, Renault's renewed focus on India is expected to energize the Northeastern auto market, where adventure-ready vehicles have a loyal following.

Customers can now join the waiting program starting today.

Mohombi Live in Shillong boosts Northeast's cultural tourism and hospitality momentum

Guwahati: The hills of Meghalaya reverberated with global rhythms as international pop icon Mohombi made his India debut on October 25 at Lariti, Mawkasiang. The high-energy concert, hosted by Courtyard by Marriott Shillong in association with Meghalaya Tourism and Meghalayan Age, drew nearly 3,500 attendees, showcasing Shillong's growing potential as a premier destination for international entertainment and hospitality.

The Swedish-Congolese artist, known for global hits like "Bumpy Ride" and "Coconut Tree", delivered a spectacular performance alongside homegrown talents Jessie Lyngdoh, Gary Daniel, Quills, Sev, and Meban. The event concluded with an exclusive after-party at Tavern Club, extending the celebration into the night.

According to Tanuj Arora, General Manager of Courtyard by Marriott Shillong, the concert was "not just about music, but about celebrating culture, connection, and the spirit of Meghalaya."



In Guwahati, tour operators and hospitality players see this as a strong boost for regional tourism. Guwahati's travel businesses expect higher visitor movement between Assam and Meghalaya, with potential collaborations to promote similar global-scale events across the Northeast.

Backed by Courtyard by Marriott, the success of Mohombi Live underscores Shillong's emergence as a vibrant hub for music-driven tourism and premium hospitality in India's Northeast.

With NCMC-enabled expense card, Tide simplifies everyday commute for SMEs

Guwahati: In a major boost for India's small businesses and freelancers, Tide, the country's leading financial management platform for SMEs, has launched National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) support on its RuPay-powered Expense Card. The integration enables users to travel and make business transactions seamlessly using a single card — covering metro, bus, toll, and parking payments across major Indian cities.

Backed by the Government of India, the NCMC feature allows Tide members to top up and manage balances in real time through the Tide app. Entrepreneurs and business teams can now manage their travel, invoices, and expense reimbursements within one platform, reducing the need for multiple cards or apps.

Kumar Shekhar, Deputy Country Manager, Tide India, said, "With NCMC support, we're enabling seamless travel and business expense management. This upgrade redefines how business owners can travel, manage expenses, and cash flow across India's mobility network."

In Guwahati, where SMEs form the backbone of the local economy, the integration is expected to streamline daily travel and business operations for entrepreneurs navigating both city commutes and regional business trips.

Since its India launch in late 2022, Tide has grown rapidly, now serving over 800,000 SMEs — a majority of its 1.6 million global members.

Tata AIA launches 'Shubh Family Protect', offer dual financial security for families

Guwahati: Tata AIA Life Insurance Co. Ltd. (Tata AIA) has officially launched Shubh Family Protect, a unique term insurance plan offering an immediate lump-sum payout along with a monthly income for up to 30 years. The plan is aimed at providing holistic financial protection to families, combining short-term relief with long-term stability.

Commenting on the launch, Amit Dave, Chief Distribution Officer - Proprietary Business and Allied Channels, Tata AIA Life Insurance, said, "At Tata AIA, we believe in providing more than just financial protection—we believe in making sure that families are supported through every stage of life. Shubh Family Protect is our way of ensuring that families have the financial security they need, with the flexibility they deserve. The 0% GST makes it even more accessible, making the product a powerful tool for those who want to secure their family's future without the burden of additional costs."

A Product Designed for Real-Life Needs

In the event of a sudden loss of a loved one, the emotional devastation is immeasurable, and the financial burden that follows can feel just as overwhelming. Often, families are left with a large lump-sum payout, which, while helpful, can be



difficult to manage—especially at a time when clarity and stability are needed most.

Shubh Family Protect by Tata AIA understands this challenge and offers a thoughtful solution. Rather than leaving families to navigate a single, large payout, the plan combines the benefit of a lump-sum amount with the security of a steady monthly income—a lifeline for those left behind.

The product offers flexible payout options, multiple nominee choices, and terminal illness protection. By combining lump-sum payouts with a consistent monthly income, the plan ensures that families can manage immediate expenses while maintaining financial security over time.

In Aizawl, local insurance advisors have reported strong interest in Shubh Family Protect, as families are increasingly looking for insurance solutions that provide both immediate and long-term financial support, underscoring the region's growing demand for innovative life insurance products.

Škoda Auto India's all-new Octavia RS sells out in 20 minutes, marks iconic comeback



Guwahati: Škoda Auto India has reintroduced the all-new Octavia RS, marking a milestone as the brand celebrates 25 years in the country. Available in limited numbers as a Fully-Built Unit (FBU), the iconic model was sold out in just 20 minutes through pre-bookings, underscoring its cult status among enthusiasts. Priced at ₹49.99 lakh (ex-showroom), the Octavia RS combines legacy, design, and performance in a single package.

Powered by a 2.0 TSI turbocharged petrol engine producing 195 kW (265 PS) and 370 Nm of torque, paired with a 7-speed DSG automatic transmission, the Octavia RS accelerates from 0–100 km/h in 6.4 seconds and reaches a top speed of 250 km/h. It comes equipped with advanced safety and convenience features including 10 airbags, ADAS, Head-Up Display, 360° Area View cameras, and a premium Canton 675W sound system. The car's bold design is highlighted by LED Matrix headlights, 19-inch alloy wheels, and five striking colours, while the luxurious cabin offers Suedia/leather upholstery, sports seats with memory and massage functions, three-zone climate control, and a 32.77 cm infotainment system.

In Guwahati, the launch has generated strong interest among premium car buyers, with local dealerships witnessing inquiries from enthusiasts eager to experience the Octavia RS. The response reflects the city's growing appetite for high-performance, luxury vehicles.

Customer deliveries across India will commence on November 6, reinforcing Škoda's strategy to combine legacy and innovation in the Indian market.

Ujjivan SFB reports robust Q2 growth; profit rises 18% QoQ, secured loan share hits 47%

Agartala: Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Ltd. [BSE: 542904; NSE: UJJIVANSFB] on Friday reported a strong financial performance for Q2 FY26, with net profit rising 18.2% quarter-on-quarter to ₹122 crore. The bank's secured loan book grew 52.9% year-on-year to ₹16,173 crore, comprising 46.8% of total loans, while gross disbursements hit a record ₹7,932 crore, up 47.6% YoY.

Deposits climbed 15.1% YoY to ₹39,211 crore, with CASA deposits rising 22.1% to ₹10,783 crore. Net interest income increased 7.7% QoQ to ₹922 crore, reversing a three-quarter declining trend. Asset quality remained healthy, with GNPA at 2.45% and bucket-X collection efficiency steady at 99.5%. The bank's capital adequacy ratio stood at 21.4%, with Tier I at 19.9%.

Mr. Sanjeev Nautiyal, MD & CEO, highlighted strong loan origination and microfinance stabilization, while noting future CASA growth through MF, forex products, and ASBA rollout.

In Agartala, Ujjivan's branch network has contributed to local credit access, with businesses and retail customers witnessing easier loan disbursements and deposit services. Analysts say the enhanced deposit mobilization and secured lending could support regional economic activity, particularly in small-scale enterprises and retail markets.

With strategic branch expansion and product diversification, Ujjivan SFB expects advances to grow around 20% in FY26 while keeping credit costs controlled.

In Northeast India, Apraava Energy's Solar-Powered Solutions to benefit over 21,000 lives

Guwahati: In a meaningful step towards empowering lives sustainably in Northeast India, Apraava Energy, India's leading integrated energy solutions providers, has partnered with SELCO Foundation to power community, health and education facilities in Assam and Nagaland through solar installations. These interventions aim to provide sustainable and reliable energy in the villages, positively impacting over 21,000 lives. The installations are expected to save ~57 tonnes of CO₂ annually, equivalent to planting about 2580 trees per year. In Assam's Chirang district, a 27.5 kW solar-powered community facility is supporting a range of development initiatives focused on health, livelihoods, education, and youth engagement. The site includes a weaving unit that empowers local women artisans with skills and sustainable income, mental health and physiotherapy clinics, and a legal aid centre



supporting women facing domestic abuse.

In Nagaland, the villages of Jhakama and Zhadima in Kohima district are benefiting from 22.32 kW of solar installations and inverter systems that are powering schools, health centres, and community areas. Commenting on the initiative, Dr. Priyesh Modi, Head – CSR, Apraava Energy, said, "As we continue to grow our business presence in the region, we remain committed to transform more lives through such interventions." As part

of its community investment initiatives, Apraava's Agri-SHE programme in Assam is equipping over 3,000 women entrepreneurs with skills in agriculture and livestock-based livelihoods. In collaboration with The Akshaya Patra Foundation, the company has also set up a centralised mid-day meal kitchen in Jorhat, Assam, which serves about 11,000 nutritious meals to school children every day. Apraava currently operates transmission assets across Assam, Nagaland, and Manipur.

India hosts CCSCH8, sets global standards for vanilla, coriander and large cardamom

Guwahati: India's leadership in the global spice trade was reinforced as it successfully hosted the 8th Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH8) in Guwahati, finalizing international standards for large cardamom, vanilla, and coriander. The standards are now recommended for adoption by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, providing uniform benchmarks for farmers, processors, and exporters worldwide.

Established in 2013, CCSCH operates under the FAO and WHO, with India's

Spices Board serving as the Secretariat. Over 30 countries and observers participated, reflecting global recognition of the importance of harmonized, science-based spice standards. The vanilla standard, which had seen multiple discussions due to technical complexities in flavor chemistry and processing, was successfully finalized, highlighting the collaborative approach of member nations.

Smt. P. Hemalatha, Secretary of the Spices Board, emphasized that the new standards will strengthen India's export competitiveness and facilitate smoother market

access for domestic producers, while enhancing consumer confidence globally.

Guwahati is expected to witness increased business activity. Traders and processors in the city anticipate better pricing, enhanced quality compliance, and higher demand for Codex-certified spices, positioning Guwahati as a key hub in both domestic and international spice supply chains.

India's successful hosting of CCSCH8 consolidates its position as a trusted partner in global spice trade, driving quality, transparency, and growth across the sector.

Bristol Myers Squibb launches India's first cardiac myosin inhibitor Kopozgo® for obstructive hypertrophic cardiomyopathy

New Delhi: Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS) has launched Kopozgo® (Mavacamten) in India, marking a major milestone in cardiac care. Kopozgo® is the first and only oral, selective cardiac myosin inhibitor approved in India for adults with symptomatic obstructive hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (oHCM), a chronic and often debilitating heart disease affecting an estimated 2.8 million Indians, most of whom remain undiagnosed.

Unlike traditional treatments such as beta blockers or surgical options that only manage symptoms, Kopozgo® specifically targets the underlying cause of oHCM, offering patients improved heart function and relief from symp-

toms like shortness of breath, dizziness, and fatigue. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) approved the drug on March 6, 2025, based on strong efficacy and safety results from the EXPLORER-HCM and VALOR-HCM Phase III trials.

Sanjay Sharma, Managing Director of BMS India, said, "With the launch of Kopozgo, patients now have a first-in-class treatment option. This breakthrough brings hope to individuals and families facing this condition." Healthcare professionals believe Kopozgo® will enhance treatment accessibility in the Northeast, where cardiac awareness and specialist care have been steadily growing.

Kriti Sanon says 'I'll always be proud of' Do Patti as the film turns 1

Mumbai: It has been a year since actress Kriti Sanon marked her new creative journey as a producer with "Do Patti", the first project of her production house, Blue Butterfly Films. Commemorating one year of "Do Patti" on Saturday, Kriti took to her Instagram and shared a heartfelt message. Expressing her joy, she penned, "It's been a year of my first butterfly (butterfly and red heart emoji) A film that I'll always be proud of.. my first production.. (folded hands emoji) @bluebutterflyfilmsofficial Happy 1 year @kanika.d @kathhapiictures @beatnikbob5. (sic)."

Made under the direction of debutante Shashanka Chaturvedi and written by Kanika Dhillon, "Do Patti" shares the tale of a police officer who comes across



a couple wherein the wife, who has a jealous twin sister, accuses the husband of attempting to murder her. The movie also marks Kriti's first dual roles in her career as twin sisters Saumya and Shailee.

The core cast of the drama also includes Kajol and marks the Hindi film debut of Shaheer Sheikh, with Tanvi Azmi playing a supporting role. Coming to the technical crew, the project has Mart Ratasapp on board as the cinematographer, and Naman Arora and Hemal Kothari as the editor. Up next, Kriti will be seen as the leading lady in the highly-talked-about sequel "Cocktail 2". Recently, the diva took to her Instagram and dropped a couple of pictures from the Italy schedule of the drama, along with the caption, "Ciao my Bellas."

Pooja Ruparel recalls how Satish Shah kept everyone laughing on the sets of 'DDLJ'



Mumbai: Actress Pooja Ruparel, best known for her role as Chutki in the cult classic "Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge," shared fond memories of her late co-star Satish Shah from the film's sets. In an exclusive quote shared with IANS, she recalled how the late actor kept the entire cast and crew laughing during the shoot of the iconic film DDLJ. Through her anecdotes, Pooja highlighted Shah's infectious sense of humour and the lighthearted atmosphere he brought to the sets, leaving a lasting impression on everyone around him.

Ruparel shared, "One thing that comes to my mind immediately is his impeccable timing. He made us all laugh till our cheeks hurt during the shooting of DDLJ. It was done so effortlessly over lunch. There is one dialogue in DDLJ where he tells Shah Rukh Khan, "You're a genius! not only are you a genius, but you are indigenous!" This word was his brilliant addition to the scene." Sharing more on his nature, Pooja added, "He was so witty, so intelligent, so subtle, and charismatic. He was just so incredibly talented! His death is such a huge loss to us all. He will always be remembered with loads of love and admiration. May his soul rest in eternal peace. Our favourite show of Satish Shah will be Sarabhai Vs Sarabhai. I have the happiest memories of watching him on the show with my family."

Satish Shah played the role of Ajit Singh in "Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge" which also featured Shah Rukh Khan, Kajol, Amr-ish Puri and Farida Jalal, among others. Satish Shah, renowned for his iconic roles in films and shows like "Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro," "Sarabhai vs Sarabhai," "Main Hoon Na," and "Om Shanti Om," passed away on October 25 in Mumbai at the age of 74.

Sydney Sweeney: I had someone tell me to fix my face



Los Angeles: Actress Sydney Sweeney has recalled how she had someone tell her to "fix" her face and get botox. "I have very strong eyebrow muscles. And I had someone tell me to fix my face or else I'm not going to make it. I should get Botox. I was 16! Or I'm in a casting and I'm reading my scene and the casting director is eating a bag of chips, and I'm like, 'You're not paying attention at all,'" Sweeney told Variety.

She went on to explain that she enjoys playing complicated characters, reports femalefirst.co.uk. Sweeney said: "I tend to gravitate towards characters that are stereotypically unlikable, and I like to challenge an audience to have empathy for that person."

She starred in season one of The White Lotus, and Mike White, the show's writer and creator, has confessed to being wowed by the actress during her first audition. He shared: "There was just something very unaffected by her. She was very likeable. And I thought that that would be helpful because the part is so unlikable on the page. Then in editing, you realise she just pops on-screen."

BB 19: Gauahar Khan lauds Gaurav Khanna, says she "sees a winner" in him

Mumbai: Bigg Boss 7 winner and actress Gauahar Khan has come out in support of Bigg Boss 19 contestant Gaurav Khanna for his stance in favour of Abhishek Bajaj and Ashnoor Kaur in the latest episode of Bigg Boss 19. Taking to her social media stories, Gauahar said, "Did you see Gaurav Khanna last night? I think it takes a lot of courage to stand your ground and make a decision that's fair not just for yourself but for everyone. Logically, he had a very good point; everyone in the Bigg Boss house breaks the rules at some point. So how do you even decide who deserves punishment?"

She further added, "Sleeping or reading during restricted hours is also a rule break, yet many housemates do it openly. That shows a certain carelessness toward the audience and the game. But no one has been consistently nominated for that. And even when someone is nominated, it's usually one person or a small group, not every-



one." The actress added, "This time, everyone got worked up because only two people were nominated easily, while the rest weren't. It's understandable that no one wants to be nominated, but Gaurav's point was valid: if only a couple of people face consequences while others go free, it's not fair." She mentioned how she is loving Gaurav's clarity and loyalty. "Honestly, I see Gaurav Khanna as a potential winner."

Adivi Sesh, Mrunal Thakur-starrer 'Dacoit' to now release on March 19, 2026

Mumbai: Actors Adivi Sesh, Mrunal Thakur-starrer 'Dacoit', which was earlier scheduled to hit the screens on December 25, will now release worldwide on March 19, 2026. A new poster announcing the revised date for the film was shared today by Adivi Sesh on X, formerly known as Twitter. "Ee Saari Mamulga undadhu There's NO LOOKING BACK #DACOIT This UGADI MARCH 19th 2026 in Theaters WORLDWIDE," Sesh wrote. The film is now all set for a grand panIndia theatrical release on March 19, making a special arrival this Gudi Padwa and extended Eid weekend. As per deadline.com the film was postponed after Sesh was



injured on set while shooting an action scene.

Apart from Adivi Sesh and Mrunal Thakur, the film will also feature director and actor Anurag Kashyap in a powerful role. It will also feature Prakash Raj, Sunil,

Atul Kulkarni, Zayn Marie Khan, and Kamakshi Bhas-karla among others. "Dacoit" traces the journey of an angry convict determined to seek revenge on his ex-girl-friend, who betrayed him. As he crafts a perilous plan

to trap her, the story evolves into an emotionally intense tale of love, betrayal, and vengeance.

The film is being shot simultaneously in Hindi and Telugu, with a story and screenplay jointly crafted by Adivi Sesh and Shaneil Deo. Filming is currently taking place in Hyderabad, with an extensive shooting schedule set to follow in Maharashtra. Marking Shaneil Deo's directorial debut, this ambitious project is produced by Supriya Yarlagadda, co-produced by Suniel Narang, and presented by Annapurna Studios. Shot simultaneously in Hindi and Telugu, the film's story and screenplay have been jointly crafted by Adivi Sesh and Shaneil Deo.

Sonam Bajwa: I always dreamt of doing Hindi films

Mumbai: One of Punjab's biggest stars Sonam Bajwa says this year has been a "pleasant surprise," as she is finally living her longcherished dream of working in Hindi films. Asked if it gets overwhelming to manage industries such as Bollywood and Punjabi cinema, Sonam told IANS: "Well, this year pleasantly surprised me, actually. As an artiste, I always dreamt of doing Hindi films. I am forever grateful for what Punjabi cinema gave to me — what it contributed to my life and my career."

The actress said she was born in Uttarakhand, raised in UP, and worked in Punjab. She added: "So, I grew up watching Hindi films and I worked in Punjabi films. But like every other artist, I also had a dream that I should get a big audience."

Shreyas Iyer is now stable, on the road to recovery : BCCI

New Delhi: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has confirmed that Shreyas Iyer, who sustained a spleen laceration injury during the third ODI against Australia in Sydney on Saturday, is now stable but continues to be under observation. Iyer suffered the injury while taking the catch of Australia wicketkeeper-batter Alex Carry during the third ODI against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground. He was immediately taken to the hospital for further evaluation and was later admitted to the ICU.

“Shreyas Iyer sustained a blunt injury to his abdomen, resulting in a laceration of his spleen with internal bleeding

on 25th October during the third ODI against Australia,” BCCI said in a statement on Tuesday. “The injury was promptly identified, and the bleeding was immediately arrested. His condition is now stable, and he continues to be under observation. A repeat scan done on Tuesday, 28th October, has shown significant improvement, and Shreyas is on the road to recovery. The BCCI Medical Team, in consultation with specialists in Sydney and India, will continue to monitor his progress.”

The injury, which was initially believed to be a rib cage issue, turned out to be more serious than first thought, as BCCI confirmed that the



scans have revealed a laceration injury to the spleen, which prompted Iyer's admission to the ICU in a Sydney hospital. However, sources told IANS that Iyer has been moved out of the ICU, and team management

remains in close contact with him and is keeping a constant watch on his recovery. India T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav also echoed the same sentiments earlier in the day, ahead of the five-match T20I series against Australia.

“We spoke to him at least on the first day when we got to know that he had an injury. I called him first. Then I found out that he did not have a phone. So I called the physio, Kamlesh. He told me that he is stable. On the first day, I don't know how, but he was looking good. We have been talking for two days now. He has been replying. If he is replying on the phone, it means he is stable,” he said on Iyer's injury. “There is also a doctor there, so it is looking good. I mean, he is good. He is talking. Everything is normal. He said that he will take care of himself for a few more days. But he has been replying, talking to everyone, so it is good,” he added.

Mandhana cements top spot in ODI batting rankings



Dubai: India batter Smriti Mandhana has cemented her position as the top batter in women's ODIs rankings with a scintillating 109 against New Zealand and 34 not out against Bangladesh in a home ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, propelling her to a career-best rating. Mandhana, who was named ICC Women's Player of the Month for September 2025, moved to a rating of 828, almost 100 points clear of second-placed Australian Ashleigh Gardner, who is sitting second with 731 rating points, jumping six spots off the back of an unbeaten century against England at the tournament.

Mandhana's opening partner, Pratika Rawal, who will miss the remainder of the tournament with injury, also gained big as she moved into the top 30, attaining the 27th spot with a rating of 564. South African captain Laura Wolvaardt also jumped into the top three, moving up two spots after scoring 90 and 31 runs. England's Amy Jones climbed four spots to ninth (656), while Annabel Sutherland moved 16 spots to 16th (613), the largest jump among top 40 competitors.

In the bowling chart, England's Sophie Ecclestone leads the bowling chart with 747 ratings, while Australia's Alana King moved to second place with a career-high rating of 698, edging teammate Ash Gardner, who dropped to third (689). Nashra Sundhu of Pakistan is joint 10th with fellow left-arm orthodox spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba (610), while fast bowlers Marizanne Kapp and Annabel Sutherland also make one-spot hops to fourth and seventh, respectively. Gardner's exploits have cemented her No.1 position in the All-Rounder stakes (rating 503), though she has a new No.2 behind her in Marizanne Kapp, who overtakes West Indies' Hayley Matthews with a rating of 422. Sutherland, meanwhile, dropped to fourth.

It's something extraordinary, but I'd like to be there: Messi hopeful for 2026 WC



New Delhi: Lionel Messi has expressed hope of representing Argentina at the 2026 FIFA World Cup, aiming to help the defending champions retain their title when the tournament takes place in North America next summer, despite fitness and age concerns. Messi has been playing professionally since 2004. He made his La Liga debut with Barcelona in October of that year at only 17 years old, becoming, at the time, the youngest player to play for the Spanish club. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner told NBC News that he will evaluate how his body feels before deciding whether to participate in the tournament across the United States, Mexico and Canada.

“It's something extraordinary to be able to be in a World Cup, and I would love to,” said Messi, who will turn 39 next June. “I would like to be there, to be well and be an important part of

helping my national team, if I am there. And I'm going to assess that on a day-to-day basis when I start preseason next year with Inter (Miami) and see if I can really be 100%, if I can be useful to the group, to the national team, and then make a decision.” “Obviously, I'm really eager because it's a World Cup. We're coming off winning the last World Cup, and being able to defend it on the field again is spectacular because it's always a dream to play with the national team, especially in official competitions,” he added.

In 2021, Messi left Barcelona and moved to the French club Paris Saint-Germain. After two years with PSG, Messi signed with the American league Major League Soccer (MLS) club Inter Miami. Having enjoyed a decorated club career, Messi's international success came in the 2022 FIFA World Cup, when Argentina defeated France 4-2 on penalties to win its first trophy since 1986. Messi won his second Golden Ball and was voted the tournament's best player.

It was the dream of my life. It was also true that it was the only thing missing at a professional level because I had been lucky enough to have achieved everything at an individual level, at a team level with Barcelona, and I think that's every player's dream. When you ask a player what their dream is, it's to be world champion,” Messi said of the 2022 World Cup win.

U-23 World Wrestling C'ship: Sujeet wins gold medal, women's team secure team title

Novi Sad: India's Sujeet (65 kg, Freestyle) won the first gold medal for the country at the 2025 Under-23 Senior World Wrestling Championship held in Novi Sad, Serbia. Sujeet gave an excellent performance throughout the tournament. He started with a strong win over the Moldova wrestler by 12-2, and in the next round, he defeated the Polish wrestler by technical superiority (11-0). In the quarterfinal,

Sujeet faced a tough bout but won a close fight 4-2 against a UWW wrestler to move into the semifinal. There, he defeated the Japanese wrestler in another close contest by 3-2 to reach the final. In the final bout, Sujeet showed great skill and confidence, defeating the Uzbek wrestler by technical superiority (10-0) to claim the gold medal for India.

Earlier, the Indian women's wrestling team had already

won 5 bronze medals and 2 silver medals, and also secured the team championship title at the same event. Sujeet's medal is the only medal for India in the men's Under-23 Senior World Wrestling Championship this year. Two other wrestlers competed for the bronze medal bouts but could not succeed. Today marked the final day of the Under-23 Senior World Wrestling Championship 2025.

World's top boxers set for World Boxing Cup Finals 2025 as India names strong 20-member squad



Delhi: The stage is set for a global boxing spectacle as the World Boxing Cup Finals 2025 will be conducted at Greater Noida's Shaheed Vijay Singh Pathik Sports Complex from November 14 to 21, bringing together over 140 elite boxers from 18 nations, including three Olympic medalists. A strong 20-member squad will represent India at the event, led by seasoned pugilists, as well as medalists from previous World Boxing competitions.

Donning the Indian colours will be ten men and ten women, headlined by former World Champion Nikhat Zareen (51kg), reigning World Champion Jaismine Lamboria (57kg), reigning World Champion Minakshi (48kg), two-time Asian Champion Pooja Rani (80kg), former World Champion Saweety Boora (75kg), and World Championship silver medallist Nupur Sheoran (80+kg). The men's contingent features an exciting mix of youth and experience, led by Hitesh (70kg) and Abhinash Jamwal (65kg), both medalists from the earlier World Boxing Cup stages this season. The prestigious event will feature three Paris Olympic medallists-Aeji Im of South Korea and Wu ShihYi and Chen Nien-Chin of Chinese Taipei-alongside multiple World Boxing Championships and World Cup gold medalists from around the world. Speaking on the occasion, BFI President Ajay Singh said, “Hosting the World Boxing Cup Finals is a proud moment for Indian boxing and a reflection of how far we've come on the global stage. Bringing the world's top nations and Olympic medallists to compete here is not just an honour, but a testament to India's growing stature as a boxing powerhouse. Our athletes have shown they can stand shoulder to shoulder with the best, and this event gives them the perfect platform to prove it once again.”

The Indian team also includes Jadumani Singh (50kg), Pawan Bartwal (55kg), Sachin (60kg), Sumit (75kg), Lakshya Chahar (80kg), Jugnoo (85kg), Naveen Kumar (90kg), and Narendar (90+kg) in the men's section; and Preeti (54kg), Parveen (60kg), Neeraj Phogat (65kg), and Arundhati Choudhary (70kg) in the women's draw. The World Boxing Cup Finals will mark the culmination of the sport's annual global series, featuring the season's top-ranked athletes vying across ten weight categories for the coveted World Boxing Cup trophy.