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Apple's iPhone CY25 exports from India cross Rs 2 lakh crore for first time



New Delhi: For the first time since domestic production began in 2021, US tech giant Apple Inc's iPhone exports from India crossed Rs 2 lakh crore in 2025, as per industry data. Exports of the tech company in January–December 2025 reached a record \$23 billion or Rs 2.03 lakh crore, up nearly 85 per cent over 2024 exports. Around three months remain before Apple's five-year PLI window ends. Under the production-linked incentive scheme (PLI), Apple's focus in India had been expansion of the iPhones exports. In the first nine months of FY26, iPhone exports stood at nearly \$16 billion, pushing cumulative shipments during the PLI period beyond the \$50-billion mark. By comparison, Samsung exported devices worth around \$17 billion during its five-year eligibility period under the scheme from FY21 to FY25. Apple's manufacturing footprint in the country includes five iPhone assembly plants—three operated by Tata Group entities and two by Foxconn—supported by a supply chain of around 45 companies, including many MSMEs supplying components for domestic and global operations.

Budget 2026-27: COAI urges govt to reduce telecom license fee, recalibrate spectrum pricing



New Delhi: The Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) on Tuesday urged the government to reduce telecom license fee from 3 per cent to 0.5 per cent-1 per cent in the upcoming Budget, just to cover the administrative costs. The leading industry body for telecom operators also suggested that the rate of GST under 'Reverse Charge on Spectrum' payment, license fees, spectrum usage charges, etc. can be reduced from the existing 18 per cent rate to the lower rate of 5 per cent slab, since it is revenue neutral to the government and would help in reducing input tax credit (ITC) accumulation. "COAI has been advocating measures that would reduce the sector's financial burden, thereby enabling further expansion

and rollout of next generation connectivity to achieve the goal of a Viksit Bharat," said Lt. Gen. Dr. S.P. Kochhar, Director General, COAI. The license fee, which is a combination of the license (3 per cent of AGR) and Digital Bharat Nidhi Contribution (5 per cent of AGR), is a huge financial burden for the licensed telcos, Kochhar added. "The Digital Bharat Nidhi contribution should be paused for the time till the unused corpus has been completely utilised by the Department of Telecommunications," he said. COAI recommended that special benefit may be provided to telecom operators in GST by way of exemption of GST on regulatory payments of LF, SUC and spectrum assigned under auction.

Sensex, Nifty open lower over US imposing 25 pc tariffs on nations trading with Iran

Mumbai: Following a sharp recovery from lower levels, Indian benchmark indices traded flat with a negative bias on Tuesday amid rising geopolitical tensions and sustained foreign institutional outflows. As of 9.29 am, Sensex slipped 85 points, or 0.10 per cent to 83,792 and Nifty eased 22 points, or 0.08 per cent to 25,768. Main broad-cap indices showed slight divergence with benchmark indices, with the Nifty Midcap 100 up 0.11 per cent, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 added 0.38 per cent.

ONGC and SBI were among major gainers on the Nifty. Sectoral indices were trading mixed, with the majority of them in the red. Nifty Media and PSU bank were among the major gainers, up 0.79 per cent and 0.67 per cent. Immediate support lies at 25,650–25,700

zone, while resistance remained at 25,950–26,000 zone, market watchers said.

Analysts said that US President Donald Trump's weaponisation of tariffs has affected global trade, especially countries which have been targeted with penal tariffs. Trump's latest declaration that the US will impose 25 per cent tariffs on countries doing trade with Iran clearly sends out the message that this policy of weaponisation of tariffs will continue. The charges against Fed chief Jerome Powell signals that markets will continue to be weighed down by the US president's unprecedented, unstable, unpredictable behaviour, they predicted. The Indian market rebounded on Monday after US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, said the US is determined to have



a trade agreement with India and talks will resume.

Moreover, Q3 results will lead to stock-specific action in near term, market watchers added. Asia-Pacific markets traded in the green zone during the morning session as traders overlooked geopolitical concerns in Iran and Venezuela, as well as a crim-

inal investigation into the US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 jumped over 3 per cent following reports of the country's ruling Liberal Democratic Party planning to dissolve the country's Lower House later this month and opt for a snap election in February.

India in Goldilocks phase of high growth, economists urge neutral policy path



New Delhi: India appears to be in a Goldilocks phase of high growth and low inflation, a report said on Tuesday, with economists urging a shift towards a near-neutral policy. The report from HSBC Global Investment Research said that a near-neutral policy, combining fiscal restraint with continued monetary ease, would best support markets and the broader economy in 2026. "A combination of tight fiscal and easy monetary policy which creates a better economic balance should be positive for all asset classes," it said.

The research firm, however cautioned that underlying weaknesses such as insufficient corporate investment and foreign inflows must be carefully addressed. Bond markets have already priced higher state borrowing for early 2026, and that RBI bond purchases, fiscal prudence in the budget and potential global bondindex inclusion could attract foreign inflows, the report said.

The report further stated that equities may gain from recent reform momentum, rising nominal GDP and more reasonable valuations, and cautioned that durable gains require structural reforms to boost corporate capex and foreign investment. Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist and Strategist, argued that the research firm's estimate suggests inflation will remain just under the 4 per cent target next year, removing pressure on the Reserve Bank of India to tighten and leaving room for further easing if growth softens.

India's rice exports jump 19.4 pc after curbs lifted

New Delhi: India's rice exports rose sharply by 19.4 per cent last year to reach the second-highest level on record, after the government lifted all export curbs. The removal of restrictions made Indian rice more competitive in global markets and helped the country strengthen its position as the world's largest exporter of the staple grain, as per reports. The strong return of Indian rice to international markets led to a steady flow of supplies, which in turn reduced exports from rival producers such as Thailand and Vietnam.

This surge in availability pushed rice prices in Asia to their lowest levels in nearly a decade. Lower prices have brought relief to poorer consumers, especially in Africa and other importing regions that depend heavily on affordable rice supplies. India's growing role in the global rice trade is also reflected in its push towards value-added and nutrition-focused exports. In a recent example, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) facilitated the export of 20 metric tonnes of fortified rice from Chhattisgarh to Papua New Guinea.

The consignment marked another step in India's efforts to diversify its agricultural exports and expand its footprint in overseas markets. Fortified rice is produced by blending rice flour with essential micronutrients such as iron, folic acid and vitamin B12.

India's private equity market rebounds 44 pc in Q4 2025: Report

New Delhi: India's private equity activity strongly rebounded in the fourth quarter of 2025 with investments touching \$3.7 billion, up 44.3 per cent from the previous quarter, a report said on Tuesday. The report from London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) said that total equity investments in Q4 touched the highest quarterly level since Q4 2024. Despite the late-year surge, full-year private equity investments eased 23.7 per cent year-on-year to \$12.1 billion, underscoring the continued impact of a cautious investment environment for much of the year, the report said.

"Although the slowdown in investment activity was broad-based, technology-led sectors remained comparatively resilient, continuing to absorb the majority of private equity capital," said Vianca Sanchez, Analyst, LSEG Deals Intelligence. Internet-specific and computer software companies attracted a combined \$6.7 billion in 2025, representing more than half of total PE deployment, the report said. It added that investment in these sectors still moderated 1.9 per cent year-on-year, reflecting heightened investment selectivity.

Fundraising was subdued, with Indian private equity fundraising falling to \$3.8 billion in 2025, the lowest since 2017, the report said.

Amway India boosts home delivery speed, expands reach to over 90% of India's pincodes



Kohima: Amway India today announced significant enhancements to its Home Delivery operations, reinforcing its commitment to faster, more seamless service for distributors and customers nationwide. Over the past five years, the company has doubled its delivery reach from 8,000 to more than 17,500 pincodes, now covering over 90% of India. During this period, average delivery time has been reduced by 48% from 3.1 days to just 1.6 days while next-day deliveries have increased from 29% to over 55%.

Rajneesh Chopra, Managing Director, Amway India, said the upgraded Home Delivery network has become a strategic pillar supported by stronger national partnerships, a sharper digital backbone and an agile supply chain. Sanjeev Suri, Senior Vice President, highlighted the role of analytics, collaboration and carrier partnerships in strengthening speed, reliability and customer value.

Amway currently operates 23 warehouses, including Pick-to-Light enabled facilities, and fulfills more than 2 lakh home-delivery orders per month with a 99.2% Perfect Delivery Rate. Customers receive real-time tracking through email, SMS and the company website, while a 30-day return policy and doorstep pickup are available across 1,900 pincodes.

In Kohima, the enhanced logistics network is expected to significantly improve product accessibility for wellness consumers and distributors across Nagaland, supporting steady demand through faster and more dependable delivery.

Looking ahead, Amway plans to enhance the unboxing and delivery experience with premium and sustainable packaging as part of its future-ready logistics strategy.

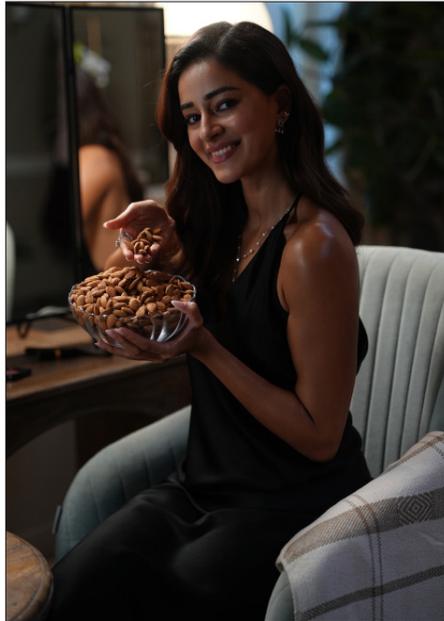
Ananya Panday embraces simple, sustainable habits to start 2026 on a mindful note

Guwahati: Actor Ananya Panday has chosen a refreshingly simple approach to welcome the New Year, stepping away from big resolutions and focusing instead on everyday habits that are easy to maintain. In a new Instagram reel shared in collaboration with California Almonds, the actor opens up about the pressure that often comes with the idea of “new year, new me.”

In the candid video, Ananya is seen speaking to herself in front of a mirror, acknowledging how quickly time passes and how New Year resolutions can sometimes trigger anxiety. Rather than aiming for perfection, she stresses the importance of consistency and balance. Her focus for 2026 includes simple goals such as getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, exercising regularly, and following small, healthy routines.

One habit she highlights is starting her morning with a handful of California Almonds. She notes that almonds provide natural energy to begin the day and contain healthy fats and vitamin E, which are known to support overall wellness and skin health.

In Guwahati, health-focused foods like almonds have seen steady demand in recent years, especially among young professionals



and fitness-conscious consumers. Retailers in the city say customers are increasingly opting for simple, nutrition-rich products that fit easily into daily routines, reflecting the same shift towards mindful living highlighted by the actor.

Tata AIA AURA aims to build next generation of insurance entrepreneurs



Guwahati: Tata AIA Life Insurance has launched Tata AIA AURA, a platform designed to transform life insurance advisory into a full-fledged entrepreneurial career, as the sector witnesses a growing influx of young professionals. The move comes at a time when India has over 31.5 lakh life insurance advisors, yet life insurance penetration stands at just 3.7% of GDP in FY24, indicating vast untapped potential.

Tata AIA AURA seeks to empower advisors with digital tools, structured training, mentorship, and strategic guidance, enabling them to operate as independent business owners rather than transactional intermediaries. The initiative aligns with the national vision of achieving “Insurance for All by 2047”, with a focus on expanding awareness and coverage, especially in underserved regions.

Amit Dave, Head of Advisor Distribution at Tata AIA, said the company views ad-

visors as entrepreneurs who build long-term relationships and secure financial futures. He noted that AURA is designed to help advisors scale sustainably while prioritising consumer needs.

The sector has also received a boost with the introduction of 0% GST on life insurance, making policies more affordable and strengthening the profession's appeal. Tata AIA currently has over 1.5 lakh advisors and reported a 99.4% claim settlement ratio in FY25, reinforcing its leadership position.

In Guwahati and the wider Northeast, rising financial awareness, a growing middle class, and increasing demand for long-term protection products are creating strong opportunities for insurance advisors. Platforms like Tata AIA AURA are expected to help advisors in the Guwahati market tap first-time policyholders, deepen trust-based relationships, and expand insurance penetration across urban and semi-urban pockets of Assam.

Gen Z drives ‘concert tourism’ boom as music-led travel becomes big business: Airbnb insights

Guwahati: Music is fast emerging as a powerful economic engine in India's travel sector, with Airbnb's new Experience-Led Travel Insights revealing that 62% of Gen Z plan to travel for concerts and music festivals in 2026. The report shows music is reshaping travel motivations, with live events influencing destination choice, travel companions and spending behaviour. Already, over one in three (36%) begin trip planning as soon as events are announced, while 76% say concerts have taken them to a city for the first time. More than 40% are willing to travel internationally, considering destinations across the US, Europe and Asia.

Concert tourism is also boosting local economies. Around 65% prefer staying near venues and 53% extend their stay to explore cafés, nightlife and cultural hubs, driving business for local communities. Six in ten are prepared to spend 21–40% of monthly income on music travel, with average spending per trip hitting ₹51,000.

In Guwahati, the findings signal rising outbound travel among Northeast youth, reflecting growing purchasing power and lifestyle-led mobility. With Guwahati among the surveyed cities, the trend also highlights potential for the local tourism and hospitality sector to benefit from destination-led music experiences.

Airbnb India and Southeast Asia Country Head Amanpreet Singh Bajaj said music tourism is opening up new neighbourhoods to young travellers. Airbnb has partnered with Lollapalooza India 2026 in Mumbai, reinforcing music-led travel as a growing cultural and economic force. The study was conducted by YouGov across 1,102 Gen Z respondents in 10 major cities.

Oil palm push gains ground, but infrastructure gaps threaten India's edible oil targets

Guwahati: India's drive towards edible oil self-sufficiency has reached a crucial phase, with oil palm cultivation emerging as a key pillar under the National Mission on Edible Oils—Oil Palm (NMEO-OP). While the mission set an ambitious target of expanding oil palm area from 3.5 lakh hectares in 2019–20 to 10 lakh hectares by 2025–26, cultivation has reached about 6.20 lakh hectares nationwide as of November 2025, falling short of the goal. Experts warn that the gap matters, as continued reliance on imports exposes the economy to global price swings.

Despite slower-than-planned expansion, farmer interest in oil palm has grown steadily. With yields significantly higher than other edible oil crops and a productive life of nearly three decades, oil palm is increasingly seen as a stable income option. Government support through subsidies, price assurance and intercropping incentives has helped address early-stage challenges, with farmers in Andhra Pradesh reporting income gains of up to three times after shifting crops.

However, weak infrastructure remains a major hurdle. Poor rural roads, long transport distances and limited processing facilities often reduce quality and returns, dis-



couraging fresh investment, especially in regions like the Northeast.

In Guwahati, the expansion of oil palm in the Northeast could reshape local edible oil supply chains. Improved infrastructure and assured procurement could reduce dependence on imported oils in the Guwahati market, stabilise prices and create new opportunities for farmers and agri-businesses in the region.

Mother's Recipe launches ‘MOM FU’ campaign to bring new flavours to North East kitchens

Guwahati: Mother's Recipe, the legacy homegrown food brand trusted by Indian households for generations, has launched a new festive campaign for its Recipe Sauces range across the North East. The initiative, themed “MOM FU: Maa ka pyaar in a new avatar,” runs from December 22, 2025 to the first week of January 2026 and aims to strengthen brand and product awareness by highlighting authentic flavours and convenience-led cooking.

The campaign adopts a digital-first strategy across Guwahati, Dimapur, Agartala and Aizawl, with locally relevant and season-specific content.

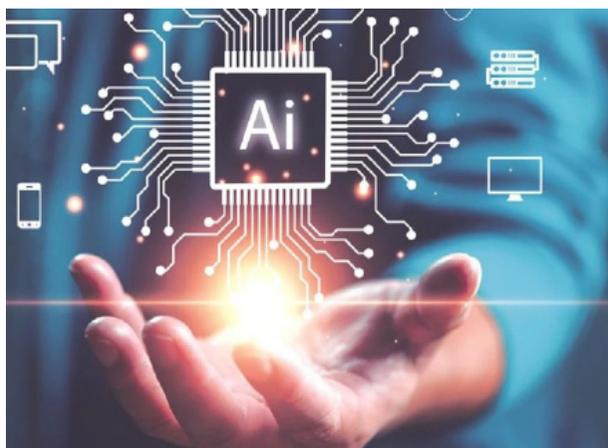
Positioned at the intersection of comfort and experimentation, the messaging reflects a rising trend of families trying Pan Asian favourites at home while still seeking the warmth of homestyle meals.

Sanjana Desai, Executive Director, Mother's Recipe, said the communication brings alive the sentiment of maternal care in a modern format. “With our Recipe Sauces, we are bringing together two things people care about deeply — exciting flavour and the comfort of Maa ka pyaar. The North East has a strong food culture and a real love for bold taste, so it felt like the perfect place to tell this story,” she said.

Upcoming 'India AI Impact Summit 2026' a defining moment: Experts

New Delhi: The upcoming 'India AI Impact Summit 2026' will position the country as a landmark global destination that will shape the future of responsible and inclusive Artificial Intelligence (AI), experts have said. According to an IT Ministry statement on Tuesday, the 38th episode of 'Digital India Ask Our Experts' highlighted the 'India AI Impact Summit 2026' in the national capital from February 16-20.

Experts explained how the Summit is built around the three guiding pillars or 'Sutras' of People, Planet and Progress, with focused working groups or 'Chakras'. The discussions and outcomes from these groups are expected to influence AI policy, skilling strategies and implementation across India and the Global South, said the ministry.



They also highlighted opportunities for youth, startups, women innovators and learners from Tier-2 and 3 cities, including AI and Data Labs, global challenges, pitch fests and the 'YUVAI Global Youth Challenge'. "Viewers were informed about the 'India AI Impact Expo 2026', to be held at Bharat Mandapam from February 16-20, which

will demonstrate how AI solutions are transforming sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture and governance," the ministry statement said. It further stated that citizens raised questions on AI infrastructure, open data access, healthcare datasets, startup participation, governance, inclusion of non-tech users, and online participation.

Gold, silver prices ease amid profit booking at record levels

Mumbai: Gold and silver prices eased on Tuesday amid profit booking, after they surged to record high levels over worries of the US Justice Department's action against the Federal Reserve Chair. MCX gold February futures eased 0.44 per cent to Rs 1,41,400 per 10 grams around 1.15 pm, while MCX silver March futures traded flat with a negative bias down 0.01 per cent at Rs 2,68,926 per kg. The price of 10 grams of 24-carat gold was at Rs 1,40,482 down from Rs 1,40,499 of previous day's close, according to data published by the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA). Gold prices had breached \$4,600 per ounce for the first time ever, followed by investors booking profits.

The rally was supported by US President Trump announcing a 25 per cent tariff on nations trading with Iran and warned of potential military action as protests intensified. Markets remain focused on the criminal probe into Fed Chair Jerome Powell's testimony, which he termed politically motivated pressure to force rate cuts, said Rahul Kalantri, VP Commodities, Mehta Equities Ltd. Investors also await key US inflation data for clearer policy direction. While rates are expected to remain unchanged this month, markets continue to price in two cuts later this



year, analysts said.

Last week's US jobs report showed weaker-than-expected payroll gains, reinforcing expectations that the Federal Reserve will deliver further interest-rate cuts this year. Demonstrations in Iran led markets to weigh the chances of political upheaval and its implications for oil supplies. Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine and Washington's renewed signals over taking control of Greenland are other factors supporting the rally. "Gold has support at Rs 1,39,550-1,37,310 while resistance at Rs 1,44,350-1,46,670. Silver has support at Rs 2,60,810 to 2,54,170 zone while resistance at Rs 2,71,810 to 2,74,470," analyst said.

Passenger vehicle sales in India jump 21 pc in Q3, touch record high

New Delhi: India's automobile industry delivered a strong performance in the third quarter of FY2025-26, with all major vehicle segments reporting their highest-ever Q3 sales, driven by festive demand, policy support and improved affordability. The passenger vehicle segment recorded its best-ever Q3 sales at 12.76 lakh units in Q3, marking a sharp growth of 20.6 per cent compared with the same period last year. The segment also achieved its highest-ever calendar year sales of 44.90 lakh units during January to December 2025, registering a growth of 5 per cent over the previous year.

A renewed sense of optimism



among buyers during the festive season further boosted demand. Passenger vehicle exports also hit a record high in Q3 FY26 at 2.25 lakh units, growing 11.7 per cent year-on-year. For the full calendar year

2025, exports stood at 8.63 lakh units, up 16 per cent, with steady demand from markets such as the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. The two-wheeler segment also posted a historic quarter, with

Q3 FY26 sales touching an all-time high of 5.70 million units, crossing the five-million mark for the first time.

This represented a growth of 16.9 per cent compared with Q3 FY25. During the January-December 2025 period, two-wheeler sales crossed 20 million units at 20.50 million, growing 4.9 per cent year-on-year. Improved affordability following the rollout of GST 2.0, higher disposable incomes, multiple repo rate cuts and income tax relief in 2025 supported demand. Exports of two-wheelers also surged, reaching a record 1.37 million units in Q3 FY26, a jump of 24.3 per cent.

Renault tests new Duster for over 1 million km across 3 continents



Guwahati: Renault India has announced that the upcoming new Renault Duster SUV has completed over 1 million kilometres of testing across three continents, covering temperatures from -23°C to 55°C. The company said the SUV was tested in a wide range of difficult environments to ensure strength, safety and long-term durability for real-world road conditions.

The Duster also proved its capability in high-altitude terrain, including Leh-Ladakh, where it completed a test run at Khardung La at 18,379 feet, one of the world's highest motorable passes. Renault said the vehicle went through dust tunnel testing, water-wading, steep climbs, city traffic drives and highway endurance runs. Testing was also carried out at facilities such as NATRAX, ARAI, GARC and ICAT in India.

Tuning drives were conducted

in several countries including Brazil, Romania, France, China and the Czech Republic to refine handling and stability. Renault Group India CEO Stephane Deblaise said the milestone shows the company's commitment to delivering a dependable and capable SUV for India.

In Guwahati, car dealers say there is strong anticipation for the new Duster, as the earlier version had a loyal customer base in Assam and the Northeast. The rugged build and ground clearance are expected to appeal to customers who often drive on mixed terrain and highway stretches connecting hill districts.

Renault says the new Duster will combine modern handling with the tough-road capability the brand is known for. The SUV will be officially unveiled on January 26, 2026, coinciding with Republic Day.

Marwadi University to host Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference; proposes Rs 1,000 cr education investment

Guwahati: Marwadi University will host the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conferences (VGRC) from January 11 to 12, 2026, as part of the Government of Gujarat's efforts to boost global engagement and investments across the state. The conference will focus on strengthening the education ecosystem and supporting economic growth in Gujarat.

The university has proposed a ₹1,000 crore investment MoU to the state Education Department. The plan includes new

academic infrastructure, advanced laboratories, modern sports facilities, upgraded hostels, and a 10,000 sq ft innovation centre for start-ups. A separate academic block will also support continuing education for working professionals and entrepreneurs.

VGRC will follow the theme "Vocal for Local" and will be organised across four regions of Gujarat. Delegations from Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, the Netherlands, and global organisations such as JETRO,

World Bank, ICBC, USISPF, and the Russian Federation are expected to participate.

Trustee Dhruv Marwadi said the conference will help connect local talent with global investors, while Provost R.B. Jadeja said the initiative supports the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047.

The two-day event will include seminars, exhibitions, MoU signings, B2B and government meetings, and sessions on AI, sustainability, engineering, and digital



marketing. The event aims to strengthen sectors such as MSMEs, start-ups, tourism, culture, and food processing, positioning Gujarat as a growing global investment hub.

Royal Enfield unveils 2026 Goan Classic 350 with new comfort and convenience upgrades

Shillong: Royal Enfield has introduced the 2026 edition of the Goan Classic 350, offering fresh rider-focused updates for customers looking for a stylish and relaxed motorcycle experience. The bobber-inspired model continues to reflect a free-spirited lifestyle, aimed at riders who value comfort, individuality and easy cruising over outright speed.

For consumers, the key update is the addition of an assist-and-slipper clutch, which makes gear changes smoother and reduces hand fatigue during daily rides and traffic-heavy conditions. The USB Type-C charging port has also been upgraded for faster charging, allowing riders to keep smartphones and navigation devices powered on the move. The motorcycle is powered by the familiar 349cc air-oil-cooled single-cylinder engine that delivers 20.2 bhp and 27 Nm of torque, paired with a 5-speed gearbox designed for calm city riding and relaxed highway travel.

Visually, the Goan Classic 350 retains its strong identity with a single-seat bobber silhouette, floating rider seat, whitewall aluminium tubeless spoke wheels, chopper-style fenders, slash-cut exhaust and mid-ape handlebars.

In Shillong, dealers say interest in premium and lifestyle motorcycles is steadily rising, especially among young riders and touring enthusiasts. The Goan Classic 350's comfortable posture, unique design and brand appeal are expected to attract buyers looking to upgrade from entry-level motorcycles.

The Goan Classic 350 is priced at Rs. 2,19,787 (ex-showroom) for Shack Black and Purple Haze, and Rs. 2,22,593 for Trip Teal Green and Rave Red, and will be available at authorised Royal Enfield stores across India.



Nissan expands India focus, appoints Thierry Sabbagh as President to drive growth

Guwahati: Nissan has announced key leadership changes across its Africa, Middle East, India, Europe and Oceania (AMIEO) region, strengthening its push under the Re:Nissan transformation plan with a sharper focus on speed, efficiency and customers. Effective January 1, 2026, Thierry Sabbagh has assumed an expanded role as Divisional Vice President and President, Middle East, KSA, CIS and India – Nissan and Infiniti, bringing India directly under his leadership.

The move highlights India's growing strategic importance for Nissan as the company accelerates its market resurgence. Over the next 14 to 16 months, Nissan India plans to launch three new models—GRAVITE, TEKTON and a 7-seater C-SUV—while expanding its dealer network to 250 touchpoints na-

tionwide.

Massimiliano Messina, Chairperson, Nissan AMIEO, said the leadership changes are aimed at empowering regional teams to respond faster to market needs and deliver competitive products. Sabbagh said he looks forward to building on strong foundations in India and the Middle East to accelerate growth and deliver greater customer value.

Welcoming the decision, Saurabh Vatsa, Managing Director, Nissan Motor India, said the appointment strengthens leadership at a crucial growth phase focused on execution, products and sustainable expansion.

In Guwahati, Nissan's planned product launches and dealer expansion could improve brand visibility in the Northeast, where demand for compact SUVs and value-driven vehicles is rising. Dealers



expect fresh models and stronger leadership focus to help Nissan gradually widen its customer base in the region.

Nissan also announced the departure of Leon Dorssers, Senior Vice President and Chief of Commercial Operations, marking the end of a three-decade-long career with the company.

Blenders Pride Fashion Tour 2025 Wraps Multi-City Showcase



Shillong: The Blenders Pride Fashion Tour 2025 concluded in January with immersive fashion experiences across Gurugram, Jaipur, and Kolkata, drawing over 2,100 attendees.

Gurugram featured Falguni and Shane Peacock's "The Futureverse of Fashion," combining haute couture with holographic technology and humanoid robots, with Shahid Kapoor and Tamannaah Bhatia walking the runway. Jaipur presented "High Octane Culture" by Namrata Joshipura and Abhishek Patni, incorporating motorsport aesthetics and chrome-wrapped supercars, featuring Harnaaz Sandhu and Raftaar. The Kolkata finale showcased Anamika Khanna's "Future Is Crafted" against the Howrah Bridge backdrop, with Ishaan Khatter as showstopper.

"Blenders Pride Fashion Tour powered by FDCI has been Indian fashion's most iconic stage," said Debasree Dasgupta, CMO of Pernod Ricard India. The tour, organized in collaboration with the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI), aimed to redefine fashion experiences through technology, cultural storytelling, and innovative design.

Makar Sankranti 2026: California Almonds add a healthy touch to harvest festivities

Guwahati: As Makar Sankranti 2026 ushers in the harvest season and longer days, California Almonds are being positioned as a key ingredient combining festive tradition with modern nutrition. Celebrated across India as Pongal, Lohri, Uttarayan and Magh Bihu, the festival drives high seasonal consumption of sweets and traditional foods, making it an important period for nutrition-focused food brands.

Health experts associated with the initiative highlighted almonds' strong nutritional profile, including protein, healthy fats and antioxidants, which help support immunity, sustained energy and blood sugar management. Ritika Samaddar, Regional Head – Dietetics at Max Healthcare, said that mindful ingredient choices during festivals can help consumers balance indulgence with health, noting that



almonds are naturally satiating and versatile for both sweet and savoury dishes.

From an Ayurveda standpoint, Dr. Madhumitha Krishnan described almonds as "balya" or strength-enhancing, particularly beneficial during winter for improving digestion, vitality and immunity. Nutrition and wellness consultant Sheela Krishnaswamy added that almonds enhance texture and nourishment in festive recipes without excessive sugar

or refined fats.

Bollywood actress Soha Ali Khan shared that California Almonds have been a staple in her family kitchen, helping maintain a balance between celebration and well-being.

The initiative is supported by the Almond Board of California, a non-profit representing over 7,600 almond growers and processors, reinforcing almonds' positioning as a premium, wholesome food choice during India's festive season.

Aviva launches 'Smart Vital' health plan with wellness rewards and fixed payout benefits

Guwahati: Aviva India has launched Aviva Smart Vital, a first-of-its-kind fixed health benefit plan that combines critical illness protection with wellness-linked rewards. The individual non-linked, non-participating plan offers lump-sum payouts starting from ₹10 lakh on the first diagnosis of any of 49 listed critical illnesses, including cancer, kidney failure, heart disease and stroke. Policyholders can double their coverage over time through quarterly step-based rewards of 2.5%, 5% or 7.5%.

Wellness tracking will be enabled via Aviva's Wellness360 app, with eligible customers also receiving a smart monitoring device at no additional cost. Unlike traditional Mediclaim products, Smart Vital offers fixed benefits that customers may use for medical expenses, income replacement or family needs. The plan is open to individuals aged 20–50 years, with policy terms of 10 to 20 years and fixed premiums throughout.



In Guwahati, insurance advisers say the plan may appeal strongly to urban professionals and self-employed customers seeking both health security and predictable financial support amid rising treatment costs. The growing awareness of lifestyle-related diseases in Assam's capital is also expected to drive interest.

Aviva India CEO & MD Asit Rath said the product aims to promote proactive wellness alongside financial resilience, while senior leadership highlighted its customer-focused design approach. The launch also supports IRDAI's goal of expanding insurance access nationwide.

Bhutanese shooters begin high-performance training in Siliguri under India-Bhutan sports partnership

Guwahati: Thirteen national shooters from Bhutan have begun a two-week high-performance training camp in Siliguri, West Bengal, under the India-Bhutan cooperation framework. The programme, scheduled from January 7 to 20 at Olympian Jitu Rai's Shooting Academy, is being seen as a strategic investment in sporting excellence, aimed at improving Bhutan's competitive standing at the international level. The initiative is funded through the Indo-Bhutan Partnership Programme, reinforcing New Delhi's Neighbourhood First policy, which extends support across infrastructure, education, health, and sports.

The Indian Embassy in Bhutan said the collaboration reflects strong bilateral engagement in youth and sports development. The Bhutan

Shooting Federation confirmed that five rifle shooters, eight pistol shooters, and two coaches are attending the camp to enhance technical skills, competition preparedness, and global exposure. The Federation also expressed gratitude to the Government of India for continued developmental support.

In Guwahati, increasing sports-related exchanges in the Northeast could stimulate regional investment in training infrastructure, hospitality, logistics, and sports tourism. The trend is expected to benefit local businesses while positioning the Northeast as a preferred hub for cross-border sports development.

The camp is expected to significantly strengthen Bhutan's talent pipeline while deepening long-term sporting cooperation between the two nations.

Groww Mutual Fund launches Small Cap Fund, NFO opens January 8

Guwahati: Groww Mutual Fund on Tuesday announced the launch of the Groww Small Cap Fund, an open-ended equity scheme that will invest predominantly in small cap stocks, as the asset manager looks to tap long-term growth opportunities in emerging Indian businesses. The New Fund Offer (NFO) will remain open from January 8 to January 22, 2026.

According to the fund house, the scheme aims to generate long-term capital appreciation through a disciplined bottom-up stock selection strategy, guided by its QGaRP framework—Quality and Growth at a Reasonable Price. The fund will focus on identifying scalable small cap companies with strong fundamentals, sustainable growth potential, and reasonable valuations, while avoiding macro-led or thematic investment calls.

Groww Mutual Fund said India's ongoing economic transformation—marked by higher infrastructure spending, deeper capital markets, wider

access to formal credit, and large-scale digital adoption—has reduced traditional disadvantages faced by smaller companies. Historically, small caps have also shown the potential to deliver higher long-term returns, though with higher volatility.

In Guwahati, interest in equity mutual funds, including small cap strategies, has been steadily rising among retail investors, especially younger professionals and first-time investors. Financial advisors in the city note that improving financial awareness and easier access to digital investment platforms are driving demand, though they continue to advise investors to adopt a long-term view and assess risk carefully.

The scheme will be benchmarked against the Nifty Smallcap 250 TRI, with a minimum investment of ₹500. Investors have been advised to read scheme-related documents carefully before investing.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas marked worldwide, PM Modi hails diaspora as India's global bridge



Guwahati: Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was celebrated with enthusiasm across India and in several countries on Thursday, with events organised by Indian missions worldwide to honour the contributions of the Indian diaspora. On the occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended greetings to Indians living overseas, describing them as a strong bridge between India and the world.

Indian missions marked the day through cultural and interactive programmes. India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva hosted a large gathering of people of Indian origin. In China, the Consulate General of India in Shanghai focused on promoting Indian entrepreneurship. Consul General Pratik Mathur visited Hangzhou's tourism facilities and emerging AI hub, where he interacted with Indian community members and diaspora youth leaders working in next-generation AI startups, praising their role in building "Made in India, Made for the World" solutions.

The Indian Embassy in Bhutan said the day was an opportunity to renew bonds and recognise the diaspora's contribution to national development. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also greeted nearly 35 million NRIs and people of Indian origin, lauding their role in strengthening India's global presence.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas marks the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa on January 9, 1915, and honours the global Indian community's role in India's growth. According to Reserve Bank of India, remittances from overseas Indians touched around USD 130 billion, contributing over three per cent to India's GDP.

In Guwahati, traders say diaspora remittances and overseas demand continue to support consumption, education, real estate and small businesses in Assam. Market players note that steady inflows help boost retail trade, housing investments and service-sector growth in the city, underlining the indirect but visible impact of the global Indian community on the local economy.

Music tourism on the rise as Gen Z Indians turn concerts into travel plans: Airbnb insights

Guwahati: Airbnb's latest Experience-Led Travel Insights reveal that live music is becoming a major driver of travel decisions among India's Gen Z, with 62% planning trips around concerts and festivals in 2026. The report shows that culture rather than calendars is shaping where young people go, who they travel with and how they explore destinations. Notably, 76% said they visited a city for the first time to attend a concert or festival, while over 40% are willing to travel abroad for performances.

More than one in three respondents plan trips as soon as an event is announced. Concert-led travel is also extending stays, with 53% spending additional days exploring local cafés, nightlife and cultural hubs, boosting neighborhood economies. Six in ten Gen Z travelers are willing to allocate up to 40% of their monthly income to music-led experiences, with average spending per trip at ₹51,000.

In Guwahati, the growing popularity of music tourism reflects rising cultural mobility among Northeast youth as well. With Guwahati included in the survey base, the trend suggests increasing outbound travel from the city for large-scale events, while also signalling potential for hosting destination-based live experiences that could strengthen local tourism and hospitality markets.

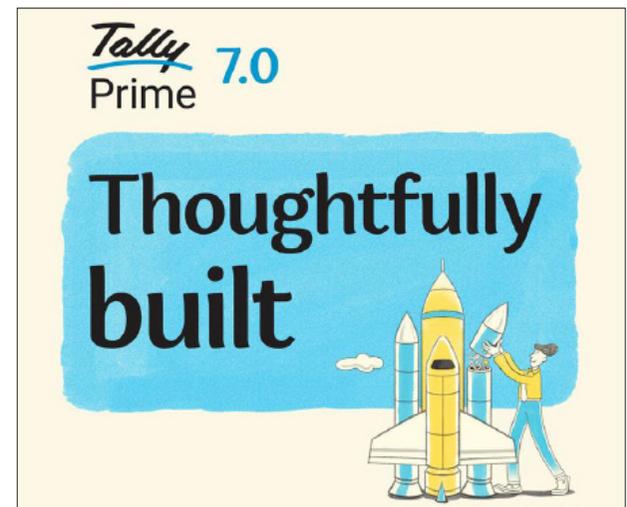
Airbnb India and Southeast Asia Country Head Amanpreet Singh Bajaj said music travel is opening communities to new forms of engagement. Airbnb has also partnered with Lollapalooza India 2026, further cementing the rise of music-led tourism as a mainstream trend.

TallyPrime7.0 launched with stronger banking links, enhanced data security for MSMEs

Guwahati: Tally Solutions Pvt Ltd on Tuesday announced the launch of TallyPrime Release 7.0, marking five years of the TallyPrime platform and strengthening its focus on simple and connected digitisation for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The latest release brings deeper integrations with banks, improved automation, and enhanced data-protection features aimed at making daily business operations faster and more reliable.

Since its introduction, TallyPrime has supported MSMEs in adapting to India's evolving digital ecosystem, including e-invoicing, e-way bills and GST compliance. With features such as Connected Banking and cloud access, businesses have been able to manage operations securely from anywhere. Release 7.0 builds on this foundation by improving continuity, clarity and control for users.

The new version introduces stronger integrations with State Bank of India and Axis Bank, allowing real-time balance checks, statement access, instant reconciliation and seamless payment management within the TallyPrime platform. Tally has also expanded its partnership with NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd through Bharat



Connect for Business, enabling automated invoice exchange and linked payments between buyers and sellers.

Data protection has been further strengthened through an enhanced TallyDrive experience, featuring upgraded encryption and integrity checks to ensure business data remains secure and under the user's control.

Commenting on the launch, Tejas Goenka, Managing Director, Tally Solutions, said the release reflects the company's belief that MSMEs need connected digitisation without added complexity, helping them operate with greater transparency and confidence.

In Guwahati, where MSMEs play a key role across trading, manufacturing and services, the launch of TallyPrime 7.0 is expected to support faster adoption of digital accounting and banking-linked operations. Local businesses dealing with GST compliance, inter-state trade and frequent bank transactions may benefit from real-time reconciliation and automated workflows, helping them improve efficiency and maintain better financial control in a competitive market environment.

TallyPrime Release 7.0 will be available to all existing TallyPrime customers with an active licence.

MG Windsor emerges as India's No. 1 selling EV of 2025

Guwahati: JSW MG Motor India has announced that the MG Windsor has become India's No. 1 selling electric vehicle of 2025, marking a major milestone in the country's growing EV market. The company recorded sales of over 46,735 units of the Windsor in calendar year 2025, averaging about 4,000 units per month. This makes JSW MG Motor India the first OEM in India to achieve such a figure with a single EV model. Overall EV sales for the company grew by 111% in 2025 compared to 2024, while Windsor sales alone grew by more than 20% in Q4 2025 over the same period last year.

The MG Windsor has found strong acceptance among family buyers, offering spacious interiors, comfort, and a feature-loaded cabin along with a smooth driving experience. Anurag Mehrotra, Managing Director of JSW MG Motor India, said the Windsor has "redefined the



EV segment with its practicality, technology and futuristic design," adding that the model has encouraged more customers to shift to electric mobility.

In Guwahati, the Windsor's rise reflects growing interest in EVs across the Northeast. Dealers in the region report increasing adoption driven by better charging infrastructure, fuel price aware-

ness and rising environmental consciousness among urban families.

JSW MG Motor India closed 2025 with 19% overall growth. The Windsor is available with two battery options, offering ranges of up to 449 km, and features a premium design and a 15.6-inch touch display, further strengthening its appeal in the competitive EV space.

CVL crosses 10 crore KYC records, reinforces leadership in India's securities market

Guwahati: CDSL Ventures Limited (CVL), India's first and largest KYC Registration Agency (KRA), has crossed a major milestone by surpassing 10 crore KYC records, marking a significant achievement in the country's financial market infrastructure. The development underlines CVL's growing role in strengthening the Know Your Customer (KYC) framework across India's securities ecosystem.

The milestone reflects the scale, efficiency, and reliability of CVL's operations, as it continues to support intermediaries, investors, and regulators with robust KYC services. As a critical backbone of the securities market, CVL enables seamless onboarding, compliance, and data integrity, contributing to greater transparency and

investor confidence. The expanding KYC database also mirrors the rising participation of retail investors and the rapid digitisation of financial services in India.

In Guwahati, the milestone is expected to support deeper capital market participation in Assam and the wider Northeast. Market participants say streamlined and reliable KYC processes have helped brokers and financial institutions in Guwahati onboard new investors more efficiently, particularly first-time and retail clients. With increasing awareness and access to digital investment platforms, CVL's expanding KYC infrastructure is seen as a key enabler for market growth and compliance in the region, aligning Guwahati more closely with national financial market trends.

Siddhant Chaturvedi to host exclusive 'Mumbai Like a Local' experience with Airbnb during Lollapalooza India



Guwahati: Actor and musician Siddhant Chaturvedi has partnered with Airbnb to offer an exclusive, invite-only experience that allows guests to explore Mumbai through his personal lens during Lollapalooza India 2026. Titled Lolla India Like a Local, the four-hour Airbnb Original Experience will be open for booking from January 19 at 11 AM IST.

Designed for just four guests, the experience includes a meal at one of Siddhant's favourite local food joints, a guided heritage walk through Bandra's historic Ranwar Village, an intimate jam session where he performs an original track inspired by the city, and finally, attending Lollapalooza India alongside him. The initiative also introduces The Mumbai Guidebook, a digital city guide curated by Siddhant, featuring neigh-

bourhoods, local cafés, creative spaces, and select Airbnb stays.

Airbnb said the collaboration reflects the growing trend of Gen Z travellers planning trips around concerts and festivals, while seeking deeper local connections. Amanpreet Bajaj, Country Head for India and Southeast Asia at Airbnb, said the experience blends music, culture and neighbourhood discovery in a meaningful way.

In Guwahati, such artist-led experiences as a strong signal for future tourism trends. With the Northeast increasingly hosting music festivals and cultural events, industry observers say similar hyper-local, celebrity-curated experiences could boost destination interest in cities like Guwahati, encouraging longer stays and higher engagement with local culture and businesses.

Tata AIA launches AURA platform to build next generation of insurance entrepreneurs

Aizawl: Tata AIA Life Insurance has rolled out Tata AIA AURA, a new platform aimed at transforming insurance advisors into full-fledged entrepreneurs, as the company looks to deepen insurance penetration and support India's long-term goal of "Insurance for All by 2047."

India currently has over 31.5 lakh life insurance advisors, yet life insurance penetration remains modest at around 3.7 per cent of GDP in FY24. Against this backdrop, Tata AIA said AURA is designed to equip advisors with digital tools, structured training, men-

torship and business guidance to help them scale sustainably and serve customers beyond major urban centres.

Amit Dave, Head of Advisor Distribution at Tata AIA, said the company views advisors as entrepreneurs rather than mere intermediaries, adding that AURA focuses on building long-term, trust-based relationships with customers instead of transactional sales.

The initiative also comes at a time when the removal of GST on life insurance policies has made products more affordable, providing fresh momentum to the sector and



improving the attractiveness of insurance advisory as a career.

In Aizawl and other parts of Mizoram, demand for life insurance is gradually rising as awareness about financial protection improves. Industry observers say platforms like AURA could help local advisors expand their reach, tap first-time policy buyers

and strengthen insurance adoption in semi-urban and hill markets.

Tata AIA, which reported a 99.4 per cent claim settlement ratio in FY25 and has over 1.5 lakh advisors, said AURA underlines its commitment to building a stronger, more professional insurance advisory ecosystem across India.

Shyam Steel Appoints Harmanpreet Kaur as Brand Ambassador



Agartala: Shyam Steel, a leading Indian TMT bar manufacturer, has named Harmanpreet Kaur, Captain of the Indian Women's Cricket Team, as its brand ambassador.

The partnership aligns with the company's campaign "Strong Woman. Strong Steel. Strong India," recognizing women's growing role in home-building and construction decisions. Kaur will also promote Shyam Steel's ApnaGhar App, a digital platform guiding homeowners through the construction process from foundation to completion.

"This partnership represents shared values of discipline, determination, and reliability," said Lalit Beriwalla, Director at Shyam Steel. Megha Beriwalla Gupta, also a Director, emphasized that women are now key decision-makers in home construction.

Kaur stated the brand's vision of building a stronger India "resonates deeply with my own journey as a sportsperson and leader."

The collaboration was facilitated by KPRD Fiberboard Advertising. Shyam Steel operates across multiple Indian states including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and expanding into Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Elmac scales up North East push with high-visibility outdoor campaign to drive festive demand

Guwahati: Elmac Agro, the Kolkata-born sauces and condiments brand owned by Desai Foods Private Limited, is betting big on rising consumption in the North East with a high-impact outdoor advertising campaign rolled out during the peak festive and year-end season. Best known for its sharp and flavour-rich Kasundi, Elmac also has a strong portfolio of Chinese sauces, including Green Chilli Sauce, Red Chilli Sauce and Soya Bean Sauce, which enjoy wide acceptance across Eastern and North-Eastern India.

The campaign, running from December 15, 2025 to the first week of January 2026, spans key cities such as Guwahati, Shillong, Aizawl, Imphal, Agartala and Dimapur. Designed around the theme "Celebrate with the flavours you love," the outdoor creatives showcase food-led moments of togetherness, positioning



Elmac as an everyday companion for cooking, finishing and serving meals. Large-format product visuals supported by appetising food imagery aim to drive instant recall and reinforce the brand's strong local connect.

Sanjana Desai, Executive Director, DFPL, said the initiative reflects Elmac's long-standing relationship with the region's bold food culture and its focus on staying close to everyday kitchens. The campaign also builds on the brand's broader

progression, which includes sauces, Kasundi, Lime Juice Cordial and Mango Panna as table staples across occasions.

In Guwahati, Elmac sees sustained traction driven by strong demand for Chinese sauces and traditional condiments, especially during festive home consumption. High visibility hoardings across the city are expected to strengthen brand recall in a competitive FMCG landscape, making Guwahati a key growth hub for Elmac's North East expansion strategy.

Term Insurance: Essential for Indian Families' Financial Security

Guwahati: In India's rapidly growing economy, term life insurance is becoming vital for financial protection. It ensures that dependents are financially secure in the event of a breadwinner's untimely death.

Term insurance offers substantial coverage at low premiums, such as a ₹1 crore policy for a healthy 30-year-old male at around ₹1,000 per month. This coverage can help families handle immediate expenses, debts, and future needs like children's education.

Choosing the right coverage involves assessing current financial obligations and looking towards future liabilities. A recommended cover is 10-15 times one's annual income, considering factors like home loans



and rising inflation.

Policyholders can also decide between a Return-of-Premium term plan, which refunds premiums if they outlive the term, and a pure term plan focused solely on protection.

A member of the Insurance Awareness Committee (IAC-Life) emphasizes the necessity of term insurance, urging households to secure the financial future of their loved ones promptly.