

# NORTH EAST BUSINESS MIRROR

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## Govt launching Rs 25,000 crore worth of schemes to boost exports

**New Delhi:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has drawn up a Rs 25,000 crore proposal for WTO-compliant support schemes, mainly to help finance small exporters in labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, gems & jewellery, and marine products under the Export Promotion Mission for a six-year period. A senior official confirmed that the proposal has been sent to the Finance Ministry for approval, after which it will be forwarded for Cabinet approval before it is finally rolled out.

These schemes have been designed to be compliant with World Trade Organisation (WTO) regulations and will focus on trade finance and improving market access for exporters. The new package of schemes under the Export Promotion Mission follows the Rs. 2,250



crore mission announced in the 2025-26 Union Budget, which has not yet been rolled out. The launch has gained further urgency given the uncertainties in the international market due to the hike in US tariffs. There is a need to diversify markets, and the schemes will also focus on developing the logistics chain and marketing to diversify markets for Indian exports.

The government views this mission as a long-term strategy

that addresses challenges beyond just tariffs and trade wars. The strategy includes promoting exports, diversifying both markets and the export baskets to make them more competitive. The high interest rates in the Indian banking sector tend to put the country's exporters at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their competitors, and financing on more affordable terms would help to bridge this gap.

The schemes aim to help ex-

porters by offering collateral-free loans, supporting alternative financial instruments, and providing assistance for new markets. The schemes will be implemented in coordination with the MSME Ministry, as the sector is the highest employer in the country.

India's merchandise exports registered a 7.29 per cent increase to \$37.24 billion in July this year, compared with the corresponding figure of \$34.71 billion in the same month last year, according to the latest data compiled by the Commerce Ministry. "Despite an uncertain global policy environment, India's services and merchandise exports in July and in FY26 so far have grown substantially, and are much higher than the global exports growth," Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said.

## Yes Bank gets RBI's approval for 24.99 pc stake acquisition by Japan's SMBC

**New Delhi:** Private sector lender Yes Bank on Saturday said that Japanese Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC) has received Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) nod to acquire 24.99 per cent stake in the bank. This approval, which was granted by the RBI on August 22, will be valid for a year, the private sector lender said in an exchange filing. However, the bank said that RBI had further clarified that with the stake acquisition, SMBC would not be treated as a promoter of the bank.

Earlier, on May 9, the stake purchase was first disclosed with SMBC acquiring 20 per cent in Yes Bank through a secondary transaction - including 13.19 per cent from State Bank of India and a combined 6.81 per cent from seven other banks: Axis Bank, Federal Bank, Bandhan Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, IDFC First Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank. The central bank's nod is subject to other conditions including compliance with the relevant provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, RBI's Master Direction and Guidelines on Acquisition and Holding of Shares or Voting Rights in Banking Companies, provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 and other applicable laws and terms including lock in, any subsequent transactions being subject to conditions and RBI's decision, the bank said.

"Further, the consummation of the above-referred 'Proposed Transaction' is subject to approval from the Competition Commission of India ("CCI") and customary conditions precedents as mentioned in the agreements referred in our intimation dated May 09, 2025," the bank stated. Meanwhile, Yes Bank shares closed at 19.28, down 0.77 per cent on Friday. The stock slipped nearly 2 per cent in the last 5 sessions, while in the last 30 days, the shares fell over 3 per cent. In a year, the stock dipped over 20 per cent, while to date this year it has remained flat.

## Apple's fall event slated for September 9; new iPhones, watches and other devices expected



Apple will host its annual fall event on September 9, according to an invite on Tuesday, where the company is expected to unveil new iPhones, watches and other devices.

The event will be held at the Steve Jobs Theater at Apple's headquarters in Cupertino, California and serve as a showcase of the company's efforts to integrate artificial intelligence into its devices. It will be closely watched by investors worried about the company ceding ground to faster-moving rivals in the race to deploy AI technology.

Media reports have said Apple will also unveil a slimmer version of its latest iPhone, possibly branded as the iPhone Air, echoing its iPad Air and MacBook Air lines.

The company is also expected to showcase new entry-level, high-end Apple Watches, upgraded iPad Pros and a faster version of the Vision Pro headset, Bloomberg News has report-

ed recently.

Under pressure from the Trump administration, Apple has boosted its already hefty investment in the U.S. to \$600 billion over the next four years, creating jobs and shifting some work there in the hopes of sidestepping potential import duties. Apple faces pressure from tariffs imposed on U.S. imports from countries including its production hubs, China and India.

In June, Apple announced a slew of AI and software features, along with an overhaul of its operating system — redesigning its icons and menu to resemble what it calls "liquid glass."

However, Apple's delay in embracing the AI market has left it trailing Big Tech stalwarts. Smartphone maker Samsung and Chinese firms Honor and Huawei have taken advantage of the gap Apple left in the industry, luring customers with their own AI offerings.

## McDonald's protein push taps into India's health trend with new veg-friendly offering

**Mumbai:** At McDonald's outlets in South India, a 30-cent burger topping is selling out — a five-gram vegetarian protein slice, the brand's first such offering globally, developed with India's Central Food Technological Research Institute.

In July, McDonald's sold 32,000 slices in 24 hours, with most of its 400-plus stores running out and being restocked a month later, according to Westlife Foodworld, its franchisee for the south and west.

McDonald's has joined India's biggest dairy Amul, a slew of start-ups and a company backed by Bollywood superstar Ranveer Singh to unleash a marketing blitz with celebrity chefs and cricketers promoting protein as a daily nutrition need for young and old, not just a gym fad.

The kiosks now highlight protein rather than calories, and even the \$3 Chicken Maharaja can be topped with the slice. India's 'proteinisation' is widening beyond gym tubs to cottage cheese, ice creams, water, chips and 60-cent blueberry milkshakes, with flatbreads next.

India's cereal-heavy diet underpins the rush. Approximately 30 per cent of the 1.4 billion population is vegetarian, and the government estimates 73 per cent are protein-deficient. Per-capita meat supply is just 6.6 kg a year, versus 123 kg in the US and 70.5 kg in China, according to UN data from 2022.

Bollywood and cricket are amplifying the craze: Ranveer Singh-backed SuperYou says it has sold over 10 million protein wafers since November, while Amul, which generates three million litres of whey daily, is pushing high-protein buttermilk, ice cream and flatbreads through cricketers.



## Gold falls by Rs 600 this week, silver also declines



**New Delhi:** Buyers of gold and silver got some relief this week as prices edged lower in the domestic market. Gold prices dropped by more than Rs 600 per 10 grams, while silver slipped by over Rs 1,000 per kilogram. According to the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA), the price of 24-carat gold now stands at Rs 99,358 per 10 grams, compared to Rs 1,00,023 a week ago -- a decline of Rs 665. Prices of 22-carat gold fell to Rs 91,012 from Rs 91,621 per 10 grams, while 18-carat gold dropped from Rs 75,017 to Rs 74,519 per 10 grams.

Silver too saw a correction during the review period,

declining Rs 1,027 to Rs 1,13,906 per kg, from Rs 1,14,933 previously. Despite the fall, silver remains close to its all-time high of Rs 1,15,250 per kg, recorded on August 7. On a year-to-date (YTD) basis, both metals have delivered hefty gains. Since January 1, the price of 24-carat gold has surged from Rs 76,162 to Rs 99,358 per 10 grams, an increase of Rs 23,196 or 30.45 per cent.

Silver has risen even more sharply, climbing 32.42 per cent from Rs 86,017 to Rs 1,13,906 per kg. A report released this week by Ventura Securities said gold prices on COMEX could touch \$3,600 per ounce by the end of 2025, higher than the record \$3,534.10 per ounce seen on August 7 this year. The brokerage attributed the uptrend to strong ETF inflows, consistent buying by central banks, and robust participation by Indian retail investors in the gold investment market.

# Renault rolls out New Kiger with bold design, tech upgrades and enhanced safety

**Guwahati:** Renault India has launched the New Kiger, a refreshed version of its popular sub-four metre SUV, featuring over 35 enhancements in design, technology, performance, and safety.

The SUV gets a powerful 100 PS turbocharged engine, offering class-leading torque-to-weight ratio and segment-best fuel efficiency. Priced between ₹6.29 lakh and ₹11.29 lakh (ex-showroom), the New Kiger is available in multiple trims, including the premium Techno and Emotion variants.

Key highlights include a redesigned grille, LED head-



lamps and taillamps, 16-inch diamond-cut alloy wheels, dual-tone interiors, ventilated leatherette seats, and a 20.32 cm touchscreen infotainment system with wireless smartphone connectivity and

3D ARKAMYS® surround sound. Safety has been significantly upgraded, with 21 standard safety features, including six airbags, ESP, Traction Control, and Hill Start Assist.

Renault India CEO Venkatesh Mamillapalle said the Kiger's latest evolution reaffirms the company's commitment to "expressive design, intelligent engineering, and real-world performance" in India's fast-growing SUV segment.

In Guwahati, where compact SUVs dominate demand due to mixed urban-rural driving conditions, the New Kiger is expected to attract young professionals and families. Dealers predict the Oasis Yellow and Shadow Grey variants will particularly resonate with buyers looking for bold styling at competitive prices.

## India launches SOAR program to equip students with AI skills

**Guwahati:** India has taken a decisive step towards preparing its next generation for an AI-powered future with the launch of the SOAR (Skill for AI Readiness) program by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The initiative, designed for students from classes 6 to 12 as well as teachers, aims to bridge the growing skill gap in artificial intelligence and digital technologies.

Under the program, students will learn the fundamentals of AI through stories, games, and case studies, progressing to advanced activities such as coding, data analysis, and chatbot creation. Ethics will remain a core element, ensuring responsible use of AI. The framework includes three 15-hour modules for students and a 45-hour "AI for Educators" module for teachers. The project has already been piloted in 10,000 schools, with \$14.4 million raised through Skill Impact Bonds to expand its reach.

In Guwahati, the SOAR program is seen as a transformative push. With Assam's growing IT and startup ecosystem, local stakeholders believe AI training in schools will create a skilled workforce ready to contribute to the state's digital economy, while also generating opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

The government plans to implement SOAR nationwide by 2027, positioning India as a global hub of technological innovation and aligning with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

## Medanta expands Northeast outreach with focus on Brachial Plexus and computer-aided plastic surgeries

**Guwahati:** Medanta – The Medicity, recognised by Newsweek as India's Best Private Hospital for six consecutive years, is strengthening its footprint in the Northeast with specialised awareness programs in Shillong. The sessions, organised with the Indian Medical Association (IMA) Meghalaya branch and Meghalaya Medical Services Association (MMSA), highlighted advanced treatment of brachial plexus injuries and cutting-edge computer-assisted plastic surgeries.

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Khazanchi, Chairman, Plastic, Aesthetic and Reconstructive Surgery at Medanta, led the sessions. He explained that brachial plexus injuries, often sustained in road accidents or during birth, require timely surgical intervention. "If treated within six months, outcomes are favourable for restoring essential motor functions," he noted. He also emphasised the role of physical therapy in rehabilitation.

On computer-assisted plastic surgery, Dr. Khazanchi said virtual surgical planning, 3-D modeling, and patient-specific implants are transforming craniofacial reconstruction, supported by AI



for precision and improved outcomes.

In Guwahati, experts believe the region stands to benefit significantly as accident-related injuries and demand for advanced reconstructive care continue to rise. With Medanta's outreach, Guwahati's healthcare sector is poised to see stronger collaboration, increased medical tourism, and improved access to high-end treatments.

Senior IMA and MMSA officials, including Dr. C Daniala and Dr. Bhaskar Borgohain, were present at the event.

## ICICI Bank impacts 1.89 crore lives with expanded CSR and ESG initiatives in FY25

**Guwahati:** ICICI Bank has reported a significant expansion of its social and environmental initiatives, impacting 1.89 crore lives during FY24-25, according to its Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Report. The Bank allocated ₹801 crore towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in FY25, marking a 54% increase from ₹519 crore in the previous year.

Women's empowerment remained a core focus, with 10 lakh women supported through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), raising the total beneficiaries to 1.1 crore.

Skill development, agriculture, and micro-enterprise programmes benefitted over 91 lakh people, boosting rural livelihoods. In healthcare, ICICI Bank partnered with 550 hospitals to facilitate treatment for 4 lakh individuals and committed ₹1,800 crore to Tata Memorial Centre for establishing three new cancer hospitals.

Environmental efforts included creating 3,387 crore-litres of water harvesting capacity, restoring 17,453 water bodies, and planting 12 lakh trees. In Bihar, traditional ahar-pyne systems revived 11,973 acres of

farmland, while watershed projects in Maharashtra improved 1,295 acres.

In Guwahati, the Bank's initiatives are seen as a positive boost to financial literacy and rural entrepreneurship. Local traders and SHG members noted that improved access to credit and skills training are creating new opportunities for small businesses and women-led enterprises in Assam.

ICICI Bank reaffirmed its goal of achieving carbon neutrality for Scope 1 and 2 emissions by FY2032, aligning governance with sustainable growth.

## Almonds linked to gut health and heart benefits, say new studies



**Guwahati:** Two recent studies highlight the role of almonds in promoting gut health and potentially supporting cardiovascular wellness. Conducted by researchers funded by the Almond Board of California, the studies show that almonds act as natural prebiotics, enhancing the growth of beneficial gut bacteria such as Bifidobacterium, Lactobacillus, and Roseburia. Almond consumption also boosts production of butyrate, a short-chain fatty acid linked to reduced inflammation, better digestion, and heart health.

The first review emphasized almonds' prebiotic potential, noting that their fiber, polyphenols, and oligosaccharides nourish beneficial gut microbes and support a diverse microbiome. The second paper explored the gut-heart axis, suggesting that the cardioprotective benefits of almonds—such as lowering LDL cholesterol and blood pressure—may be mediated through improved gut microbiota function. Experts, including Professor Jack Gilbert and Dr. Ravinder Nagpal, called for further research to determine optimal consumption levels and clarify the mechanisms linking gut and heart health.

Guwahati has seen a steady rise in almond consumption among health-conscious consumers. Retailers report growing demand in supermarkets and local stores, with almonds increasingly featured in diets targeting digestive wellness and heart health. Nutritionists in the region are also recommending almonds as a convenient, nutrient-dense snack for families and working professionals.

With 6g of protein, 4g of fiber, and a rich nutrient profile per ounce, almonds are emerging as a functional food bridging gut and heart health.

## TVS Motor launches King Kargo HD EV, eyes strong growth in cargo mobility

**Guwahati:** TVS Motor Company, a global leader in two and three-wheeler manufacturing, has launched the TVS King Kargo HD EV, marking a major push into the electric cargo mobility segment. The company also showcased the CNG variant, which is scheduled for launch by the end of 2025.

The King Kargo HD EV is built to serve the needs of urban and semi-urban logistics operators, offering a combination of safety, comfort, and smart technology. Key highlights include LED headlamps and tail lamps, a spacious cabin with rolling windows, stylish door trims for ventilation, and a dedicated Power Gear Mode delivering higher torque under load. As India's first Bluetooth-enabled cargo three-wheeler, it comes with TVS SmartXonnect™, offering 26 smart features, while twin-axis mirrors improve navigation in congested roads.



In Guwahati, the model is expected to attract traders and fleet operators in dense commercial hubs such as Burabazar, Posta and Sealdah. Given the city's narrow lanes and high daily logistics demand, the vehicle's compact design, torque efficiency and fleet management capabilities could provide a competitive edge for last-mile deliveries.

Priced at ₹3.85 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi), the King Kargo HD EV integrates with TVS Connect Fleet, a platform offering 31 advanced features including real-time tracking, reports, and intelligent dashboards. It will first be available across Delhi-NCR, Rajasthan, and Bengaluru.

## SBI Card, Flipkart launch co-branded credit card to boost online shopping value

**Guwahati:** SBI Card, India's largest pure-play credit card issuer, and e-commerce giant Flipkart on Tuesday announced the launch of the Flipkart SBI Credit Card, aimed at enhancing affordability and rewards for customers across Flipkart, Myntra, Shopsy, and Cleartrip platforms.

Launched in the presence of SBI Chairman ChallaSreenivasuluSetty and SBI Managing Director Ashwini Kumar Tewari, the card offers up to 7.5% cashback on Myntra spends and 5% cashback on Flipkart, Shopsy, and Cleartrip purchases. Additionally, customers will receive 4% cashback on brands like Zomato, Uber, Netmeds, and PVR, and 1% unlimited cashback on all other eligible spends.

In Guwahati, the card is expected to drive stronger participation from younger



shoppers, particularly in fashion, electronics, and travel segments. With e-commerce adoption steadily rising in Assam's urban markets, the new offering could encourage greater use of digital payments, while boosting consumer confidence in online shopping.

SalilaPande, MD & CEO of SBI Card, said the launch

reflects efforts to deliver "a rewarding and seamless payment experience." Flipkart CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy added that the initiative will help "democratize access to formal credit in India."

The card carries a joining and annual fee of ₹500 with welcome benefits worth ₹1,250 and limited-period launch offers.

## Medanta pushes early detection of heart and kidney diseases, expands reach to Northeast

**Guwahati:** The Medicity, Gurgaon, recently named Best Private Hospital in India by Newsweek for the sixth consecutive year, has highlighted the urgent need for early detection and integrated treatment of coronary artery disease (CAD), valvular heart disease (VHD), and related renal ailments.

At a medical session in Itanagar, Dr. Praveen Chandra, Chairman of Interventional Cardiology at Medanta, stressed that minimally invasive surgeries, robotic procedures, and advanced interventions like TAVR and next-generation angioplasty have transformed outcomes for high-risk patients. "The benefits are greatest when disease is detected early. A proactive approach can prevent complications and save lives," he said.

Dr. Debabrata Mukherjee,

Senior Director of Nephrology, explained the complex chain reaction linking heart, kidney, liver, and metabolic disorders, calling for a multidisciplinary approach. "We must address the root metabolic dysfunction, not just the symptoms," he noted.

In Guwahati, patients and families increasingly seek advanced care outside the state due to limited tertiary facilities. Medanta's announcement of an upcoming hospital in the city is expected to reshape the market by reducing medical outmigration and providing world-class treatment locally. Experts believe this will significantly boost healthcare access for the Northeast.

Founded by Dr. NareshTrehan, Medanta currently operates five hospitals and plans major expansions, including Guwahati, Mumbai, and Delhi.

## Comic Con India 2025 makes North-east debut; Guwahati edition to kick off on November 22

**Guwahati:** Comic Con India, the country's largest pop culture festival, is set to make its debut in the Northeast with the first-ever Guwahati edition on November 22-23, organizers announced. The two-day event promises a complete celebration of comics, cosplay, anime, gaming, and experiential sessions, bringing the global fandom experience closer to fans in the region.

Speaking about the expansion, AkshatRathee, Co-founder and MD of NODWIN Gaming, said, "Guwahati has always been a cultural gateway to the Northeast. Now, the city becomes a stage where local creativity and fandom can shine for the world to see. Fans no longer need to travel across India; Comic Con comes to them." Shefali Johnson, CEO of Comic Con India, added that the expansion aims to make the festival accessible to every fan and provide a platform to showcase local talent in cosplay, comics, and gaming.

From the market perspective, Guwahati has emerged as India's fastest-growing destination for international travellers, according to Agoda's New Horizons ranking. The city's thriving youth culture, growing cafes, entertainment hubs, and active local markets are expected to benefit from increased footfall, offering local vendors and businesses an opportunity to engage with a diverse audience.

The Guwahati edition will also serve as a launchpad for emerging artists, illustrators, and gamers, while providing interactive experiences for fans of all ages. Tickets for the event are now live on the District app.

## Flipkart and NEDFi collaborate to empower Assam's MSMEs and artisans through digital platforms



**Guwahati:** Flipkart, India's homegrown e-commerce giant, in partnership with the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFi), organized a workshop in Guwahati to enhance digital market access for local MSMEs and artisans. The session, attended by over 100 participants, aimed to equip weavers and artisans with the skills and knowledge to scale their businesses through Flipkart's marketplace. Shri P V S L N Murthy, Chairman and Managing Director of NEDFi, highlighted that the Flipkart Samarth program seeks to bridge the digital divide and create sustainable livelihoods for underserved communities. He also hinted at plans for a Common Facility Centre for packaging to support artisans' product sales.

The workshop focused on promoting entrepreneurship, self-employment, and market readiness, leveraging Flipkart's platform to connect local businesses to national consumers. Assam has seen a 100% year-on-year growth in seller onboarding, reflecting the increasing participation of local MSMEs in e-commerce. Flipkart's collaborations with the Assam Industries & Commerce Department and the Assam Skill Development Mission further promote handlooms, arts, crafts, and supply chain skill development, generating employment opportunities.

In Guwahati, local sellers and artisans are witnessing a surge in demand through online channels, with digital sales complementing traditional marketplaces. The city is emerging as a hub for regional crafts, with entrepreneurs now leveraging e-commerce to reach customers beyond Assam.

## Axis Mutual Fund launches Axis Nifty500 Quality 50 Index Fund to offer low-cost high-quality equity exposure

**Guwahati:** Axis Mutual Fund has announced the launch of the Axis Nifty500 Quality 50 Index Fund, an open-ended index fund tracking the Nifty500 Quality 50 TRI. The fund, managed by Mr. Karthik Kumar and Mr. Hitesh Das, aims to provide investors a simple, transparent, and cost-efficient route to invest in 50 high-quality companies selected from the broader Nifty 500 universe.

The Nifty500 Quality 50 Index selects companies based on strong return on equity, low financial leverage, and stable earnings growth, offering both resilience during market volatility and competitive long-term returns. Historically, the index delivered a 15.6% CAGR over 15 years compared to the Nifty 50's 12.1%, while providing lower volatility. The fund allows minimum investments of ₹100, with exit loads only applicable within the first 15 days.

B. Gopkumar, MD & CEO of Axis AMC,



highlighted that "this fund provides a disciplined, low-cost way to gain exposure to India's strong companies poised for consistent long-term performance."

Local investors in Guwahati have shown growing interest in index-based mutual funds, seeking stability and diversification amid market fluctuations. Financial advisors in the city anticipate the fund could attract retail investors looking to gradually build equity portfolios with disciplined, long-term strategies.

The NFO will be open from 21st August to 4th September 2025.

## TVS Raider Super Squad Edition expands with Deadpool and Wolverine variants

**Guwahati:** TVS Motor Company, a leading global two- and three-wheeler manufacturer, has expanded its TVS Raider Super Squad Edition lineup with two new Marvel-themed variants inspired by Deadpool and Wolverine. Priced at ₹99,465 (Ex-showroom Delhi), the new editions aim to capture the attention of young, tech-savvy riders with distinctive superhero-inspired styling and advanced features.

The updated Raider SSE comes with a powerful 3-valve engine delivering 11.75 Nm torque at 6,000 RPM. Riders will

now benefit from iGO Assist with Boost Mode for improved acceleration and Glide Through Technology (GTT) for smoother low-speed manoeuvres and better fuel efficiency. A fully connected reverse LCD cluster featuring over 85 functions enhances the high-tech appeal, reinforcing TVS's focus on combining style with performance.

Building on the success of earlier Marvel editions featuring Iron Man and Black Panther, TVS continues to leverage pop culture icons to appeal to the Gen

Z market.

In Guwahati, the Raider Super Squad Edition is expected to see strong demand among young urban riders and motorcycle enthusiasts. Local dealers report that Marvel-themed bikes are generating significant excitement, particularly among college students and first-time bike buyers seeking a blend of personality, technology, and dynamic performance.

The new Raider SSE will be available at all TVS dealerships nationwide starting this month.

## Abbott launches Free Style Libre 2 Plus in India with real-time glucose monitoring and alarms

**Guwahati:** Global healthcare leader Abbott has introduced its latest diabetes management innovation, the FreeStyleLibre 2 Plus sensor, in India. The next-generation device provides automatic glucose readings every minute directly to a smartphone, along with optional alarms for high or low sugar levels. This advancement eliminates the need for routine fingersticks, giving people with diabetes more confidence and freedom in managing their health.

India, home to over 101 million people with diabetes—the world's second-largest population—faces a growing demand for real-time management tools. Abbott's technology has already transformed care for more than seven million people globally. Studies show FreeStyleLibre technology can reduce low blood sugar episodes by up to 43%, hospital visits by 66%, and significantly cut risks of cardiovascular and stroke-related complications.

In Guwahati, doctors and retailers view the launch as a timely boost to diabetes care. With rising cases across Assam and the Northeast, the availability of advanced continuous glucose monitoring is expected to improve early intervention, reduce hospital dependency, and make diabetes management more accessible to urban as well as semi-urban patients.

Free Style Libre 2 Plus is available across India for adults and children aged two and above, including women with gestational diabetes.

## Medanta organises two-day medical camp for IOCL employees in Assam



**Guwahati:** Gurgaon-based Medanta – The Medicity, recognised as India's Best Private Hospital by Newsweek for six consecutive years, successfully conducted a two-day medical camp for Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL) employees in Assam. The initiative, held in association with IOCL Refinery Hospitals in Guwahati and Bongaigaon, concluded on August 23.

The camp was organised at two venues – IOCL L & D Centre, Noonmati, Guwahati on August 22, and Refinery Hospital, Bongaigaon on August 23. Senior specialists Dr. PawanRawal, Senior Director, Gastrosciences, and Dr. SharadTandon, Director, Cardiac Care, provided consultations and delivered awareness sessions on preventive healthcare.

Dr. Rawal stressed the importance of gastrointestinal health through balanced diet, safe

food practices, screenings, and hepatitis vaccination, while Dr. Tandon highlighted lifestyle changes to manage hypertension, diabetes, and cardiac risks. Both underscored the role of timely check-ups in preventing serious illnesses.

In Guwahati, such camps highlight the growing demand for advanced healthcare in the region, where employees of major industries like IOCL seek better access to specialist doctors. With rising health awareness and disposable income, Guwahati's medical sector is emerging as a key hub for quality treatment in the Northeast.

Medanta Chairman Dr. NareshTrehan said, "North East India has long been underserved in healthcare. At Medanta, we believe every life is invaluable, and our mission is to make advanced care accessible to all."

## Vi Games launches 'Galaxy Shooters Freedom Fest' with rewards worth Rs 4999 for just Rs 1

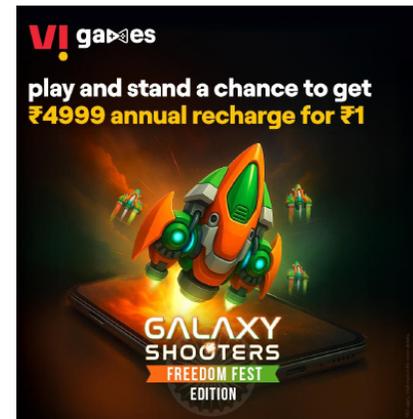
**Guwahati:** In a bid to strengthen its digital offerings and deepen customer engagement, India's leading telecom operator Vi has launched the Galaxy Shooters Freedom Fest on Vi Games, available exclusively through the Vi App until August 31. The special edition combines gaming, entertainment, and exclusive rewards for users at minimal cost.

The highlight of the festival is a chance to win an annual recharge worth ₹4999 for just ₹1, which includes 2GB daily data, Amazon Prime Video, and access to 19 OTT platforms such as SonyLIV, ZEE5, Lionsgate Play, and FanCode via Vi Movies & TV Super subscription. Other rewards include 50GB data packs at ₹1, OTT subscriptions with

10GB data, and ₹50 gift vouchers. Participants can log in daily, play Galaxy Shooters, collect gems, and improve their chances of winning.

From a Guwahati market perspective, the launch is expected to boost Vi's appeal among young mobile gamers and OTT consumers. With Assam emerging as a strong growth hub for digital entertainment and gaming, Vi's festival offer is likely to attract urban youth and students, driving both data consumption and customer stickiness in the region.

The gaming contest resets daily, giving multiple opportunities for users to win. Winners will be announced on the Vi App and notified via SMS. With Galaxy Shooters Freedom Fest, Vi is positioning



itself strongly in India's rapidly expanding mobile gaming market, projected to reach \$7.5–8.75 billion by 2025.

## Screen Awards 2025 goes digital-first on YouTube, blend cinema with creators

**Guwahati:** The Indian Express Group has announced a major transformation of its iconic Screen Awards, taking the 2025 edition digital-first in partnership with YouTube. For the first time, the awards will be streamed globally, merging Bollywood's biggest stars with YouTube's most influential creators in a three-month-long celebration of cinema, storytelling, and fan engagement.

Executive Director of Indian Express Group, AnantGoenka, said the awards would honour creativity beyond box office numbers. "Our storytellers carry 1.4 billion dreams — rooted in tradition and racing toward an exciting future," he remarked. GunjanSoni, Man-



aging Director, YouTube India, highlighted the platform's role in bridging Bollywood and digital creators, describing YouTube as "the digital home for Screen Awards."

With surging internet pene-

tration, rapid Connected TV adoption, and soaring mobile consumption, YouTube has become India's fastest-growing screen, reaching four out of five adult internet users. Curator PriyankaSinhaJha emphasized the Screen Awards' legacy of "firsts," adding that the partnership with YouTube ushers in a new era of accessibility and credibility.

In Guwahati, entertainment markets see this digital shift as a boon. Industry insiders note that YouTube-powered accessibility will bring Bollywood and creator-led content closer to Assam's young, mobile-first audiences, boosting advertising opportunities and cultural participation across the Northeast.

## Godrej Agrovet unveils Ashitaka, a new herbicide to boost maize yields

**Guwahati:** Godrej Agrovet Limited, a leading player in India's agri-business sector, has launched Ashitaka, a novel herbicide for maize crops, developed in collaboration with ISK Japan. Designed to tackle grasses and broad-leaved weeds, the solution aims to help farmers achieve higher productivity during the critical early growth stages. When applied at the 2–4 weed leaf stage, Ashitaka significantly reduces crop-weed competition, ensuring better soil moisture and nutrient utilization.

Rajavelu NK, CEO of Godrej Agrovet's Crop Protection Business, said, "Effective weed management during ear-

ly growth is crucial for maize productivity. Ashitaka, a first-of-its-kind solution in India, empowers farmers to improve yields and profitability." Anil Choubey, GM – Marketing, added that the product's recommended dosage of 50 ml/acre with 400 ml/acre of surfactant ensures consistent output, superior grain quality, and resilience against weather-related stresses.

Initially launched in Telangana, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, Godrej Agrovet plans to expand Ashitaka's availability to all major maize-growing states in the coming months.

In Guwahati, where maize cultivation is gradually gaining



traction, local dealers report growing interest among farmers for advanced crop protection solutions. Early adopters have noted improved weed control and potential yield benefits, making Ashitaka a promising addition to the city's agricultural inputs market.

## HCLTech launches TechBee Program in Manipur to empower high school graduates

**Guwahati:** HCLTech, a leading global technology company, has announced the rollout of its flagship TechBee Early Career Program in Manipur, opening new avenues for high school graduates to pursue careers in the technology industry.

The initiative follows an 'earn while you learn' model, offering hands-on technology training alongside higher education opportunities. With specialized tracks in Generative AI and Cybersecurity, developed in collaboration with institutions such as BITS Pilani, IIT Guwahati, Sastra University, Amity University Online, IIIT Kottayam and IIM Sirmaur, the program is designed to equip students with skills that are in demand globally. Participants will also receive stipends during training, allowing them to support their families from an early stage.

"TechBee is more than a skill-building initiative—it's a launchpad for ambitious youth to build meaningful careers in tech," said Subbaraman B, Senior Vice President, HCLTech.

In Imphal, where families often discuss career prospects over everyday trade, the program has generated optimism. Parents see TechBee as a pathway for local youth to access well-paying jobs without leaving the state, potentially boosting the city's economy and reducing migration pressures.

Aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, the initiative also emphasizes inclusion, with strong participation from women and first-generation learners.

**Ashnoor Kaur asks for ten times the love and support for her 'Bigg Boss' journey**



**Mumbai:** Actress Ashnoor Kaur has kickstarted her TV reality show journey with Bigg Boss season 19. The show that has begun its airing from the 24th of August, this year saw Ashnoor as the first introduced contestant.

On Monday, few videos and pictures were shared from Ashnoor's Instagram handle showcasing the start of her 'Bigg Boss' journey. In the video Ashnoor can be heard saying "By the time you see this video I would already be inside the Bigg Boss house."

She continued and asked her fans to keep loving and supporting her in her new journey in the reality show niche.

She captioned it as, "With all your love, support, and blessings, your girl Ashnoor Kaur has officially stepped into the Bigg Boss house! To all the amazing Ashnoorians who have watched her grow from the age of 4, this is the moment to see Ashnoor in her truest self-beautiful, unfiltered, and full of heart-on reality television for the very first time! We are so thrilled to have you join us on this journey and make it even more special with your love and encouragement! Keep cheering for Ashnoor, keep spreading the love, and get ready for some unforgettable memories along the way! Let the adventure begin! #AshnoorKaur #Ashnoorians #AshnoorKaurinBB19 #BiggBoss19 #BiggBoss less."

Ashnoor Kaur, all of 21 years, began her acting journey at a tender age of four and a half years old with the historical drama Jhansi Ki Rani, in 2009. Post that, Ashnoor appeared in several popular Indian TV shows, including Saath Nibhaana Saathiya, Shobha Somnath Ki, Na Bole Tum Na Maine Kuch Kaha, and Bade Achhe Lagte Hain. Her biggest television hit was in the show Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai as a child actor.

She was last seen as the lead in the TV show Suman Indori where received great reviews for her performance.

# Parineeti, Raghav Chadha all set to become parents: 'On its way'

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress Parineeti Chopra and AamAadmi Party (AAP) MP-husband RaghavChadha are all set to welcome their first bundle of joy. Parineeti and Raghav took to Instagram, where in a collaborative post they made the announcement. They shared an adorable picture of a round cake with the message "1 + 1 = 3" along with two small golden footprints beneath it. They also shared a video of them strolling through a park holding hands. They captioned the post: "Our little universe ... on its way. Blessed beyond measure."

Raghav and Parineeti started dating in 2023, however the couple did not publicly speak

about the relationship. They got engaged in May 2023 at Kapurthala House in New Delhi. She married Chadha in September 2023 in Udaipur, Rajasthan in a traditional Hindu wedding ceremony. The comment section was filled with congratulatory messages. Sonam Kapoor wrote: "Congratulations darling." Bhumi Pednekar and Huma Qureshi simply said "Congratulations." The actress had earlier shared a picture on Independence day, where she and her husband spent the afternoon at home and enjoyed a hearty meal.

"An afternoon at home, drenched in the colours of our country and family love. Happy Independence Day! @



raghavchadha88," Parineeti captioned the post. On the professional front, Parineeti will next grace the screen with a yet untitled Netflix series, co-starring Tahir Raj Bhasin, Jennifer Winget, Harleen Sethi, Chaitannya Choudhry, SumetVyas, and AnupSoni

in important roles, along with others. The shoot for the project has already been wrapped up. Recently, the couple were seen on the "The Great Indian Kapil Show". During the episode, which aired on Netflix on August 2, ArchanaPuran Singh complimented Raghav

on his looks, wondering if he's ever thought about entering Bollywood.

Raghav played a perfect Uno Reverse saying: "AisahaiArchanaji, humarajo profession hai, usmebhiabhineta, harnetakeandarhotahai. Tohumare kaammein acting bohothai, aur jab main inki (Parineeti) zindagidekhtahoon, tohmujheyhyakeen-hojaatahaikiinkekaammein, rajneetibohothai! Bohot politics hai! (Archanaji, our profession has an actor within every politician. So, there is a lot of acting in our work, and when I look at her (Parineeti's) life, I am convinced that there is a lot of politics in her work!"

## Yami Gautam visits Thiksey Monastery in Leh



**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress Yami Gautam visited the historic Thiksey Monastery in Leh and said the chants she heard there will forever stay with her. Yami took to Instagram, where she shared a string of memories from her visit to the monastery, which is noted for its resemblance to the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet, and is the largest monastery in central Ladakh.

For the caption, the 36-year-old actress, who even posed for a picture with a monk, wrote: "Visited the beautiful & one of the oldest monasteries- Thiksey Monastery ! The experience of listening to the chants & prayers shall forever echo in my heart.#Grateful #Leh."

The monastery, which is a twelve-storey complex and houses many items of Buddhist art such as stupas, statues, thangka, wall paintings and swords. One of the main points of interest is the Maitreya Temple installed to commemorate the visit of the 14th Dalai Lama to this monastery in 1970.

On August 22, the actress shared a glimpse of her serene getaway in Leh, where she enjoyed a cup of tea against the backdrop of the rugged mountains.

She wrote: "The feeling of sipping chai while nestled in the lap of mighty mountains, terrain of Leh, by my papa dear, while he holds his cup of chai. #beautifulLadakh, #allaboutchai lovers."

Yami, who began her career as a model, made her acting debut on television as the lead role in Yeh Pyaar Na Hoga Kam, transitioned to Bollywood with her first screen appearance in Vicky Donor, which established her as a promising actor. Since then, she has been a part of several notable films like Kaabil, Bala, A Thursday and Uri: The Surgical Strike.

She is married to filmmaker Aditya Dhar. The couple recently welcomed their first child, a baby boy, whom they named vedavid in May 2024.

## Kalyan Jewellers to open new showroom in Dibrugarh; Genelia D'Souza to inaugurate

**Dibrugarh:** Kalyan Jewellers, one of India's most trusted jewellery brands, is strengthening its presence in Assam with the launch of new showrooms in Dibrugarh's K.C. Gogoi Path, Khalihamari. The inauguration, scheduled for Friday, August 29, 2025, at 4:00 PM, will be led by actor Genelia D'Souza, who will unveil both the KalyanJewellers and Candere showrooms.

The expansion underlines the company's strategy to widen its reach in key growth markets. "Assam is among the most critical markets for us, and the Dibrugarh launch will enhance accessibility while boosting market share in the region," said Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director, KalyanJewellers. The showroom will offer the

brand's full portfolio, including Muhurat, Mudhra, Nimah, Ziah, Antara, and the newly launched Lila.

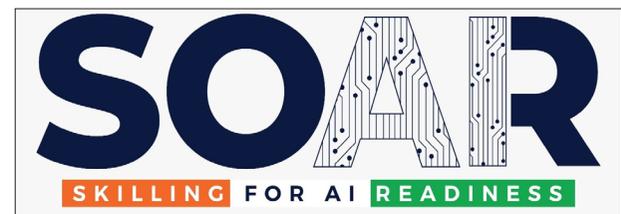
Dibrugarh has emerged as a significant retail hub in Upper Assam. With rising disposable incomes and increasing demand for branded lifestyle products, the city offers strong potential for the organised jewellery sector. Industry observers say Kalyan's entry will intensify competition while offering consumers a wider choice of certified, hallmarked jewellery.

To celebrate the launch, customers can avail 0% making charges and the Kalyan Special Gold Board Rate—standardized across showrooms. Buyers will also receive a 4-Level Assurance Certificate, ensuring purity, transparency, and lifetime maintenance.

## India launches SOAR program to equip students with AI skills

**Guwahati:** India has taken a decisive step towards preparing its next generation for an AI-powered future with the launch of the SOAR (Skilling for AI Readiness) program by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The initiative, designed for students from classes 6 to 12 as well as teachers, aims to bridge the growing skill gap in artificial intelligence and digital technologies.

Under the program, students will learn the fundamentals of AI through stories, games, and case studies, progressing to advanced activities such as coding, data analysis, and chatbot creation. Ethics will remain a core element, ensur-



ing responsible use of AI. The framework includes three 15-hour modules for students and a 45-hour "AI for Educators" module for teachers. The project has already been piloted in 10,000 schools, with \$14.4 million raised through Skill Impact Bonds to expand its reach.

In Guwahati, the SOAR program is seen as a transformative push. With Assam's growing IT and startup ecosystem, local stakehold-

ers believe AI training in schools will create a skilled workforce ready to contribute to the state's digital economy, while also generating opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

The government plans to implement SOAR nationwide by 2027, positioning India as a global hub of technological innovation and aligning with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

# BCCI looking for new title sponsor after ending association with Dream11, says Saikia

**New Delhi:** Devajit Saikia, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary, confirmed on Monday that the board's association with fantasy sports company Dream11 has ended, and deliberations over finding a new lead sponsor is on. Dream11 had signed a three-year deal worth Rs 358 crore in July 2023 to replace edtech company Byju's as the lead sponsor of the Indian cricket team. It also had a significant presence in the Indian Premier League (IPL) through multiple franchise tie-ups and being lead sponsor in 2020 after Vivo's pullout.

But after the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming

Bill 2025 was passed in both Parliament houses last week, as well as got the assent of President Droupadi Murmu, Dream11 said it suspended all money-based online gaming contests on its platform. "Under the new legislation, it will be difficult for BCCI to continue with Dream11 or any other identical gaming companies. So, there is a roadblock and I don't think BCCI will be able to continue with Dream11 now. We are deliberating on an alternative course of action at this stage," said Saikia to IANS.

It is understood that Dream11 will not incur any penalties, with the contract having a clause safeguarding



the sponsor in case its core business is banned by the government and that they won't be liable to pay anything to the BCCI. Asked if the BCCI will float a new tender soon

finalised anything, but we'll have to have an alternative now. Because with Dream11 going away, there will be some vacancy in the sponsorship slot. So, we have to have an alternative, not a replacement. What we'll have to do and how we are going to do it, on that, we are deliberating now."

"Dream 11 will not be with us anymore, under the new law. So we still have some time, at least 20 days or in fact, just about 15 days. So, if something develops within these 15-20 days, there will be a replacement. Otherwise, we'll see how it will progress over a period of time."

## US Open: Pegula, Paolini, Azarenka advance to second round with solid wins



**New York:** Fourth seed Jessica Pegula advanced into the second round of the US Open with a straight-sets win over Egypt's Mayar Sherif. Playing the night session match on Ashe Stadium, Pegula got off to a blistering start to win the first set 6-0. In the second set, Sherif found her rhythm and broke the American to take a 4-1 lead.

However, Pegula regained her focus and her form to win five games in a row and complete the 6-0, 6-4 win in one hour and 15 minutes. She will next meet Anna Blinkova, who defeated Yuliia Starodubtseva 6-3, 6-1 in another first-round clash. Meanwhile, No. 7 seed Jasmine Paolini dismissed qualifier Destanee Aiava 6-2, 7-6(4) to reach the second round of the US Open for the third time in six main draw appearances. After winning the first set 6-2, Paolini had to work a lot harder to overcome the spirited Australian in the second set as both players held their service games to take the set into a tiebreak.

The two-time Grand Slam runner-up's experience pulled her through for a 6-2, 7-6 (4) win to set up a second round showdown against the experienced 31-year-old Aliaksandra Sasnovich or rising teen Iva Jovic, WTA reports.

## Cristiano Ronaldo Scores 100th Goal for Four Clubs, But Al-Nassr Falls Short in Saudi Super Cup Final



**Hong Kong:** Cristiano Ronaldo etched his name in history once again by becoming the first player to score 100 competitive goals for four different clubs. However, despite his milestone, Al-Nassr was denied glory in the Saudi Super Cup final, losing to Al-Ahli in a dramatic penalty shootout after the match ended 2-2 in regulation time. Ronaldo's historic achievement came in the 41st minute of the final at Hong Kong Stadium, where he converted a penalty to put Al-Nassr ahead. This goal took the 40-year-old forward to his 100th competitive goal for his Saudi Arabian club, which he joined in December 2022. Ronaldo's remarkable tally now includes his 450 goals for Real Madrid, 145 for Manchester United, and 101 for Juventus, making him the first player in football history to reach 100 goals for four different clubs. He surpassed previous legends such as Isidro Langara and Brazilian icons Romario and Neymar, who had scored 100 goals for three clubs.

While Ronaldo's record-breaking performance was a significant individual achievement, the match proved to be a frustrating one for Al-Nassr. The game saw intense back-and-forth action, with Franck Kessie of Al-Ahli quickly leveling the score at 1-1 after Ronaldo's penalty. The game intensified in the second half, with Marcelo Brozovic putting Al-Nassr back in the lead with just seven minutes remaining. However, Ibanez, the Brazilian defender for Al-Ahli, headed in a corner to equalize again and send the match to a penalty shootout. In the shootout, Ronaldo confidently scored from the spot, but his teammate Abdullah Al-Khaibari missed his attempt, and Al-Ahli clinched the title with a 5-3 win.

## Sunil Gavaskar Overwhelmed by Statue Unveiling at MCA Sharad Pawar Cricket Museum

**Mumbai:** Indian cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar found himself at a loss for words when his statue was unveiled during the inauguration of the MCA Sharad Pawar Cricket Museum at the iconic Wankhede Stadium. The momentous event took place in the presence of Sharad Pawar, former BCCI and ICC president, with the museum set to open to the public on September 22.

As Gavaskar stood before his statue, which celebrates his historic achievement of becoming the first-ever player in Test cricket history to score 10,000 runs, emotions ran high. "I am actually at a loss for words because I am overwhelmed by this unique honour," said the 45-year-old legend. "It doesn't happen to everybody that there is a statue just outside the museum where there is going to be so much more footfall." For Gavaskar, the occasion was far more than a personal achievement; it was a reflection of his deep connection with Mumbai cricket. "The Mumbai Cricket Association, I've said in the past, is like my mother, (it) held my hand when I was beginning with crick-



et at the school's level, playing for Bombay schools. Thereafter as well, for Ranji Trophy etc. It's been absolutely just a privilege and an honour and a blessing to be able to play for Mumbai, and I never ever dreamt that it would come to this."

The unveiling of Gavaskar's statue was a fitting tribute to a player whose name is synonymous with the rich legacy of Indian cricket. His statue commemorates his groundbreaking achievement during the 1987 Ahmedabad Test against Pakistan, when he became the first-ever player to score 10,000 runs in Tests.

## India to celebrate National Sports Day 2025 as a three-day Jan Andolan of sports and fitness

**New Delhi:** Acting on the clarion call given by Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports and Labour & Employment, Mansukh Mandaviya last week to transform this year's National Sports Day 2025 into a true people's movement, States and Union Territories (UTs) across India have begun their preparations for this mega Pan-India celebration.

Rajasthan, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhanda, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, Maharashtra,

Madhya Pradesh, and the UTs of Puducherry, Chandigarh, and Delhi have already issued directions to their concerned departments to initiate preparations. National Sports Day is celebrated every year on August 29 to commemorate the birth anniversary of hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand. First observed in 1995 and nationally celebrated since 2012, the day also witnessed the launch of the Fit India Movement in 2019, which has since become a mass fitness revolution



across the country.

The National Sports Day (NSD) 2025 celebrations will be led by the Fit India Mission and organised as a

three-day, nation-wide sports and fitness movement from August 29 to 31 under the inspiring theme 'Ek Ghanta, Khelke Maidan Main'.