

6
WORLD

8
NATION

- A missile strikes Norwegian-flagged tanker off Yemen
- Suicide bomber attacks police station in northwest Pak
- Vishnu Deo Sai to take oath as Chhattisgarh CM today
- First-time BJP MLA Bhajan Lal Sharma to be new Rajasthan CM

# 17,861 people granted citizenship, SC told

**Apex court reserves order on 17 petitions challenging validity of Section 6A of CA ● Collection of data of illegal migrants impossible: Centre**

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** The Supreme Court Tuesday reserved its order on petitions challenging the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act (CA) related to grant of Indian citizenship to illegal immigrants in Assam.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud heard the submissions of attorney General R Venkataramani, solicitor general Tushar Mehta, senior advocates Shyam Divan, Kapil Sibal and others for four days before reserving the judgement.

The bench, also comprising Justices Surya Kant, M M Sundresh, J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, reserved order on 17 petitions questioning the constitutional validity of Section 6A, which was inserted into the Citizenship Act as a special



provision to deal with the citizenship of people covered under the Assam Accord.

It says those who came to Assam on or after January 1, 1966 but before March 25, 1971 from specified

territories, including Bangladesh, in accordance with the Citizenship Act amended in 1985, and since then are residents of the northeastern state, must register themselves under Section 18 for acquiring Indian citizenship.

As a result, the provision fixes March 25, 1971 as the cut-off date for granting citizenship to migrants, particularly those from Bangladesh, residing in Assam.

Meanwhile, the Centre informed the apex court that it is not possible to collect data of illegal migrants living in various parts of the country as entry of foreign nationals is clandestine and surreptitious. In its affidavit filed in the top court which is examining the constitutional validity of section 6A of the Citizenship Act relating to illegal immigrants in Assam, the Centre said 17,861 people have been granted citizenship under the provision.

Answering the court's query posed on December 7, the Centre said 32,381 people have been detected as foreigners under the or-

ders of foreigners tribunal with reference to the period of 1966-1971.

Replying to the court's query about the estimated inflow of illegal immigrants into India, including but not confined to Assam after March 25, 1971, the Centre said illegal immigrants enter the country without valid travel documents in a clandestine and surreptitious manner. "The detection, detention and deportation of such illegally staying foreign nationals are a complex ongoing process. Since entry of such foreign nationals into the country is clandestine and surreptitious, it is not possible to collect accurate data of such illegal immigrants living in various parts of the country," the Centre said. The government said in the past five-years from 2017 to 2022, 14,346 foreigners were deported. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Several organisations threaten to resume anti-CAA stir in Assam



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** Several organizations on Tuesday collectively pledged to rekindle a movement to oppose the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) if the government attempted the enforcement of the same.

The pledge was taken during memorial gatherings which were held across the state, including in Guwahati, orchestrated by political parties, student groups, and civil society organizations.

During the memorial gatherings, homage was offered to the five individuals who lost their lives in an anti-CAA protest in Assam four years ago. The state had witnessed widespread violent protests after the Citizenship (Amendment) Act or CAA was passed in Parliament in December 2019.

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), which had been at the forefront of the anti-CAA movement, organised a memorial at Hatigaon Higher Secondary School field here.

Local residents also joined them in paying tributes to the five slain persons, including local teenager Sam Stafford, killed during the protests four years ago in different parts of the state. Similar memorial prayers were organised by the AASU across the state.

The memorial prayers were held on Tuesday as Stafford, the first person to be killed in the stir, died

on December 12, 2019.

AASU said it will continue stir against the CAA, and its partner organisations have also been staging protests against the Act in other northeastern states as well.

Independent legislator Akhil Gogoi, one of the prominent leaders of the anti-CAA agitation who was jailed for a prolonged period for his role as a Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) leader in 2019, said the agitators were ready to take to the streets again if the government tried to implement the Act.

"KMSS has resolved once again today that we will resume our agitation if the government attempts to implement CAA. We will start taking the matter to the public once again and take to the streets again, if needed," he asserted.

Gogoi, who now heads Rajior Dal, a political party formed after the anti-CAA movement, paid tributes at a programme organised by KMSS. He also maintained that the anti-CAA agitation will go down the annals of history as one of the biggest movements and will serve as an inspiration for posterity.

Assam Jatitya Parishad (AJP), another political outfit born post-anti CAA movement, also organised a memorial meeting at Panitola in Tinsukia district.

Party president Lurinjyoti Gogoi, who was the AASU general secretary in 2019, said the sacrifices made (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Economy is moving in right direction: FM

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday in the Lok Sabha said the economy is moving in the right direction, and India has become the fastest-growing major economy in the world.

Replying to a debate on supplementary demands for grants, finance minister Sitharaman said fiscal prudence is the top priority of the government without compromising on social welfare.

The House later approved the supplementary demands for grants, allowing the government to spend an additional over ₹ 1.29 lakh crore, of which ₹ 58,378 crore would be the cash outgo in the current fiscal. The remaining ₹ 70,968 crore will be matched by the savings and receipts.

"Our economy is moving in the right direction...Macroeconomic fundamentals are fine. We have be-

come the fastest-growing economy. Q2 growth of 7.6 per cent is the highest in the world," she said.

Responding to issues raised by the Opposition members on BSNL, the minister further said the government has earmarked ₹ 11,850 crore capital infusion in the state-owned telecom firm.

She alleged that the 10-year of UPA rule is responsible for the company's situation.

"In every budget, we allocate funds to the BSNL," she said.

On MNREGA, she said it is a demand-driven programme, and the government allocate funds accordingly. So far this fiscal, ₹ 80,000 crore has been allocated.

On complaints of members that the centre delays the release of funds to states, Sitharaman said they are done in accordance with the rules on receipt of utilisation certificate. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Decline in maternal, child mortalities after crackdown on under-age marriage: Himanta



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday stated that maternal mortalities have dropped by more than 33 per cent, and child deaths decreased by nearly 15 per cent following the initiation of measures against child marriage in the state this year.

He vowed to eradicate child marriage by 2026 and informed that more than 5,000 people already arrested in multiple cases.

"Child marriage is a social evil, which also manifests undesirable health outcomes such as high infant and maternal mortality rates. Our crackdown has yielded encouraging results in women & child health sphere. By 2026, Assam will end this abhorrent practice," Sarma wrote micro-blogging site X. Highlighting the challenges, Sarma emphasized that Assam's infant mortality rate (IMR) and maternal mortality rates (MMR) surpass the national average, particularly in specific districts. He attributed the primary cause to child marriage.

The chief minister said that in 2020, under-5 mortality in the state was 40 per cent, exceeding the national average of 32 per cent.

As per sarma, the government's response involved arresting over 5,000 individuals in a comprehensive crackdown against child marriage, appointing gram panchayat secretaries as officers for prevention. "These efforts led to a 33.4 per cent reduction in maternal deaths (from 766 to 510) and a 14.7 per cent decrease in child deaths (from 7,872 to 6,718)," Sarma added.

The crackdown against child marriage and teenage pregnancy will continue till the government achieves its goal of eradicating these by 2026, the CM added.

## NC Hills Autonomous Council polls to be held on Jan 8



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** Assam state election commissioner (SEC) on Tuesday announced that the polling for the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) is scheduled for January 8 next year.

While addressing a press conference, the election

commissioner, Alok Kumar said that due to the unavailability of electronic voting machines (EVMs), the election will employ traditional ballot papers.

He further informed that the deadline for filing nominations in all 28 constituencies is December 21, with application scrutiny slated for the following day.

The total voter count in Dima Hasao district's constituencies is 1,41,124, with 70,485 men and 70,639 women, he said.

"Withdrawal of candidature can be done until December 22, and the final list of candidates will be published on the same day. Polling hours are set from 8 am to 4 pm on January 8, while the counting of votes will take place on January 12. In the event of re-polling requirements, it is scheduled for January 10," Kumar added.

Kumar also highlighted the logistics challenges, stating that 10-15 per cent of polling stations are situated in extremely remote and difficult terrain with non-motorable roads. "To address this, the ASEC will grant two additional days for polling officials to reach these booths," the election commissioner said.

He also said that the total number of voters has seen a 15.4 per cent increase compared to the 2019 council election, and the voting will adhere to the latest photo electoral rolls published (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Kashmir issue should be resolved through dialogue between India and Pakistan: China

**BEIJING, Dec 12:** The Kashmir issue should be resolved through dialogue and consultation between India and Pakistan, China on Tuesday while reacting to India's Supreme Court judgment on Article 370 upholding the central government's decision on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

"On the Kashmir issue, China's position is consistent and clear," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said, replying to a question by a Pakistani journalist seeking China's reaction on the issue.

India's Supreme Court on Monday unanimously upheld the central government's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370 bestowing special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The apex court also directed restoration of statehood "at the earliest" as well as holding elections to the assembly by September 30



next year.

"This is a dispute left from the past between India and Pakistan and it should be properly addressed through peaceful means, according to the UN charter, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and relevant bilateral agreements," she said.

Relevant parties need to settle the dispute through dialogue and

consultations and safeguard peace and stability in the region, Mao said.

Pakistan, China's all-weather ally, on Monday said India's Supreme Court verdict upholding the abrogation of Article 370 has "no legal value", asserting that the international law does not recognise New Delhi's "unilateral and illegal actions" of August 5, 2019. (PTI)

## Inter College Karbi Cultural competition concludes

**HT Correspondent**

**BOKAJAN, Dec 12:** All Karbi Anglong Inter College Karbi Cultural Competition 2023 concluded on Tuesday evening at Deopani College in Karbi Anglong.

All Karbi Anglong Inter College Karbi Cultural Competition 2023 was organised by Karbi Lohcharli Jutang Aterank (KLJA) from December 11 to 12.

On December 11 delegates and troupes were received and registered. On December 12 morning the festivity started with Karbi traditional procession called Rongketong. The president, KLJA, Songia Tisso, secretary, Akash Rongpi and principal of Deopani College, Boson Rongphar hoisted the flag.

With the participation of 12 colleges competitions were held on Karbi folk dance Nimso kerung and Rit-nong chingdi; folk song Lun sampung; poem; quiz; race with stilts; (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## 'We need to bridge the awareness gap among doctors to effectively combat tobacco harm'

### Only 7 pc doctors aware of recent advances in anti-smoking strategies: Study

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Only 7 per cent of doctors showed awareness about the recent advances in anti-smoking strategies, posing a significant challenge to the nation's efforts in combating tobacco addiction, a study conducted by the Indian Medical Academy for Preventive Health (IMAPH) said.

The study, based on a survey conducted among 200 doctors with a minimum of three years of experience, brought to light some eye-opening statistics.

Cardiovascular disease emerged as the most common reason for patient visits at 12 per cent, underscoring the urgent need for anti-smoking interventions.

Dr Chandrakant S Pandav, former head of the Department of



Community Medicine at the AIIMS-New Delhi, expressed concern stating, "The survey sheds light on the key role doctors play in motivating smokers to quit, emphasising the need for increased

awareness and training in implementing advanced anti-smoking strategies. The findings of the survey are a wake-up call. We need to bridge the awareness gap among doctors to effectively combat to-

bacco harm."

Dr M Wali, senior consultant, Medicine at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital also underlined the importance of healthcare providers being well-informed about the latest smoke cessation approaches.

He said, "Effectiveness remains a critical factor in recommending cultural and region-specific methods to combat smoking, advocating the need for science-backed policy-making to arm doctors with safer options against tobacco addiction. Therefore, doctors must stay abreast of the latest developments to offer the best guidance. It's crucial for effective tobacco control which is successfully practised abroad." The survey study suggests that (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## KSA criticises Howraghat MLA's wife for participation in political rally

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Dec 12:** The Karbi Students Association (KSA) has criticised Sabina Teronpi, wife of Howraghat MLA Darsing Ronghang for participating in a political rally at Tarabasa playground on December 11.

Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) had organised a 'Unity, Victory and Prosperity Rally' at Tarabasa playground for the Phuloni Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituency on December 11. The purpose of the rally was to highlight the government development schemes.

In a press conference at Autonomous State Demand Committee office here, the KSA vice president Moniram Teron said, "On December 11 the BJP held a Unity, Victory and Prosperity Rally at Tarabasa playground. We have come to know from local portal news channel that Howraghat MLA Darsing Ronghang's wife Sabina Teronpi, a teacher in Rongnighang LP School, Diphu, was seen felicitating party workers and supporters from other parties joining the BJP. She was seen putting BJP caps on the newly joined opposition party workers and supporters."

Expressing dissatisfaction over the involvement of a school teacher, Teronpi, in a political rally, the KSA



vice president said that since Teronpi is a government employee drawing salary from the government and as per government rules she cannot participate in any political meetings.

The KSA urged upon the executive member (EM), KAAC, Education, Richard Tokbi to take immediate action to suspend her from service for violating the service rules of the statutory body of KAAC or state government, adding, "She is misusing her status as a government employee". Teronpi also urged the KAAC authority not to engage any government employee in any political programmes.



# Thermax arm bags ₹ 500 crore order for setting up 5 bio-CNG plants

*Bio-CNG generated from these plants will be employed for commercial and captive use by the customer*

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Thermax on Tuesday said its arm has bagged an order worth more than Rs 500 crore from a leading energy conglomerate to set up five bio-CNG plants across the country.

These plants will be set up in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

The announcement was made at four-day-long Thermax Fest in Pune, which began on Tuesday, according to a statement.

The company, through one of its subsidiaries, has secured orders worth more than ₹ 500 crore from a leading energy conglomerate for setting up five bio-CNG plants across India, it stated.

Details about the conglomerate were not disclosed.

With the capacity to produce 110 Tonnes Per Day of bio-CNG, these plants will utilise local feedstock exceeding 1,000 TPD, which



includes rice straw, napier grass, cane trash and soya trash.

The bio-CNG generated from these plants will be employed for commercial and captive use by the customer.

This is part of Thermax's broader initiative to introduce so-

lutions around biochemicals and bioenergy.

Thermax is the largest provider of biomass-based green energy solutions for fuel flexibility. It has also invested in a biomass-sourcing supply chain for captive consumption to ensure a consistent

biomass fuel supply.

"Thermax Fest is a confluence that showcases some of these technologies and cutting-edge solutions that can help industries meet their climate commitments," the company's managing director and chief executive officer Ashish Bhandari said in the statement.

Another initiative aligned towards clean energy is the installation of 1 GW of hybrid renewable energy solutions by FY 2027. These will be intra-state and inter-state projects.

Currently, the company manages an operational portfolio of 140 MWp, with an additional 145 MWp under construction, over 300 MW in development, and 400 MW in the pipeline. Further, Thermax aims to develop gasification plants with carbon capture capabilities to process coal ranging from 100 to 500 TPD. (PTI)

## HCL Tech, UPES Dehradun team up for sustainability solutions

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** IT services company HCL Technologies announced that it has inked a pact with UPES Dehradun, Uttarakhand, to collaborate on developing advanced solutions for the oil and gas industry, with a focus on sustainability.

According to a release, students and research scholars from UPES Dehradun will have the opportunity to intern with HCL Tech and on successful completion, select candidates will be offered employment in the company's oil and gas consulting team.

The collaboration will add rigor to HCL Tech's expertise in developing digital solutions and leveraging artificial intelligence in the exploration and production of hydrocarbons, offering significant value to oil and gas companies.

"This strategic initiative will introduce solutions that promote sustainability, innovation, value optimisation and prioritisation of low-carbon solutions in the oil and gas industry," Ajay Bahl, corporate vice president, HCL Tech, said.

The alliance will focus on the development of advanced solutions for the oil and gas industry using technologies such as AI/ML (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning), GenAI, IoT (Internet of Things), Industry 4.0, data engineering and cloud computing, Bahl added. (PTI)

## BJP govt most likely to retain power in 2024 elections: Fitch



**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** There is likelihood of policy continuity to be maintained in India as the incumbent administration is "most likely" to retain power in the general elections due in April-May, Fitch Ratings said on Tuesday.

However, the size of the majority in the next Indian Parliament could influence the ambitious agenda, it said.

"We believe it most likely that incumbent administrations will retain power in India (BBB-/stable) and Bangladesh (BB-/negative), during their general elections in April-May and January, respectively, pointing to the likelihood of broad policy continuity," Fitch said in a statement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led BJP government had come to power in 2014 and came back with

a thumping majority in 2019 general elections as well.

The 2024 general elections are due in April-May and Fitch expects the Modi government to come back to power for the third time.

The global rating agency said almost half of its rated portfolio in the Asian region will hold legislative or presidential elections in 2024.

Fitch said it expects continuity to be the main theme of the elections among its rated Asian sovereigns due in 2024.

But the chance of election outcomes influencing credit profiles as being higher in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, which are both dependent on successful IMF programme implementation and official support, as well as Taiwan, given potential geopolitical implications. (PTI)

## Airtel launches 'Airtel IQ Reach' in Guwahati

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** Bharti Airtel (Airtel), one of India's leading telecommunications service providers, announced the launch of a first-of-its-kind marketing communications platform - Airtel IQ Reach, in Guwahati. Designed to enable emerging and small & medium businesses (SMBs) in enhancing their customer engagement strategy with tailor-made communications, the platform will enable businesses in the city to reach out to their target customers in a cost-effective manner.

Businesses in Guwahati across all sectors like tourism, real estate, textile, pharmaceuticals and others, can now simply log on to the one stop destination at <https://www.airtel.in/business/b2b/airtel-iq/dashboard/#/>, to easily manage and fully control their marketing campaign starting from designing customised messages, to uploading or selecting their target audiences, to scheduling their messages, and finally, tracking campaign effectiveness, all in just a few clicks.

The platform will also offer real time insights and comprehensive analytics on a centralized dashboard with the aim of enabling businesses to measure their campaign effectiveness. The portal is now live for communications via WhatsApp & SMS and will be rolled out on voice and other channels shortly.

Abhishek Biswal, head - digital products & services, Airtel Business, said, "Customers are at the heart of everything we do at Airtel. We have designed Airtel IQ Reach especially for the small and medium business segment to enable them to elevate their customer communication. The platform leverages cutting-edge technology along with Airtel's strengths of infrastructure, data and engineering expertise to facilitate enterprises in targeted customer communications. Businesses in Guwahati can now capitalize on the platform for their business growth even as they reduce their customer acquisition costs and target the right audience at the right time with the right personalized communication through our innovative solution." Airtel IQ Reach will help businesses solve key challenges when planning marketing campaigns - like identifying the right audience, tracking campaign effectiveness, managing multiple channels to reach their audience, amongst others.

Airtel IQ is an omni-channel cloud communications platform that unifies cloud communication and customer experience management to enable brands to engage with their customers across voice, SMS and WhatsApp channels.

## Markets take a breather after record-breaking rally

*Nifty hits all-time high in intra-day trade*

**MUMBAI, Dec 12:** Benchmark stock indices closed lower on Tuesday due to profit taking by investors after a record-breaking rally and ahead of release of key inflation numbers.

After a two-day rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 377.50 points or 0.54 per cent to settle at 69,551.03. During the day, it declined 484.68 points or 0.69 per cent to 69,443.85.

The Nifty declined by 90.70 points or 0.43 per cent to 20,906.40. In intra-day trade, it hit a record high of 21,037.90. Key stock indices had settled at lifetime high levels on Monday following buying by foreign investors.

Among the Sensex firms, IndusInd Bank, Maruti, Titan, Reliance Industries, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Kotak Mahindra Bank and HDFC Bank were the major laggards.

UltraTech Cement, JSW Steel, Axis Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro and ITC were the major gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory.

European markets were trading mostly in the green. The US markets ended with gains on Monday.

"Following the recent impressive surge, the Nifty-50 has undergone a consolidation phase today due to anticipated elevated November inflation in India, driven by rising food prices, which may potentially delay RBI policy cuts. In contrast, the US inflation



outlook remains stable, which could influence the upcoming US Fed policy," said Vinod Nair, head of research, Geojit Financial Services.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.39 per cent to USD 76.33 a barrel on Tuesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,261.13 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark surged past the 70,000-level for the first time on Monday, reaching its record intra-day peak of 70,057.83. It ended at 69,928.53, registering a gain of 102.93 points or 0.15 per cent.

The Nifty gained 27.70 points or 0.13 per cent to settle just below the 21,000 level at 20,997.10, its all-time closing high. (PTI)

## DTDC four-day Branding Mahotsav concludes Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting announces 15<sup>th</sup> acquisition

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** The four-day long Branding Mahotsav organised by the country's leading express logistics company DTDC concluded with a grand success in Guwahati in the presence of DTDC chairman and managing director Subhasish Chakraborty.

On this occasion, DTDC executive director Abhishek Chakraborty, director (customer experience) Arpita C Mitra, vice president Kaushik Bhattacharjee, Northeast head Sukanta Biswas, Shantanu Chakraborty and other senior officials were present in the function organized at DTDC Regional office at Last Gate, Beltola. During the four-day Branding Mahotsav, DTDC Chairman and managing director Subhasish Chakraborty personally visited all the Guwahati-based company stores and re-branded total of 54 stores with the new rebranding

look of DTDC. During this, CMD Subhasish Chakraborty personally interacted with all the channel partners of DTDC to know about their experiences and challenges faced during work. On this occasion, CMD Chakraborty also gave his valuable suggestions to all his channel partners for overall development. Speaking on the occasion executive director Abhishek Chakraborty announced that from January 1st in the new year, E-commerce delivery COD service will be available to customers in all DTDC stores. He further said that with over 15,000+ channel partners strategically deployed across the country, DTDC serves 96% of the Indian population. The network covers 14,000+ pin codes across India and 400+ pin codes in the North-East region, making DTDC the preferred logistics partner for businesses and individuals.

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting, announced its 15th acquisition by acquiring Jo, Doy, and Bacter Shield, brands from VVF (India) Limited. This is also the company's third acquisition within the last twelve months.

The acquisition will be a strategic expansion for Wipro in the personal wash segment. Jo toilet soap is the key brand with a significant play in Northeast and West markets. Doy operates in the premium segment with differentiated positioning, and Bacter Shield has an antibacterial range of soap and handwash. These brands together recorded revenue of over ₹ 2100 MN during FY23.

Vineet Agrawal, CEO of Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting, and managing director, Wipro Enterprises expressed enthusiasm about

the acquisition, stating, "We are thrilled to onboard the notable personal wash brands of Jo, Doy and Bacter Shield into the Wipro family. With a diverse array of brands and Wipro's robust distribution network, we are positioned to fortify our market presence and propel growth. These brands complement our existing portfolio and will give us a stronger foothold in the key markets."

"We are pleased to embark on this journey with Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting. The divestment of Jo, Doy, and Bacter Shield to Wipro aligns with our focus on optimizing our portfolio and underscores our confidence in Wipro's ability to nurture and elevate these brands. This alliance reflects our commitment to delivering value to consumers and marks a significant step in our strategic business evolution", commented Mr. Rustom

Godrej Joshi, chairman and managing director, VVF (India) Limited.

Neeraj Khatri, chief executive, Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting, India, and SAARC Business, further added, "The addition of Jo, Doy, and Bacter Shield to our portfolio reinforces our commitment to enhance our offerings in the personal wash category in India and SAARC markets. The acquired brands have a strong legacy of over two decades, with Jo being recognized for its natural, fresh, and premium ingredients, Doy for its range of beauty and skincare soaps, and Bacter Shield for its focus on hygiene and protection. This move not only expands our product offerings but also strengthens our position as a leading player in the region, enabling us to better serve the evolving needs of our consumers."

## Gold declines ₹150 to ₹61,900 per 10 grams

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Gold declined ₹ 150 to ₹ 61,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid a fall in precious metal prices internationally, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had settled at ₹ 62,050 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also slipped ₹ 150 to ₹ 75,750 per kilogram, while it had closed at ₹ 75,900 per kg in the previous trade. In the global markets, gold and silver were quoting lower at USD 1,989 per ounce and USD 22.90 per ounce, respectively. Spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 1,989 per ounce, down by USD 6 from its previous close in the international markets.

Gold traded in a narrow range with a negative bias as traders are cautious to take large bets ahead of US consumer price index (CPI) data, which is going to be released later on Tuesday, and Fed's FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) policy meeting outcome for further direction, Samuil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. (PTI)

## Job creation single most important pressure point: Rajan

*'Nation needs to create jobs at every level going along the path of development'*

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Indian economy, dubbed the fastest growing major economy in the world, is faced with the single most important pressure point of job creation, says former RBI Governor Raghuram G Rajan as he makes a strong case for improvement of human capital through skill development.

Talking about the book 'Breaking the mould: Reimagining India's economic future', written jointly by him and Rohit Lamba, assistant professor of economics at Pennsylvania State University, Rajan said one of the greatest strength of India is its human capital of 1.4 billion and the question is "how do you make it strong?"

The nation needs to create jobs at every level going along the path of development, said Rajan, presently Katherine Dusak Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance at Chicago Booth, USA.

"Jobs is the single most important pressure point... If we had many more private sector jobs showing up, would there be so much pressure on reservations? Perhaps there'll be less so to some extent," he said, regretting that states are trying to reserve jobs for their residents, which is a worrisome trend.

"...that's a reflection of the fact that we're not providing jobs. And I would say that it is the primary concern. We are a united country. You can't reserve jobs in your state for people from the state. It has to be available for everybody. We've benefited so much from each other's migration," Rajan said in an interview to PTI.

Making a case for improvement of human capital, he



said, "if we create well educated high school graduates, if we move some of them to vocational training", lots of jobs can be created in the next six months to a year and the nation will not have to wait for 10 years to generate employment.

Citing an example, he said, "one place where we are severely understaffed is local government, partly because they don't do very much. You need to improve the functions that they have to do."

Rajan further said, "If we improve the human capital, the biggest problem of today, the jobs that we need, will

come automatically...if you also improve the quality of the workforce, companies will come to India. We constantly hear from entrepreneurs (that they) can't find good workers."

He said that by skilling the average level of jobs can be transformed into good jobs. "So it's really about how we do this by taking the long view. The longer view doesn't mean results only in the long term. It means results all along the way. It means that when we end there, we will come to 2047 with a population that can be upper middle income," he added.

Rajan also underlined the need for governance reforms with focus on decentralisation and improving democratic institutions.

"We need to have governance reform which means building on our democracy and focusing on decentralization...One example of good decentralization is the daily administration which has to focus on providing social services to the poor and the middle class, such as education, mobile app clinics etc," he said.

India, he added, "needs stronger democracy, not a weaker democracy besides strengthening distribution and becoming more inclusive, taking all our people with us...We need to create the opportunities for people, entrepreneurs".

According to the book, "our current growth is largely jobless, which means we need more growth to create necessary employment or else the demographic dividend will evaporate in front of our eyes... Another pos-

sibility is that our growth and GDP have been overestimated since 2013, when we changed the method of estimating the GDP."

India, the book concludes, "is at a cross road. We must embark on the Indian way, which builds on our strengths rather than our weaknesses. Our strengths include our spirit of inquiry and debate... Those not only make life in India more empowering and fulfilling for every citizen, they will also help us build the economy of the future."

Besides other things, the authors pointed out issues concerning data collection. For instance, they said India has not collected consumption data in the last six years, since the last report from 2017 was suppressed, perhaps because leaked versions suggested an increase in poverty and the latest census data is from 2011. The new decadal round has simply been shelved.

"The infrequently collected data on employment is noisy, often not square with the lived reality of the citizenry," they said.

The authors argued that they are not against manufacturing, they are against pouring enormous subsidies into attracting the lowest end of the manufacturing supply chain, assuming that will attract the rest.

They observed that India, for a variety of reasons, missed the manufacturing bus when China took it. "The China path of starting with low skilled assembly and moving up there will not work well for us because China and others are already there and have competed down the profits," they opined. (PTI)

PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL/ ENHANCEMENT OF WATER TREATMENT FACILITIES

E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/ 120 of 2023 (Item No. 1 & 2); Dated: 07-12-2023. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work:

SN.1. Brief Description of Item: Repair & provision of additional/enhancement of water treatment facilities in Lumding-Furkating Jr. section under the jurisdiction of Sr. DENI/IV/Lumding. (Chongjan, Bhilgaon, Jamguri & Gating). Tender Value: ₹65,71,189.10

Earnest Money: ₹1,31,400.00. SN.2. Brief Description of Item: Repair & provision of additional/enhancement of water treatment facilities in Lumding-Furkating Jr. section under the jurisdiction of Sr. DENI/IV/Lumding. (Diphu, Daldali, Rangapahar & Dhanisin). Tender Value: ₹68,75,105.15

Earnest Money: ₹1,37,500.00. E-tenders will be closed 15:00 hrs. on 01-01-2024 and opened 15:00 hrs. on 02-01-2024. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 01-01-2024 in website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

DRM/Works, Lumding

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# Minister Ashok Singhal oversees progress of key development projects in Tezpur

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, Dec 12:** Ashok Singhal, the minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, conducted a comprehensive inspection of crucial development projects in Tezpur town. The minister carefully reviewed the implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, in Sonitpur district and assessed the performance of various segments under the Housing and Urban Affairs department, with a specific focus on municipal activities within the district.

Reaffirming the commitment of the state government, minister Singhal said the protection of land rights for tribal communities and forest rights for the general population in accordance with government laws. He highlighted the need for swift and effective execution of departmental initiatives to ensure the seamless implementation of development projects that contribute to the welfare of citizens.

Minister Singhal proceeded to Tezpur town to inspect ongoing construction work facilitated by



the Housing and Urban Affairs Department. Notably, the 1,000-seat town hall near Parowa Chariali, currently under construction at a

cost of ₹ 27 crore, received special attention. The minister expressed optimism about its imminent completion, considering it a valuable

community asset. Additionally, he examined the progress of the integrated sports project, waterfront development, and the construction of a bird observation tower at Hajarapar in ward 18 of Tezpur town. The project, with an estimated cost of ₹ 24 crore, is projected for completion within the next two years.

Minister Singhal anticipated that both endeavors would significantly enhance the quality of life for the residents of Tezpur and amplify the charm of Usha Nagari upon completion. Along with Tezpur MLA Prithviraj Rabha, the minister was accompanied by senior department officials during the review meeting and project inspection.

Furthermore, minister Singhal convened an intimate meeting with prominent citizens and intellectuals of Tezpur at the District Commissioner's Office on Monday afternoon. Seeking valuable input, the gathering facilitated discussions on suggestions for the beautification and holistic development of Tezpur, with the participation of several dignitaries from the city.

## Presentation of Borgeet in correct form is an obligation: Dr Sanjib Pal Deka

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, Dec 12:** Dr Sanjib Pal Deka, a noted writer, researcher, and faculty of the Assamese department at Tezpur University, highlighted the importance of presenting Borgeet in its correct form during an oration program organised by the Sonitpur Press Club. The event, held in memory of Sanskrit scholar and journalist Late Narendra Dev Sastri, included the presentation of the 'Narendra Deva Shastri Memorial Award' to committed writer and retired teacher Surendra Mohan Nath.

Dr Deka, in his keynote speech on the topic 'Borgeetar Path Parampara', highlighted the issue of certain songs circulating as 'Borgeet' that were not originally part of the Sanchipat manuscript. He cited examples such as 'Kampita Madhava', 'Bahuri Gauri Gopala', 'Shankar Guru Hari', 'Shyam Chanda Mukhi', 'Srimanta Shankar', and 'Harinam Rase'. Dr Deka pointed out that these songs, created during the eighteenth century with religious fervor, are mistakenly considered as Borgeet. He stressed that it is an obligation for all to present Borgeet in its correct form.

During the award ceremony, Surendra Mohan Nath, the recipient of the 'Narendra Deva Shastri Memorial Award', expressed his deep pleasure for receiving an award instituted in memory of a noble soul like Narendra Dev Sastri. Local MLA Prithviraj Rabha spoke about the late Narendra Dev Sastri's contributions to ethical journalism and Assamese literature, highlighting his role in imparting value education to society. The program also included keynote lectures on the



life and contribution of late Narendra Deva Sastri by journalist Pulak Kumar Deka. Five distinguished personalities, including lawyer and journalist Subhash Chandra Biswas, environmental activist Kumud Barua, teacher Pankaja Saikia, lawyer Jamini Kumar Baishya, and social activist Tarun Das, were felicitated for their significant contributions to society and their professions. Children's literature Dilip Kumar Barua was also honored for receiving a government literary award.

The meeting, presided over by Subhash Chandra Biswas, president of Sonitpur Press Club, and hosted by executive president Pankaj Baruah, commenced with paying homage to late Narendra Dev Sastri and a Borgeet presented by Hiramoni Lahkar.

## Assam team shines in NSS National Integration Camp

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Dec 12:** A group of 11 members from Assam and the NE region, under Gauhati University, participated in an NSS National Integration Camp organised at Kavayitri Bahinabai Chaudhari North Maharashtra University from November 30 to December 6, 2023.

Dr Bhuban Chandra Chutia, NSS programme officer at Nowgong College (Autonomous), and Dr Amiya Patar, NSS programme officer at Nowgong Girls College, led and guided the team of 11 members, including 4 volunteers from Nowgong College, 3 from Nowgong Girls College, and 2 from Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College, in this camp.

The Assam team gained national acclaim through 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat' by performing Sattriya, Dashavatar,

Bihu, and folk dances. Their performance of Bihu from Assam in a cultural procession won the affection of the people of Jalgaon city in Maharashtra. The team secured the third-best position in the poster-making competition held during the camp.

The delegation also participated in several programs under 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat' with representatives from the state of Rajasthan. The team's performance was praised by the vice-chancellor of the University BL Maheshwari, regional officers of NSS, Pune Region, youth officer, and director of NSS of Kavayitri Bahinabai Chaudhari North Maharashtra University, emphasising the potential for future social and cultural exchanges with Assam through NSS.

The success of the team was lauded by Dr Sarat Borkatoki, principal of Nowgong College

(Autonomous), Dr Sadananda Payeng, principal of Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College, Dr Kulen Das, Nowgong Girls College, and Dr Ranjan Kumar Kakoti, coordinator of Guwahati University NSS. The participants, including Vishal Sonwal, Ambarish Krishnaksh, Rajshekh Gayan, and Niku Ghosh from Nowgong College; Parismita Sharma, Supriya Sharma, Sonmili Baypi from Nowgong Girls College; Jitendra Kumar Nath and Anindita Rani Saikia from Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College, received congratulations.

It is noteworthy that Parismita Sharma of Nowgong Girls College performed Sattriya and Bihu dances at the event. The group participated in various cultural programs and received praise from everyone. Over 220 participants from 11 states took part in the camp.

## Awareness campaign on ending violence against women held in Nagaon

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Dec 12:** In continuation of the 16-day-long activities, the Women and Child Development Department, ASRLM, DMMU Nagaon, in collaboration with the Nagaon district administration and with the support of the Raha ICDS Project, organised an awareness rally and a subsequent awareness meeting on ending violence against women and girls at Mahendra Nath Hazarika Smriti Bhawan under the Beti Bachao

Beti Padhao scheme.

As part of the event, a basket of fruits, a baby kit, and a Sukanya Samridhi Yojana form were distributed to the parents of five girl children to celebrate the birth of the girl child and acknowledge their receipt of the PMMVY cash incentive. Additionally, a registration desk was set up for on-the-spot enrollment of eligible mothers as part of the PMMVY enrollment drive.

The program saw the partici-

pation of several officials, including ADC (in-charge SW), the principal of Raha College, DSWO Nagaon, CDPO Raha, DPM ASRLM Nagaon, mail overseer Raha Post Office, supervisors, CA, OSC Nagaon, officials of District Hub for Empowerment of Women, Nagaon, and district officials of CINI. The initiative aimed to raise awareness and address issues related to violence against women and girls in the community.

## AAU to host first national women scientists conference in agricultural sciences

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, Dec 12:** The department of plant pathology at Assam Agricultural University is set to organise a two-day national conference on 'Women Scientists in Plant Health Management for Sustainable Development Goals' on December 22 and 23. In collaboration with the prestigious Indian Phytopathological Society, New Delhi, the event aims to bring together more than 200 women delegates from different states of India.

The conference will serve as a platform for networking and collaboration, offering attendees the opportunity to participate in interactive sessions on various topics, including crop protection approaches, crop improvement, host-pathogen interaction, economically important microbes, agro-technology dissemination, and recent advances in the agriculture and horticulture sector.

A significant highlight of the conference will be a panel discussion featuring experts from diverse sectors, exploring the intersection of technology and societal challenges.

## 1139 coaches undergo successful overhauling for safe train operations



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** The North East Frontier Railway places a strong emphasis on the safety and efficiency of passenger trains, which relies heavily on the meticulous maintenance of various types of coaches. To ensure the proper functioning and safety of the rolling stock, NF Railway has undertaken a significant initiative in the mechanical field, particularly the maintenance of passenger coaches through Periodical Overhauling (POH) at its depots and workshops.

From January to November of the current year, a total of 1139 coaches underwent POH at the two workshops of NF Railway, namely New Bongaigaon and Dibrugarh. The POH process involves thorough inspections and maintenance, addressing issues such as breakage of springs, loose types on the wheels, and other mechanical equipment failures that could lead to untoward incidents.

At the New Bongaigaon workshop, POH was carried out for 301 non air-conditioned conventional coaches, 51 air-conditioned conventional coaches, 93 non air-conditioned LHB coaches, and 122 air-conditioned LHB coaches. Simultaneously, the Dibrugarh workshop completed POH for 323 non air-conditioned conventional coaches, 60 air-conditioned conventional coaches, 88 non air-conditioned LHB coaches, and 101 air-conditioned LHB coaches.

## Gramalok poetry session held in Sivasagar

**HT Correspondent**

**SIVASAGAR, Dec 12:** A special poetry reading and discussion session, Gramalok, was held at Desangmukh BR Ambedkar Senior Secondary School recently. The event was organised by Sahitya Academy and Sivasagar Kobi Samaj. Samsul Barik, teacher and writer, inaugurated the session, and Dr Mamini Khargharia, principal of MRD College, spoke on the topic 'Use of language in contemporary literature'. Barik, in his speech, shed light on the crisis facing the Assamese language today. The session was presided over by Sivaprasad Mili, a professor at Sib-sagar Girls' College. Poets Punjan Barua, Kishore Deori, Agamoni Phukan Saikia, Abhijit Gogoi, and Ujaswi Phukan read out self-composed poems. Prabhat Duwara, president of Sivasagar Kobi Samaj, delivered the vote of thanks.

## Lions and Leo Club hosts blood donation camp

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** Lions Club and Leo Club of Guwahati Elite, in collaboration with Agarwal Yuva Parishad, organised a highly successful blood donation camp at Saharia Blood Bank recently. The joint initiative aimed to enhance community health witnessed an overwhelming response from Guwahati residents. The event, marked by altruism and solidarity, resulted in an impressive collection of 25 units of life-saving blood. The Lions and Leo Club of Guwahati Elite, known for their commitment to humanitarian causes, partnered seamlessly with Agarwal Yuva Parishad to ensure the smooth execution of this crucial community service.

## Akhil Gogoi threatens renewed anti-CAA stir



**HT Correspondent**

**SIVASAGAR, Dec 12:** Akhil Gogoi, the Rajior Dal supremo, paid homage to the five people who died in police firing during the anti-CAA stir in a protest rally in Samaguri near Amguri on Monday. During the event, he threatened the resumption of the stir if the government implements the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

He stated that Rajior Dal would be supported by Krishak Mukti Sangram Samitee, Nari Mukti Sangram Samitee, Chatra Mukti Sangram Samitee, and all other anti-communal democratic forces.

## Demow residents to receive Sahashi Awards 2023

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, Dec 12:** Sahashi, an NGO, is set to host its Seventh Annual Sahashi Award 2023 ceremony at Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra on December 28. Recognising outstanding contributions, Dr Diganta Gogoi, professor at HCDG College, Nitaipukhuri, will be honoured with the Sahashi Award 2023, while Manjur Ali, a national handball player from Sivasagar, will receive the Sports Organiser Award 2023. Both individuals, hailing from Demow in the Sivasagar district, have garnered congratulatory messages from the people and well-wishers of Demow for their notable achievements.

## Book on dance in NE India released at Tezpur University

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, Dec 12:** The department of Cultural Studies at Tezpur University organised a book release function for 'Reflections of Dance along the Brahmaputra' on Tuesday. Edited by Prof Debarshi Prasad Nath of the department of Cultural Studies at Tezpur University, along with Dr Barbara Snook and Prof Ralph Buck from the University of Auckland, the book marks the outcome of an academic collaboration between the University of Auckland and Tezpur University.

Published by Routledge, a global academic publisher, the book celebrates the diverse dance traditions in North East India and comprises 16 chapters authored by faculty members of Tezpur University. Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, vice-chancellor of Tezpur University, graced the occasion as chief guest, praising the authors for their academic contribution to the traditions and cultures of the North East. He highlighted the book's exploration of various dance forms, including indigenous performances, dancers' narratives, and the ethos of traditional dance practices in the region.

Prof Nath, discussing the book, emphasized its coverage of a wide range of dance traditions, from Sattriya to Kherai to Rati Bihu to Hudum, without imposing a hierarchy. The book also shares life experiences of renowned dance maestros such as Jatin Goswami, Ghankanta Bora, and Indira PP Bora.

Dr Snook, addressing the gathering, highlighted the uniqueness of folk dances in the North East, expressing political and cultural identities. She appreciated the beauty of the Brahmaputra River, stating that the book explores the rich tapestry of dance forms flourishing along its banks.

In conjunction with the book release, the vice-chancellor inaugurated a five-day International Faculty Development Programme on teaching 'Community Dance' and 'Creative Teaching Strategies', organised by the department of Cultural Studies. Prof Farheena Danta, dean of the School of Humanities & Social Sciences, was also present at the event.



## Review advocates increased patrolling coverage in Raimona National Park

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** The recent annual review of Data Driven Patrolling in Raimona National Park (RNP) in the state suggested increased patrolling coverage and the identification of sensitive areas to set up new anti-poaching camps. Data Driven Patrolling was introduced in Raimona National Park, the youngest national park in Assam, in October 2022 at the central range of the national park.

The annual review meeting discussed the progress and outputs of the Data Driven Patrolling initiative. The additional principal chief conservator of Forest and the council head of the Department of Biodiversity and Terrestrial Council (BTC) Forest, Suman Mohapatra, praised the work done so far and stated the need to identify sensitive areas for building new anti-poaching camps. He also called for increased patrolling coverage, especially in the eastern and western ranges.

Concerns were raised regarding the increasing threat of timber and firewood collection in the park. The use of temporal graphs to plan better patrolling strategies to mitigate these threats was suggested. Additionally, the condition of forest



roads, accessibility, and logistical issues were discussed.

The meeting appreciated Aaranyak, an organisation supporting conservation efforts, and encouraged collaboration. The participants included the DFO of Kachugaon Division, Bhanu Sinha, secretary general & CEO of Aaranyak, Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, director of Tiger Programme Panthera, Dr Abhishek Harihar, senior scientist of Aaranyak, Dr Firoz Ahmed, and staff members from RNP and Aaranyak.

Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar pledged Aaranyak's support in legal and advocacy efforts, including organising workshops and training for the forest officials of Raimona National Park in the scientific investigation of wildlife crime cases.

The Data Driven Patrolling initiative aims to strengthen the security of the wildlife habitat. Frontline staff of RNP have been trained and mentored in patrol data collection and management over the years with assistance from Aaranyak. The patrol data have

been periodically analyzed to improve patrolling efforts and threat detection inside the park.

The review meeting highlighted the importance of recording threat data for effective planning and minimising threats in the park. Aaranyak has been supporting the Forest department of BTC in improving patrolling since 2016, starting in Bhuyanpara and Banskari Ranges of Manas National Park. The best practices of this model were later transferred to the newly-established Raimona National Park.



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Order and simplification are the first steps toward the mastery of a subject. -Thomas Mann

## Historic verdict on Article 370

In a landmark verdict on December 11, the Supreme Court upheld the abrogation of Article 370, marking a significant development with far-reaching implications. While political parties in Jammu and Kashmir now face the task of reassessing their strategies in light of the judgment, the aftermath is likely to trigger a series of political actions and reactions. Mehbooba Mufti asserted that the ruling was not just a defeat for Kashmiris but a setback to the cultural ethos of Kashmir, known as Kashmiriyat. The legal intricacies surrounding the judgment are noteworthy; the apex court deleted sub-section (B) of Section 370 without explicitly stating the cessation of Section 370 itself. The presumption is that Section 370 has become obsolete with the removal of sub-section (B). The court emphasized that Jammu and Kashmir had no internal sovereignty, having fully surrendered to the Union of India through the Instrument of Accession in 1947. However, questions arise about the government's selective application of Article 370, leaving defense, external affairs, and monetary transactions under its purview, while devolving other matters to the local administration.

Despite the government's claims that the abrogation aimed to curb insurgency and terrorism, recent data from the Ministry of Home Affairs revealed 761 terrorist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir between 2018 and 2022, resulting in 174 civilian deaths. This challenges the government's assertion that terrorism has been eradicated. Notably, a judge on the constitution bench suggested the establishment of a "truth and reconciliation commission" to investigate human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir since the 1980s. The call for healing wounds underscores the complex social and political landscape. While the court directed the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, providing a ray of hope, it also mandated elections by September 30, 2024. The reinstatement of local governance allows the people of Kashmir to address concerns such as the provision allowing outsiders to purchase land, a key factor that prompted the abrogation. Despite the court's approval of the abrogation, questions linger about the government's intentions and the temporary nature of the measures taken. The decision to bifurcate the state into Union Territories, particularly Ladakh, raised eyebrows, with the court declining to decide on the validity of this move.

The court's reluctance to address the mutilation of Jammu and Kashmir disappointed some, including Congress, which expressed disagreement with the judgment on Article 370. Congress member Abhishek Manu Singhvi questioned the central government's prolonged control over the state by remote and raised concerns about the contradictory stance on Ladakh. In the backdrop of the ruling, the court's acknowledgment that Parliament's use of Article 367 to amend Article 370 was "constitutionally invalid" raises questions about the overall legitimacy of the abrogation. The lack of a compelling explanation from the Modi government regarding the bifurcation further fuels skepticism. Despite the legal intricacies and political nuances, the court's directive for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood signifies a pivotal moment. As the region moves toward electing its assembly, the people of Kashmir will have an opportunity to shape their future and address longstanding concerns, including the protection of land rights. The Supreme Court's verdict on Article 370 introduces a new chapter for Jammu and Kashmir, presenting both challenges and opportunities. The intricacies of the judgment and its implications will undoubtedly continue to shape the region's political landscape in the coming years.

## Abrogation to reconciliation: The changing landscape of Kashmir

By: Dipak Kurmi

The historic Supreme Court verdict on December 11, 2023, affirming the validity of the abrogation of Article 370, marks the definitive closure of a troubling chapter in India's history. This chapter, casting doubt on India's territorial integrity and affecting security, not only discriminated by law but also deprived the people of J&K of the complete benefits of Indian citizenship as per the Constitution. Article 370, a source of the security and socio-political challenges in Kashmir, served as a tool for local leaders to fuel separatism, enabling external powers like Pakistan to exploit existing fault lines. According to the Supreme Court, J&K lost its sovereignty upon accession to India, and Article 370 was only a temporary provision. This unanimous verdict from the five-judge bench firmly resolves all questions regarding the status of J&K as an integral part of India.

In the grand scheme of events, the seamless execution of a task untouched for over seven decades became a reality in 2019, with the Supreme Court's final dismissal of all petitions challenging the abrogation four and a half years later. Since 2019, Kashmir has witnessed a transformation - stone-pelting has faded, infrastructural development has flourished, and tourism has thrived. Despite lingering Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, security forces assert that those resorting to violence in the Valley have a limited shelf life. Today, the Tricolour proudly flies over Lal Chowk as Independence Day is celebrated, marking a stark contrast to its turbulent past. Movie halls are reemerging, symbolizing a significant shift in a region where cinemas were once destroyed under the pretext of religious objections. Contrary to warnings from leaders like Farooq Abdullah, who predicted turmoil post-Article 370 abrogations, Kashmir remained calm after 2019. The echoes of violent unrest in 2016 and 2010 led by figures like Burhan Wani and the Hurriyat now seem like distant, unpleasant memories.

The scenario in Kashmir isn't entirely normal, but it marks a significant step towards integrating the valley with the rest of India. This underscores the im-

port of sincere intentions, exemplified by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve to address the supposedly insurmountable Kashmir issue. Despite the international liberal and Wahhabi ecosystem spreading misinformation against him, Modi remained undeterred in steering the problem towards resolution. Post the 2019 abrogation, international voices opposing the government grew louder, constructing a narrative of majoritarian India oppressing minorities. However, the Supreme Court's verdict on the 2019 action refuted such claims, placing Article 370 in an irreversible state. It is anticipated that demands for "azaadi" (freedom) for Kashmir within India will diminish. Even when former J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah asserts his party's respect for the Supreme Court verdict but expresses intent to bring back Article 370, it appears as posturing, diverging from the mainstream politician's role of ensuring prosperity for J&K. The lack of unrest in Kashmir in recent years indicates a desire for progress. The Supreme Court's verdict, met with silence in the Valley, sends a clear message to Kashmiri politicians: refrain from pandering to separatist sentiments and focus on fostering a normal life, free from strife and violence, for the people.

The call for reconciliation and healing, as emphasized by the Supreme Court, is timely. However, any proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission must ensure justice not only for those based in the valley who may have suffered from state and non-state excesses but also for the lakhs of people abruptly driven out of the valley. The crucial question arises: Does reconciliation extend to enabling these individuals or their descendants to return to Kashmir and rebuild their lives in a secure environment? This remains a challenging inquiry with no immediate answer, as various adversarial interests seek to maintain Kashmir as a hotbed of terror and extremism. Recent targeted attacks on Kashmiri Pandits underscore the ongoing efforts to instill fear in their hearts, making the path ahead difficult. Nonetheless, it signifies a noteworthy beginning. (The writer can be reached at dipaknews@gmail.com)

## The Siang Dialogue 1.0: North East pivotal to India's prosperity and security

The inaugural session of The Siang Dialogue 1.0 titled "The Namsai Note" kicked-off the conference on 8th December. It was aimed to stimulate discussions towards the strategic importance of attending to India's neighbourhood besides providing an opportunity for an in-depth discussion on India's northeast region.

Ninong Ering-MLA, Arunachal Pradesh Assembly, in his address stated how the northeast region is of great importance for India strategically and geopolitically.

Dr Sriparna Pathak, Associate Professor at OP Jindal Global University, elaborated on the details of the topic in great depth and its impact on the northeast. She talked about how China is weaponising water.

Dr Sriparna further added that the mindless construction of dams by China in ecologically sensitive regions like Occupied Tibet and on the Majia Zangbu river, will badly impact natural habitats and its impact can be seen in the form of floods in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and the entire northeast region.

Dr Rajiv Nayan, Senior Research Associate at Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses elaborated on how the geographical location of Northeast India makes it very special. He further said that the Government has transformed its "Look East Policy" into the "Act East Policy". In the last 10 years, the northeastern region of the country has witnessed significant transformation on the infrastructure front under the current leadership.

Dr Shrabana Barua, Research

Red Lantern Analytica, a Delhi based think-tank organised their annual event "The Siang Dialogue 1.0" in virtual mode from 8th-10th December 2023. Over three days, the speakers articulated their views that China must not preach things that it itself doesn't practice like bringing peace and creating friendly ecosystems. Speakers further explored the origins of the people of Tibet, the historical significance of the relationships between the people of Tawang and Tibet

Fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs, focused more on connectivity issue in the northeast region and how it is transforming strategic aspects in the region.

Dr Shrabana stressed that we need to address the China factor in the northeast region. She highlighted the example of China reviving the Burma Road, which can lead to an increase in smuggling and opium trade once completed.

The Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) initiative is doing good work in integrating the region with neighbouring countries, she said, and suggested that the Indian Government should utilise water resources in the northeastern region to its greatest potential by strengthening inland water connectivity.

Namrata Hasija, Research Fellow at the Centre for China Analysis & Strategy, moderated the session. In her remarks Hasija said, "North East Region of India is set to play a crucial role in India's grandiose plan of development. China's Belt and Road Initiative is being countered proactively & China's evil plans are upfront now."

In the second session titled 'Lohit's Longitude' held on 9th December discussion centred on understanding India's northeast

as a gateway to the "Act East policy" of the government.

Subject Kumar-MP-RS in his video message said, "Northeast region of India holds immense political and geopolitical importance. India's 'Act East Policy' cannot be successful unless we focus more on the northeast".

Defence strategist Major Amit Bansal mentioned that India's Act East Policy is based on the 4 C's - Culture, Commerce, Connectivity, and Capacity Building. Major Bansal suggested that the Government should focus more on strengthening connectivity between the northeast and the ASEAN countries to make the northeast an engine of growth and also to counter China's growing influence in ASEAN countries. He further said that to counter China's influence in the ASEAN region we need to act very fast with our "Act East Policy" and increase our trade with ASEAN countries and only by developing the northeast region at a rapid pace we can achieve it.

Ajay Dutt-MLA-Delhi Assembly, highlighted how closely northeastern states are linked with the rest of the country and are extremely rich in natural re-

sources. He stressed how northeastern states can act as a bridge between the Bay of Bengal and Himalayan regions. There is need for exploring the hidden economic potential of the northeast region and strengthening the connectivity of the region with Southeast Asia and other nearby countries, he further added.

In his keynote address, Dr J Jeganaathan Associate Professor-JNU, elaborated on how connectivity and infrastructure are the biggest challenges in the region, as one has to circumvent Bangladesh in order to transport goods, and other requirements.

Dr. Jeganaathan concluded by saying that we need to focus more on Myanmar, Bangladesh and ASEAN countries in light of China's increasing presence in the region. "There needs to be more substance in India's Act East Policy with respect to the strategic aspect," he added.

The third and final session of the conference on 10th December was titled 'The Tawang Translation'.

Dr. Ayanjit Sen, senior journalist and Associate Professor at Bennett University said that Arunachal Pradesh has always been and will always remain an integral part of India no matter what may come. Commenting on China he said Arunachal Pradesh holds significant importance for India and it is not "South Tibet" (as claimed by China). He criticised China's sinister tactics of including Arunachal in its own so called

official maps, he concluded by saying, "You can remove Arunachal Pradesh from the map but not from Geography".

Tenzin Lekshay La, Spokesperson of the Central Tibetan Administration expressed his concern about the ecological damage being done by China in Tibet. Glaciers are melting rapidly; temperature is rising as China is putting so much pressure on the fragile ecology of Tibet. He concluded by appealing to Indians to support Tibet not only emotionally but also through actions. "China is carrying out genocide in Tibet. It is running colonial-style schools in the region to indoctrinate Tibetan children", he said.

Dr. Soumya Awasthi, author and consultant with the Indian Ministry of Defence in the context of China's actions in Tibet said, "Chinese have a very aggressive and expansionist agenda but Tibet is a very important part of India's history." She further added that the Tibet issue continues to be unresolved due to China's expansionist agenda. It has still not honoured the 1954 agreement of granting autonomy to the Tibetan people to run their own government.

Tsewang Dorji, Researcher at Tibet Policy Institute, in his presentation elaborated on the geopolitical significance of Tawang in India-China relations and China's Great Game in the Himalayan region. He said that the geopolitical importance of Tibet is very critical to understand China's expansionist agenda in the Himalayan region.

The RLA plans to have the next edition of Siang Dialogue in Arunachal Pradesh.

## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Asad Mirza

## Human rights and labour advocacy need to be intensified to protect workforce

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

December 10, 2023 is the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ILO Convention 87, yet we are far from achieving human dignity, freedom, and social justice for all, especially for the entire workforce. Intensified efforts to promote and protect the human and labour rights is thus imperative at this juncture when the employers and governments across the world are in favour of scuttling large number of labour rights including the "right to strike" while real wages are on the decline, quality of jobs deteriorating, and unemployment remains high since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020.

Only a month ago on November 10-11, a special two day session outside the ILO Governing Body meeting was held on request of 14 Employer members, who wanted to limit the scope of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention of 1948, ie Convention 87. Such a meeting was a rare event held outside the ILO Governing Body meetings, only the fourth one in the history of ILO's existence since 1919. The three others were held in September 1932, October 1935, and May 1970.

The two-day special session was held just after conclusion of 349th Session (October 30 - November 9), in which the ILO Governing Body members could not even

defend the Convention 87, due to split of votes, and had to decide to refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The 14 employer members of the ILO governing body had requested for urgent inclusion of the issue on the agenda of the 112th Session of International Labour Conference (ILC) and proposed ILC adopt a protocol to ILO Convention 87. If adopted, it would authoritatively determine the scope and limits of the right to strike, is, more broadly, industrial action. As per the request of the employer members, the dispute is to be brought in the 112th Session of the ILC to be held in June 2024.

However, the Governing Body has decided to consider appropriate follow-up action only after receiving the advisory opinion of ICJ. It should be noted that just before this decision, the Governing Body had endorsed the proposed ILO integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining and requested the DG ILO to take into account its guidance in implementing the strategy and submit a progress report at its 352nd Session in November 2024.

It is therefore significant that ILO Director-General Gilbert F. Houngbo has now called for intensified efforts to promote and protect these rights and collectively strive for a future grounded in human dignity, freedom, and social jus-

tice. He has said that these human rights were hard-won, and they remain essential for peace and social justice. We all have a duty to protect and support them - especially in times of conflict and insecurity, he said in a statement adding, "at the ILO we pledge to redouble our efforts to promote these rights, and so support a future based on human dignity, freedom and social justice for all."

How far his call will be effective is uncertain, since the ILO Governing Body itself is not running smoothly. There are 56 titular members and 66 deputy members in it. Titular members included 28 governments, 14 employers, and 14 workers while deputy members included 28 governments, 19 employers and 19 workers. Ten of the titular government seats are permanently held by states, and other government members are elected by the ILC every three years. However, it is unfortunate that not election has been held since June 2014.

It is worth recalling that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948 in the aftermath of World War II. That same year the ILO's members adopted Convention 87, protecting freedom of association and the right to organize, safeguarding the rights of workers and employers to choose how, and by whom, they are represented. For many years until 2012, the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Rec-

ommendations, consisting of independent experts responsible for monitoring the application of the ratified Conventions by member states, has taken the view that the right to strike is a corollary to the right to freedom of association, and that, as such it is reorganized and protected by the Convention 87.

In 2012, Employers' group have started questioning the interpretation of the Experts, bringing a major institutional crisis with the ILC Committee on the Application of Standards being prevented for the first time from exercising its supervisory functions. The issue of collective bargaining came before the tripartite screening group in May 2022 that decided to place the strategy for promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining on the agenda of the ILO Governing Body in its meeting in March 2023.

Since trade unionism across the world is in great crisis, ILO's call for protecting and promoting Convention 87, is important. The 75th anniversary of the Convention 87 should be an occasion to make a fresh resolve for workers and trade unions to protect themselves from exploitation and assert for their rights, especially the right to organize, right to collective bargaining for proper wages and social security coverage, and right to strike. ILC and ILO has major responsibility to protect the Convention 87 to protect workers' rights. (IPA Service)

## Hectic work is on in ISRO to send first Indian astronaut to moon by 2040

By: Girish Linganna

In October this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi led a significant meeting to evaluate the advancement of India's Gaganyaan Mission and to define the future of the nation's space exploration efforts. Expanding on the achievements of such previous space missions as Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya L-1, the Prime Minister has set ambitious targets for India, which include establishing an Indian Space Station, called the Bharatiya Antariksha Station, by 2035 and sending the first Indian astronaut to the Moon by 2040.

To ensure that humans are adequately prepared for extended space missions, including lengthy journeys to Mars which can take up to seven months, scientists are actively studying the impact of space on human well-being. This research encompasses investigations into the effects of the space environment on various aspects of health, including sexual health.

Recent research funded by NASA suggests that exposure to high levels of Galactic cosmic radiation, associated with such astronomical events as supernova

explosions, refers to the highly energetic particles present in space. Highly energetic particles refer to particles that possess a significant amount of energy. In the context of space, these particles can include cosmic rays, which are typically high-energy protons, electrons and atomic nuclei. These particles can travel at very high speeds and have the potential to cause damage to living organisms and materials they come into contact with.

These particles can pose significant health risks to astronauts, including impairing vascular tissues and potentially resulting in conditions like erectile dysfunction, along with the microgravity conditions experienced in space, can negatively impact vascular tissues. This impairment of vascular tissues can result in erectile dysfunction. What is concerning is that the research indicates that, even after astronauts return to Earth and undergo an extended recovery period, these issues with sexual function can persist.

As manned missions to space are scheduled for the near future, the research emphasizes the importance of monitoring astronauts' sexual health upon their

return to Earth. Justin D La Favor, a co-author of the study from Florida State University, states that these findings highlight the need for close observation in this area. Earth's magnetosphere shields us from cosmic radiation, but astronauts on the ISS rely on artificial shielding. Despite this, they still encounter a week's worth of cosmic radiation in space that is equal to a year's worth of the same on Earth's surface. However, when astronauts embark on missions to the Moon and Mars, they will have significantly less shielding from these particles compared to their experience on the ISS or that of astronauts planned for Gaganyaan. The research team highlights that erectile dysfunction, which affects a significant portion of men over the age of 40 and has a considerable impact on

overall life satisfaction, still lacks clear understanding regarding its implications for space travel. The research team also discovered that even minimal exposure to cosmic rays led to an elevation in oxidative stress. This elevation in oxidative stress can be harmful to cells, proteins and DNA—potentially causing damage. Oxidative stress occurs when there is an imbalance in the body, leading to harmful molecules, called 'free radicals', causing damage to cells and important molecules. This can contribute to health issues and the ageing process. We are susceptible to oxidative stress in such conditions as chronic inflammation, exposure to environmental pollutants, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, poor diet, certain medical conditions, such as diabetes and cancer, and neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's

and the ageing process.

Oxidative stress is linked to a higher chance of erectile dysfunction due to how the body responds to damage in blood vessels. Exposure to cosmic rays, causing oxidative stress, is thought to impact the artery supplying blood to erectile tissue. Microgravity also has a similar, though less pronounced, negative effect on erectile function. The body fights oxidative stress by producing antioxidants naturally. The team's study suggests that using certain antioxidants as a treatment could enhance the function of tissues exposed to cosmic rays.

"Despite the adverse effects of galactic cosmic radiation staying for a long time, we have learnt through our research that, by specifically targeting the redox and nitric oxide pathways in tissues, we could, possibly, treat erectile dysfunction," the research team stated. Redox is a term formed from 'reduction' and 'oxidation', involving chemical reactions with electron transfer in the body. Targeting these reactions is possible through interventions, such as employing specific antioxidants. (IPA Service)





# Headache during pregnancy: By trimester and remedies

By: Jon Johnson

Experiencing a headache during pregnancy is common and not usually a cause for concern. Home remedies can often help soothe the pain. Pregnancy causes several significant changes in the body, many of which can give rise to individual symptoms. Changes in hormones and blood volume, as well as poor posture due to increased body weight, are all common factors.

Some of these changes can also result in headaches, for which a range of home remedies are available. However, anyone experiencing troubling or severe symptoms should seek medical treatment. A doctor can usually determine the specific cause. In this article, we discuss the causes, symptoms, and treatment of headaches during pregnancy.

**Causes**  
The female body experiences several quick and drastic changes during pregnancy, which may lead to a few different symptoms. Headaches are a common symptom during pregnancy. Research suggests that 39% of women will experience headaches during or just after pregnancy. The exact cause of a headache during pregnancy may vary based on the trimester. The following sections will discuss some likely causes of headaches during pregnancy, some of which are more common in certain trimesters.

**First trimester**  
During the first trimester of pregnancy, a woman's body goes through several drastic changes in a short space of time. The body experiences a large influx of hormones, along with an increase in the amount of blood. Rapid weight gain may also occur. Together, these changes may make certain types of headache, such as tension headaches, more likely. Some other pregnancy symptoms may also influence these headaches or make them worse. Common issues that could cause or worsen a headache include:

- nausea and vomiting
- high stress levels
- poor nutrition
- low blood sugar
- dehydration
- lack of sleep
- changes in vision
- light sensitivity, which may trigger migraine
- a sedentary lifestyle

Additionally, a pregnant woman may have some trigger foods that cause irritation

or symptoms such as headaches. These trigger foods may vary among individuals, but some common culprits include dairy products and chocolate.

## Second and third trimesters

In the second and third trimesters, a woman may be less likely to experience headaches due to hormonal changes, as the body has usually adjusted to these changes by this stage of pregnancy.

However, some women continue to experience tension headaches from hormonal changes throughout their pregnancy. In the later stages of pregnancy, symptoms such as headaches are more likely to be due to:

- excess weight
- high blood pressure
- muscle strain
- poor posture
- insufficient sleep
- poor diet

## Hypertension during pregnancy

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is a common experience for many pregnant women. Some will experience a condition called preeclampsia, which occurs when someone who usually has normal blood pressure levels suddenly develops high blood pressure after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that 1 in 25 pregnant women in the United States will develop preeclampsia. Preeclampsia increases the risk of many medical emergencies, including seizures and stroke.

The condition may also reduce the oxygen flow to the fetus. A common symptom of preeclampsia is a headache that will not go away. Some other symptoms include:

- changes in vision, such as blurred vision or seeing spots
- nausea or vomiting
- sudden weight gain
- pain in the upper stomach or abdomen
- difficulty breathing
- swelling in the face or hands

These symptoms do not occur in every case of preeclampsia, which is one of the reasons why it is important to check in regularly with a doctor throughout pregnancy.

## Symptoms

Headaches during pregnancy can manifest in various ways. For example, they can cause different types and levels of pain. Medically speaking, headaches are either primary or secondary. Primary headaches are not a

symptom of a health condition, whereas secondary headaches occur when an underlying condition is the cause. Secondary headaches usually lead to a number of other symptoms.

The sections below will discuss several types of headache that are common during pregnancy.

**Tension headaches**  
Tension headaches are the most common type of headache during pregnancy. In fact, a 2017 review in the Journal of Headache and Pain notes that 26% of all headaches that occur during pregnancy are tension headaches.

Tension headaches cause mild-to-moderate pain in the head. Many people describe the pain as feeling as though they have a tight band around their head.

## Migraine headaches

Migraine headaches may also occur during pregnancy. According to estimates, migraine headaches without aura occur in up to 10% of pregnant women.

A migraine headache often begins as a dull ache that grows into a piercing, throbbing pain, which may or may not radiate. A person may also be very sensitive to light, noise, and some smells. Migraine episodes might also cause other symptoms, such as dizziness or nausea.

## Cluster headaches

Cluster headaches are rarer than other types, occurring in an estimated 0.3% of all pregnancies. Cluster headaches cause a severe "stabbing" pain, typically on one side of the head and around the eye. A person may also notice some other symptoms, such as nasal congestion, watery eyes, or swelling in the area.

## Treatments

In many cases, home remedies can help soothe a primary headache during pregnancy. Some home remedies that may be effective include:

- applying a cold or warm compress to the area for 10 minutes at a time
- taking a warm bath to release muscle tension
- stretching
- doing mild exercises, such as yoga, swimming, or tai chi
- sitting or standing with better posture
- taking frequent breaks away from screens
- drinking plenty of water throughout the day
- getting plenty of rest
- getting a gentle head massage
- resting in a dark area

Keeping a food journal to track what they eat each day may also help a woman identify and eliminate any headache triggers.

If possible, pregnant women should aim to manage any unpleasant symptoms with home remedies or talk to their doctor about medical options, if necessary.

## What to avoid

During pregnancy, it is essential to avoid over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Advil) or aspirin.

A review in the Annals of Epidemiology notes that women who take NSAIDs while pregnant are more likely to give birth to babies with congenital abnormalities. Some women take acetaminophen (Tylenol) while pregnant, although there is a concern that this may also affect the baby.

A recent study in the journal JAMA Psychiatry found that children born to women who take acetaminophen during pregnancy are more likely to be autistic or have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. However, there is a need for more research into this connection before health experts can make any broad claims. Many people still view acetaminophen as the safest drug choice for women during pregnancy.

## When to see a doctor

Although headaches during pregnancy are common, it may sometimes be necessary to see a doctor.

Anyone experiencing severe or continuous headaches that do not respond to home remedies should schedule an appointment with their doctor. Similarly, anyone experiencing other troubling symptoms — such as dizziness or changes in vision — should seek diagnosis and treatment. A doctor may be able to recommend a treatment that is safe for both the woman and the fetus. Headaches during pregnancy can be uncomfortable, but they are not usually a cause for concern.

Pregnancy causes a number of significant changes within the body, which may lead to symptoms such as headaches. However, it is important to find treatments that are safe for the fetus.

Secondary headaches that occur due to an underlying issue may be dangerous. Anyone who is uncertain about their symptoms or experiences troubling or severe symptoms should see a doctor for diagnosis and treatment. (Courtesy: MNT)

# NCRB report: How Kolkata has emerged as the safest city, especially for women

By: Samiya Raza

The National Crime Records Bureau recently released its annual report on crime in India for the year 2022 and Kolkata has emerged as the safest city in India for the third consecutive year. The city recorded the least number of cognizable offenses per lakh population among all the metropolises in India.

According to the NCRB's annual report for the year 2022, Kolkata reported 86.5 cases of cognizable offenses per lakh population, a remarkable feat that places it ahead of Pune (280.7 cases) and Hyderabad (299.2). The ruling All India Trinamool Congress hailed this as an achievement for West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

"We rejoice as Kolkata achieves this milestone once again! For the third consecutive time, according to NCRB data, the City of Joy proudly stands as the safest city in India. Under the able guidance of Smt @MamataOfficial and the constant vigilance of @KolkataPolice, crime rates have significantly plummeted. Beyond its richness in culture, food, music and art, Kolkata also nurtures a sense of security seldom found elsewhere." - Trinamool Congress posted on X.

However, the BJP, which is the main Opposition in the state said that the data is misleading.

Leader of Opposition, Suvendu Adhikari, claimed that the state gov-

ernment manipulated the data submitted to the NCRB.

In response, the Trinamool Congress accused Adhikari of questioning the credibility of the BJP-led central government's reports.

## Which city is safest?

Delving deeper into the NCRB report reveals a disturbing national trend - a significant rise in crimes against women. The nationwide data indicates a 4 percent increase in crimes against women in 2022 compared to the previous year.

City wise breakdown of Crime Rate (per one lakh Population)

- Delhi - 1,952.50
- Kochi - 1,358.20
- Indore - 1,251.80
- Jaipur - 1,202.80
- Surat - 1,206.10
- Patna - 1,045.10
- Ahmedabad - 847.7
- Nagpur - 767.3
- Lucknow - 656.9
- Kozhikode - 570.6

Delhi ranked highest in various categories of crimes against women, notably rape, where the city reported 1,204 cases, constituting nearly a third of the 3,635 cases reported in metropolitan cities. Jaipur followed with 497 cases, and Mumbai with 370.

Delhi, perennially grappling with this issue, recorded a staggering 14,158 cases, with about 186.9 crimes reported for every 1,00,000 women, maintaining its unenviable position as the most unsafe metropolitan city for women.

A total of 2,98,988 cases were registered in the national capital under the Indian Penal Code in 2022 against 2,89,045 in 2021, as per the annual crime report of the NCRB. (PTI)

The grim statistics further highlight that Delhi logged nearly 3 lakh criminal cases in 2022, marking a 3.3 percent increase from the preceding year. The city recorded three rape cases daily, underscoring the urgent need for focused interventions.

Furthermore, the capital recorded the highest number of dowry deaths, accounting for 129 out of the total 381 cases nationwide. Delhi was followed by Lucknow and Kanpur, each reporting 43 cases, and Jaipur with 33 cases.

Delhi was also on top on cases of assault against women and kidnapping. The incidence of crime rates against women has witnessed a 4% increase compared to previous years. In 2021, there were 428,278 recorded cases, which has risen to 445,256 cases in 2022. Another alarming trend are the crimes against children. A total of 1,62,449 cases were registered during 2022.

**Crimes against children** witnessed an 8.7 percent surge in 2022, with Maharashtra leading. Metropolitan cities like Delhi and Mumbai have highest records of crime against children under POCSO Act.

**Murder cases:** 173 in Bengaluru, 135 in Mumbai, 131 in Lucknow, and 101 in Chennai. (Courtesy: The Quint)

# Changing dynamics of womanhood and rise of 'toxic masculinity' in Bollywood

By: Ajay Amitabh Suman

Cinema has long been considered a mirror reflecting the evolving contours of society. The journey of Indian cinema has been a fascinating one, transitioning from religious and spiritual themes to patriotic narratives and, more recently, showcasing a surge in films venting anger against the socio-political landscape. However, a concerning trend has emerged in the past few years, as Bollywood witnesses the poor state of womanhood and an increasing glorification of masculinity.

**Evolution of Indian Cinema:** In the 1940s, Indian cinema predominantly revolved around religious and spiritual themes, offering a reflection of the cultural fabric of the time. As the decades progressed, a wave of patriotic fervor swept through Bollywood, with films showcasing the struggle for independence and celebrating the spirit of the nation. The late 1980s witnessed a shift towards movies expressing discontent with the prevailing socio-political system, offering a platform for societal critique.

**The Poor State of Womanhood:** However, recent years have seen a troubling regression in the portrayal of women in Bollywood. A surge in films containing abusive language and extreme depictions of women has cast a dark shadow on the industry. Songs and dialogues that reflect women in an extremely derogatory light have become alarmingly prevalent, raising questions about the industry's responsibility in shaping societal attitudes.

**The Glorification of Masculinity:** Simultaneously, there has been a noticeable trend in the glorification of masculinity in Bollywood. Muscle power and extreme violence are increasingly portrayed as synonymous with success, perpetuating a narrative that

reinforces traditional gender stereotypes. The rise of hyper-masculine protagonists often involves the marginalization and objectification of female characters, contributing to the overall degradation of womanhood on-screen.

**Impact on Society:** The question that arises is whether these cinematic portrayals merely reflect societal attitudes or contribute to shaping them. It is alarming to note that such films are not only gaining popularity but are also finding an audience among women. This shift prompts a critical examination of the evolving mindset of the country. Are these films influencing societal perceptions, or are they merely a reflection of existing norms?

**Changing Mindsets:** While it is tempting to attribute the changing landscape solely to the film industry, it is crucial to recognize that cinema both reflects and shapes societal attitudes. The popularity of movies that glorify masculinity and degrade womanhood suggests a deeper societal shift in perceptions of gender roles and power dynamics. It becomes imperative to question whether these cinematic representations are reinforcing regressive norms or challenging them.

**The Concluding Note:** The poor state of womanhood and the increasing trend of masculinity in Bollywood demand a nuanced analysis of their impact on society. As cinema continues to be a powerful medium with a far-reaching influence, it is crucial for filmmakers, audiences, and society at large to engage in a dialogue about the messages being conveyed.

Bollywood has the potential to play a transformative role in shaping positive societal attitudes, and a conscientious effort towards responsible storytelling can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable representation of gender on-screen and in society. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

# Getting married this Winter? Here are some hair & skincare tips for you

By: Shahnaz Husain

As the winter is knocking on the door, it is time to start preparing for the wedding nuptials. It's a day that would forever etch in your heart, a string of moments that you would hold dear for the rest of your life! Yes, the wedding day - the magical 24 hours that nudges your soul with love, pomp, and care towards a dream living!

Who doesn't want to look gorgeous at a party or a wedding? When it comes to a winter wedding, we generally assume that winter weddings are fuss free. No humidity so no frizzy hair, no sweaty makeup, no makeup melt-down during wedding functions. But the season brings along problems like flaky skin, cakey makeup, chapped lips, limp hair and pedicure running out too soon during marriage celebrations. Dry and patchy skin can be a nightmare when it comes to makeup application as everything you apply flakes off or creases.

Looking beautiful on the wedding day is not merely a matter of make-up and dress. It needs weeks of care. If a skin care programme is followed a few weeks before the wedding, it can really help. The skin type and the season should also be taken into consideration. For instance, in winter, even oily skins may feel dry, while dry skins need more moisturisation and nourishment with creams and oils.

For your daily facial care routine, cleanse your skin twice a day. It's not just the skin on your face that's prone to dryness in the

winter-your hands are often left vulnerable to the same environmental elements as your complexion. Same goes for the rest of your body!

Night time cleansing is more important, in order to remove pollutants and make up before bedtime. So, cleanse the skin daily at night and apply a layer of moisturizer before you sleep. You can also apply an all-night mask for your skin. For normal to dry skin, use a cleansing cream or gel. Or, take half a cup of cold milk and add five drops of any vegetable oil (til, olive or sunflower oil). Put this in a bottle and shake well. Cleanse the skin with it, using cotton wool.

Keep left-over mixture in the fridge. If the skin is oily, use a cleansing lotion or face wash for oily skins. Oily skins also need deep pore cleansing. Mix rice powder with curd and apply on the face once or twice a week. Rub gently with small circular movements and wash off with water. Ready-to-use scrubs are also easily available. In winter, an oily skin may be prone to blackheads. You can have "clean-up" at a beauty parlour and have blackheads extracted. One of the easiest ways to prevent dry hands is by adding a hand cream to your skin care routine.

An oily skin may also feel dry in winter, but when cream is applied, it can lead to pimples. So, mix one teaspoon pure glycerine with 100 ml rose water and keep in a bottle in the fridge. Use a little of this lotion to relieve dryness. It will soften the skin, without making it oily.



Aloe vera gel or honey may be applied on all skin types, to moisturise and soften the skin. Apply on the face and wash off with plain water after 20 minutes.

For all skin types, tone the skin daily with chilled rose water, using cotton wool pads. Wipe and stroke the skin with them. Then, pat briskly with the rosewater-soaked cotton wool pads. This adds a glow to the skin.

The daily nourishing of normal to dry skin can be done at night, with a nourishing cream. After cleansing, apply the cream and massage on the face with a few drops of water, with outward and slightly upward movements, for 2 minutes. Wipe off with moist cotton wool. For the face, mix a mask at home and use it two or three times a week. For normal to dry skin, mix two teaspoons wheat bran (choker) with one teaspoon each of almond meal (badaam), curd, honey and rose water.

For oily or combination skin,

mix three teaspoons oats with curd, honey and egg white or rose water. Mix everything together into a paste and apply on the face, avoiding the lips and area around the eyes. Wash it off after 20 minutes. After applying face mask, soak two cotton wool pads in rose water and use them as eye pads. Lie down and relax. This is extremely relaxing and refreshing and a great restorer of both body and mind. Rose water actually has a relaxing effect, helps to remove fatigue and brighten the eyes.

The skin around the eyes is thin and delicate. It acquires lines and wrinkles easily. Apply an under-eye cream wipe it off after 15 minutes, with moist cotton wool. Or, daily apply pure almond oil sparingly and massage lightly, using only the ring finger, for one minute under each eye. Massage in one direction only.

The skin on the lips is also thin and lacks oil producing glands. It

becomes dry and chaps easily. Even if you are using the moistest lipstick you cannot apply it on your lips without a coat of lip balm or petroleum jelly. For plump looking lips give them a base coat of lip balm. After cleansing, apply almond oil or almond cream on the lips daily and leave it on all night. Sun-protective lip balms are also useful.

Protect the skin from moisture loss during the day. Apply SPF rich sunscreen, before going out in the sun. Ultra violet rays are weaker in winter and you don't get tanned easily. But, it tends to cause wrinkles, premature ageing, dryness, and damage the skin. Most sunscreens have built-in moisturizers. Moisturizers are available in cream and liquid form. For extreme dryness, use a cream. A liquid moisturizer should also be used under make-up. Keep the skin well moisturised.

During winter, opt for water-resistant sunscreens free from fragrance and parabens. This practice will make you glow on your wedding day and even before after.

In winter, the skin of the body also needs nourishing with oils. In the olden days, "ubtan" was made at home for skin care. First the body was massaged with "til" oil. Then homemade "ubtan" was applied. This usually consisted of wheat bran (choker), gram flour (besan), yogurt (dahi) or cream of milk (malai) and a pinch of turmeric (haldi). All these were mixed together and applied on the face and body, before bathing. The "ubtan" was washed off after

half an hour, while bathing. It helped to clear the skin of dead cells, leaving it smooth and bright, with a translucent quality. Another ideal way for glowing skin on the body is to tie ingredients in a clean cloth, wet slightly and then rub the cloth bag on the skin while bathing. Mix powdered milk, ground almonds (badaam), rice powder and rose petals. The ingredients work on your skin, gently cleansing it and leaving it soft, smooth and vibrant. It also leave the body naturally perfumed and refreshed, feeling as smooth as silk.

In winter, the hair also needs to be nourished with oils. Heat pure coconut oil and apply on the hair. Then dip a towel in hot water, squeeze out the water and wrap the hot towel around the head, like a turban. Keep it on for 5 minutes. Repeat the hot towel wrap 3 or 4 times. After shampoo, apply a creamy conditioner, leave on for 2 minutes and wash off with plain water. Or, you can apply a leave-on conditioner or hair serum for shine and protection. Oil them every week and get a hair spa atleast once a month prior to your wedding. Add a little olive oil to whichever oil you apply to give it a little touch of moisture.

You can also give your hair a quick conditioning treatment before shampoo. Mix one teaspoon each of vinegar and almond oil with one egg. Beat them together well. Massage the mixture into the scalp. Leave on the mixture for half an hour and then wash your hair. If you do not wish to use egg, add more almond oil.

You must keep yourself hydrated by drinking 8-10 glass of water daily which will help flush out toxins, improves skin tone, healthy and glowing skin. You can add fruit juice, coconut water, watermelon, green tea and lassis in your daily routine. Make sure these do not contain too much sugar or sodium. Eating the right kinds of food will help your skin glow even in the winter months. Have a small box of dry fruits when you are travelling. Try to include regional and seasonal fruits, vegetables in your diet on a daily basis.

Snacking on naturally hydrating food will keep your body hydrated. Opt for a diet that is rich in Omega 3 essential fatty acids. All brides go through some kind of stress. Do not stress. It can ruin all your winter skincare efforts. To deal with this kind of mental stress, it is essential to learn to relax. It has been proved that physical exercise actually helps the body to cope with stress. A few weeks before the wedding, start taking a little exercise, like going for a walk.

In fact, walking is good for both body and mind. Yoga and meditation are also helpful, in terms of calming the mind and inducing relaxation. You must ensure Eight hours sleep daily to rejuvenate your skin. If you sleep late and aren't getting enough rest, take mini naps between the days. Even a couple of 30 minute naps through the day will help you and your skin! (The author in International reputed beauty expert and is popularly called as herbal queen of India)



The attack happened near the crucial Bab el-Mandeb Strait separating East Africa from the Arabian Peninsula

# A missile strikes Norwegian-flagged tanker off Yemen in an apparent expansion of rebel attacks

**DUBAI, Dec 12:** A missile fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels slammed into a Norwegian-flagged tanker in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen near a key maritime chokepoint, the rebels and authorities said on Tuesday.

The assault on the oil and chemical tanker Strinda expands a campaign by the Iranian-backed rebels targeting ships close to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait into apparently now striking those that have no clear ties to Israel. That potentially imperils cargo and energy shipments coming through the Suez Canal and further widens the international impact of the Israel-Hamas war now raging in the Gaza Strip.

Houthi military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree issued a video statement saying the rebels only fired on the vessel when it "rejected all warning calls."

The U.S. military's Central Command issued a statement Tuesday saying an anti-ship cruise missile "launched from a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen" hit the Strinda.

"There were no U.S. ships in the vicinity at the time of the attack, but the USS Mason responded... and is currently rendering assistance,"

Central Command said. The Mason is an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer that has been involved in several of the recent incidents off Yemen.

The private intelligence firms Ambrey and Dryad Global had earlier confirmed the attack happened near the crucial Bab el-Mandeb Strait separating East Africa from the Arabian Peninsula.

Geir Belsnes, the CEO of the Strinda's operator, J. Ludwig Mowinckels Rederi, also confirmed the attack took place.

"All crew members are unhurt and safe," Belsnes said. "The vessel is now proceeding to a safe port."

The Strinda was coming from Malaysia and was bound for the Suez Canal and then on to Italy with a cargo of palm oil, Belsnes said. Saree alleged without offering any evidence that the ship was bound for Israel. The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which provides warnings to sailors in the Middle East, earlier reported a fire aboard an unidentified vessel off Mokha, Yemen, with all the crew aboard being safe. The coordinates of that fire correspond to the last known location of the Strinda based off satellite tracking

data analyzed by The Associated Press.

The Houthis have carried out a series of attacks on vessels in the Red Sea and also launched drones and missiles targeting Israel. In recent

days, they have threatened to attack any vessel they believe is either going to or coming from Israel, though there was no immediate apparent link between the Strinda and Israel.

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, said over the weekend that Israel has called on its Western allies to address the threats from Yemen and would give them "some time" to organize a response. But he said if the threats persist, "we will act to remove this blockade."

Analysts suggest the Houthis hope to shore up waning popular support after years of civil war in Yemen between it and Saudi-backed

forces.

France and the United States have stopped short of saying their ships were targeted in rebel attacks, but have said Houthi drones have headed toward their ships and were

shot down in self-defense. Washington so far has declined to directly respond to the attacks, as has Israel, whose military

continues to describe the ships as not having links to their country.

Global shipping has increasingly been targeted as the Israel-Hamas war threatens to become a wider regional conflict — even during a brief pause in fighting during which Hamas exchanged hostages for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. The collapse of the truce and the resumption of a punishing Israeli ground offensive and airstrikes on Gaza have raised the risk of more sea attacks.



## Suicide bomber attacks police station in northwest Pak, killing 6 officers and wounding 25

**PESHAWAR, Dec 12:** A suicide bomber detonated his explosive-laden vehicle at a police station's main gate in northwest Pakistan on early Tuesday, killing at least six officers and wounding 25 others, officials said. Part of the building collapsed upon impact, local police officer Kamal Khan said.

Some militants also opened fire and a shootout ensued for hours between them and security forces before three attackers were gunned down, he said. Several officers were transferred to hospital in critical condition.

The attack happened in Dera Ismail Khan, a city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, Khan said. The province is a former stronghold of the militant Pakistani Taliban group, also known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP.

The newly formed militant group Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan, or TJP — believed to be an offshoot of the TTP — claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement, saying it targeted officers who were at the police station.

A larger number of security forces from across the country

have had a constant presence at the Daraband police station where they were conducting intelligence-based operations against militants in the area with help from local police, said Khan.

There was no immediate comment from the military or government.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has witnessed a rise in violence with several deadly attacks. In January, at least 101 people were killed when a suicide bomber targeted a mosque in Peshawar. The Pakistani Taliban have stepped up attacks on security forces since 2022. Authorities say the insurgents have become emboldened while living openly in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of that country in 2021.

The TTP, though a separate group, is closely allied with the Afghan Taliban.

Dera Ismail Khan is located near South Waziristan, a former sanctuary for militants. Pakistan's army carried out multiple operations against militants there after some attacked an army-run school, killing more than 150 people, mostly school children, in 2014. (AP)

## Xi visits Vietnam weeks after it strengthened ties with the US and Japan

**BANGKOK, Dec 12:** Chinese leader Xi Jinping arrived in Vietnam on Tuesday seeking to further deepen ties with the Southeast Asian nation, weeks after it elevated its diplomatic relations with Western-aligned countries.

In his first visit since 2017, Xi will meet with Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, President Vo Van Thuong and Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Vietnam's Foreign Ministry said.

"This reflects Beijing's concerns about Hanoi's advances with the West," said Nguyen Khac Giang, a visiting fellow with the ISEAS—Yusuf Ishak Institute in Singapore. "Concerns that Vietnam may join an anti-China alliance and gang up against China."

The Chinese leader received a red carpet welcome as Pham greeted him on the tarmac. Dozens of Chinese and Vietnamese nationals gathered at the airport, waving Chinese and Vietnamese flags to welcome Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, who accompanied him on the visit. Xi's



visit marks 15 years of China being a "comprehensive strategic partner" of Vietnam, the highest official designation for a diplomatic relationship. Vietnam plays an increasingly important strategic role in security and the economy in Southeast Asia. Ideologically, Vietnam is closer to Beijing. It is run by a Communist Party with strong ties to China. But in recent months, Vietnam has signalled closer ties with Western countries.

In September, US President Joe Biden visited Vietnam to mark the US being elevated to the same diplomatic status as China. Biden asserted that the stronger ties were not about countering China, though US diplomacy across Asia and the Pacific has been focused

on improving defense ties with countries to do just that. In November, Japan and Vietnam boosted their economic and security ties, citing a "free and open Indo-Pacific," with Japan being given the same diplomatic status as China and the US. Japan has been rapidly developing closer ties with Vietnam and is its third-largest foreign investor.

Experts say Vietnam is hedging against its large neighbour and its geographical claims. "You can see that they're flexible and balancing big powers," said Nguyen Thanh Trung, a professor of Vietnamese studies at Fulbright University Vietnam. Vietnam is one of several countries to clash with China in the disputed South China Sea, particularly on two archipelagos, the Spratlys and the Paracel Islands. It has faced off with China's coast guard in the past in the disputed waters. Vietnam usually does not publicise the confrontations. In October, Xi told the Vietnamese president that amid "changing international landscapes" the two nations should continue to develop their "traditional friendship". (AP)

## Pakistan SC resumes hearing of long-pending case against Zulfikar Bhutto's death sentence

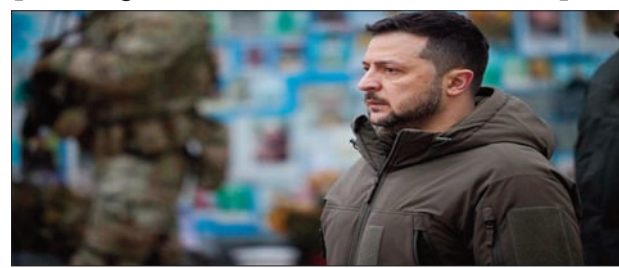
**ISLAMABAD, Dec 12:** Pakistan's Supreme Court on Tuesday resumed hearing a long-pending presidential reference seeking to revisit the 1979 controversial death penalty given to former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. A nine-member larger bench of the apex court, headed by chief justice Qazi Faez Isa, took up the case for hearing.

Bhutto was hanged to death in 1979 after he was convicted for abetment in a murder case. The execution was carried after a seven-member Supreme Court upheld the conviction, which many believed was done under coercion exercised by then military dictator Gen Ziaul Haq who had toppled Bhutto's government in 1977.

Former President Asif Ali Zardari on April 2, 2011 had sent a formal request to the court for an opinion on revisiting the death sentence given to Bhutto under the Supreme Court's advisory jurisdiction.

The case was last heard by an 11-judge panel, headed by then chief justice Ifikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, in Jan 2012. The case proceedings are being broadcast live on the request of Bhutto's grandson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. (PTI)

## Zelenskyy will arrive on Capitol Hill to grim mood as Biden's aid package for Ukraine risks collapse



**WASHINGTON, Dec 12:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will arrive on Capitol Hill to a darker mood than when he swooped in last winter for a hero's welcome, as the Russian invasion is grinding into a third year and US funding hangs in balance.

Zelenskyy's visit on Tuesday comes as President Joe Biden's request for an additional USD 110 billion US aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other national security needs is at serious risk of collapse in Congress.

Republicans are insisting on strict US-Mexico border security changes that Democrats decry as draconian in exchange for the overseas aid.

"It is maddening," said Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., a close ally of Biden, of the stalemate. "A very bad message to the world, to the Ukrainian people." The White House said the time was right for Zelenskyy's trip to Washington as Biden pushes lawmakers to approve the aid package before the year-end holidays. But the mood turned grim at the Capitol on the eve of his arrival.

Zelenskyy will meet privately with senators and new House Speaker Mike Johnson, then talk with Biden at the White House as the once robust bipartisan support for Ukraine was slipping further out of reach.

Ahead of Zelenskyy's high-stakes meetings, the White House late Monday pointed to newly declassified intelligence that shows Ukraine has inflicted heavy losses on Russia

in recent fighting along the Avdiivka-Novopavlivka axis — including 13,000 casualties and over 220 combat vehicle losses. The Ukrainian holdout in the country's partly-occupied east has been the centre of some of the fiercest fighting in recent weeks.

US intelligence officials have determined that the Russians think if they can achieve a military deadlock through the winter it will drain Western support for Ukraine and ultimately give Russia the advantage, despite the fact that Russians have sustained heavy losses and have been slowed by persistent shortages of trained personnel, munitions, and equipment.

"Russia is determined to press forward with its offensive despite its losses. It is more critical now than ever that we maintain our support for Ukraine so they can continue to hold the line and regain their territory," said White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson. She added that Russian President Vladimir Putin "is clearly watching what happens in Congress — and we need Congress to act this month to support Ukraine in its time of need."

Republicans in Congress, fuelled by Johnson's far-right flank in the House, have taken on an increasingly isolationist stance in US foreign policy, demanding changes to American border and immigration policies in exchange for any funds to battle Putin's war in Ukraine. (AP)

## Hong Kong leader praises election turnout as voter numbers hit record low

**HONG KONG, Dec 12:** Hong Kong leader John Lee on Tuesday praised the 27.5 per cent voter turnout in the city's weekend election, a record low since the territory returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Sunday's district council election was the first held under new rules introduced under Beijing's direction that effectively shut out all pro-democracy candidates.

"The turnout of 1.2 million voters has indicated that they supported the election, they supported the principles," Lee said at a news conference.

"It is important that we focus our attention on the outcome of the election, and the outcome will mean a constructive district council, rather than what used to be a destructive one," he said. Sunday's turnout was significantly less than the record 71.2 per cent of Hong Kong's 4.3 million registered voters who participated in the last election, held at the height of anti-government protests in 2019, which the pro-democracy camp won by a landslide.

Lee said there was resistance to Sunday's election from prospective candidates who were rejected under the new rules for being not qualified or lacking the principles of "patriots" administering Hong Kong.

"There are still some people who somehow are still immersed in the wrong idea of trying to make the district council a political platform for their own political means, achieving their own gains rather than the district's gain," he said. The district councils, which primarily handle municipal matters such as organising construction projects and public facilities, were Hong Kong's last major political bodies mostly chosen by the public.

But under the new electoral rules introduced under a Beijing order that only "patriots" should administer the city, candidates must secure endorsements from at least nine members of government-appointed committees that are mostly packed with Beijing loyalists, making it virtually impossible for any pro-democracy candidates to run.

An amendment passed in July also slashed the proportion of directly elected seats from about 90 per cent to about 20 per cent.

"The de facto boycott indicates low public acceptance of the new electoral arrangement and its democratic representativeness," Dominic Chiu, senior analyst at research firm Eurasia Group, wrote in a note.

Chiu said the low turnout represents a silent protest against the shrinking of civil liberties in the city following Beijing's imposition of a tough national security law that makes it difficult to express opposition. (AP)

## Donald Tusk becomes Poland's prime minister with the mission of improving European Union ties

**WARSAW, Dec 12:** Donald Tusk, a leader of a centrist party, returned as Poland's prime minister for the first time in nearly a decade after a vote in parliament on Monday, paving the way for a new pro-European Union government following eight years of stormy national conservative rule.

Tusk, a former EU leader who served as European Council president from 2014-2019 and has strong connections in Brussels, is expected to improve Warsaw's standing in the bloc's capital. He was Poland's prime minister from 2007-2014.

Tusk's ascension to power came nearly two months after an election which was won by a coalition of parties ranging from left-wing to moderate conservative.

The parties ran on separate tickets, but promised to work together under Tusk's leadership to restore democratic standards and improve ties with allies.

The change of power is felt as hugely consequential for the 38 million citizens of the Central European nation, where collective anger against the Law and Justice party produced a record high turnout to replace a government many believed was eroding democratic norms.

Law and Justice, which took office in 2015, increased its power over courts and judicial bodies, drawing accusations from

the EU and others that it was eroding judicial independence. It also turned taxpayer funded public media into a party mouthpiece. The vote was 248-201 in support of Tusk in the 460-seat lower house of parliament, the Sejm, with no abstentions.

"Thank you Poland, this is truly a wonderful day," Tusk said in a short speech. "Not only for me, but for all those who throughout these many years deeply believed... that things would get better."

Tusk is scheduled on Tuesday to give a more substantial speech to parliament, present his Cabi-

net and face a vote of confidence for his new government. He should then be sworn in by President Andrzej Duda, a step scheduled for Wednesday morning.

The election of Tusk comes after the former government of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki lost a confidence vote in parliament earlier in the day. The votes marked the end of eight tumultuous years in which Law and Justice ruled the country with the support of many Poles — but at bitter odds with liberal Poles as well as the 27-nation EU and other Western allies. (AP)



They were honoured at a special ceremony held in the UN Headquarters on Monday

## Former Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, three veteran diplomats honoured with 2023 Diwali 'Power of One' Awards at UN

**UNITED NATIONS, Dec 12:** Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and three veteran diplomats were here honoured with the annual 'Diwali Power of One Awards', hailed as the 'Oscars of diplomacy', for their selfless efforts to "help form a more perfect, peaceful, and secure world for all".

The former UN chief was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2023 Diwali Stamp -- The Power of One Award ceremony organised by the Diwali Foundation USA. The other awardees for the year 2023 are former permanent representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the UN Ambassador Mirsada Colakovic, former permanent

representative of South Korea to the UN Ambassador Kim Sook and 72nd UN General Assembly president and EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue Miroslav Lajcak.

They were honoured at a special ceremony held in the UN Headquarters on Monday. Ban commended the work and "forward-thinking vision" of the Diwali Foundation USA "for advancing vital light in a world of increasing darkness".

Ban said the world of today "seems fractured like never before" as he cited the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis and regional conflicts, particularly "regional crisis as we see today in the Middle East and Ukraine".



"But it is exactly at times such as these that the work of the United Nations is indispensable. The United Nations and its pursuit of peace, human rights and sustainable development exemplifies the values and principles that we should all espouse to replicate," he said. Ban was the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations, serving two terms as the world's top diplomat from January 2007

to December 2016. He said that as the world moves into 2024 and beyond, "we share a common destiny illuminated by peace, sustainability and prosperity. Let us work together and expand our unified efforts to realise this shared destiny for all. This is your political responsibility and for me, my moral responsibility as a former Secretary General" and as an awardee of the Power of One

honour.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, in her address to the event attended by UN diplomats, envoys, civil society members and policy experts, said that Diwali is a celebration that holds a very special place in the hearts of over a billion Indians across the globe.

Diwali "is more than just a festival. It is a sentiment that embodies the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance and hope over despair", she said. Kamboj said "as we lit the lamps of Diwali, let us remember that every small light, no matter how small, can make a significant difference in dispelling the

shadows". Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mohan Pieris said "Deepawali has become truly a secular festival in the world, since its message is not exclusively restricted to any religious creed. "This festival has united the global community with the central message that we need more than ever the humanistic ideals to engage the inglorious wars, which are bleeding the innocence of humanity," he said. Pieris underscored that for the world to have peace, it is important that the whole world must be united to save the higher ideals of humanity, which have evolved since the millennium in various religious traditions. (PTI)



# Arunachal govt working to develop scripts of various indigenous languages: CM Khandu

*'The Arunachal Pradesh government is committed to preserving the cultures and languages of all the indigenous communities of the state'*

**ITANAGAR, Dec 12:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu said his government is working with community-based organisations to develop scripts of various indigenous languages of the state so that children are taught their mother tongues and they always remain connected to their roots. He urged the youths of Monpa and Khampti communities, who have their own scripts, to learn those.

"The Arunachal Pradesh government is committed to preserving the cultures and languages of all the indigenous communities of the state," he said, while inaugurating Thegtse Sangye Choe Long Monastery at Balem, a small hamlet at the tri-junction of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Bhutan in West Kameng district, during the annual Shar Amartala Torgya Festival on Monday.

The religious festival, which is being held under the patronage and blessings of Padma Shri the 14th Thegtse Rinpoche, was attended by devotees from Arunachal Pradesh and neighbouring Bhutan.

The CM said Monpas and Khamptis, both Buddhist communities of Mahayana and Hinayana sects respectively, have their own scripts.



While Monpas live in Tawang and West Kameng districts in western Arunachal Pradesh, Khamptis reside in Namsai district in eastern part of the state adjoining Upper Assam.

"Khamptis and Monpas are lucky to have their own scripts, which are now being taught in schools. We are working with community-based organisations to develop scripts, if possible, for the remaining communities or use the Roman script to teach indigenous languages to our children so that they always remain connected to our roots," he said.

Khandu, a Monpa himself, said teachers are being recruited to teach Bhoti script to Monpas in schools in the Mon region, comprising Tawang and West Kameng districts.

He thanked all Monpa MLAs, and Union minister Kiren Rijiju for contributions towards construction of the monastery.

"We, the Mon people, have been following Buddhism for centuries. It is our duty to preserve our culture and maintain indigenous identity," he said.

He said Balem, being the gateway to the western part of the state, has a huge potential for the growth of tourism.

"Balem's growth had been affected due to Bodo insurgency in adjoining Assam. But now, the insurgency has come to an end due to efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, resulting in peace along our inter-state boundary with Assam," Khandu said.

Khandu said that with the support of the central government, efforts are underway to resolve the inter-state boundary dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

"We have proposed to develop all entry points to our state, including Balem and Bhalukpong in West Kameng district, with state-of-art infrastructure and facilities to welcome tourists," he said. (PTI)

## Common people not law enforcers, can't grill others on suspicion: Manipur CM

**IMPHAL, Dec 12:** Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Tuesday said that common people should not take the role of law enforcers and excessively question those whom they deem suspicious in the restive northeastern state.

Asking them not to see enemies everywhere, the chief minister said one should not harass and assault people unreasonably.

There were allegations from various quarters that volunteers guarding different areas interrogate people whom they think are suspicious and even assault them.

The chief minister also announced a scheme under which a certain category of women will receive ₹ 500 per month from the government.

"It's understandable for the people to be suspicious due to the prevailing situation and it's okay to ask some basic questions. However, acts that amount to humiliation cannot be tolerated," Singh said while speaking at a function here.

A common person cannot don the hat of a law enforcer and question others excessively or assault them, he said.

"Let us know our friends and enemies. Don't see enemies everywhere. Don't harass and assault people unreasonably... Not everyone is the enemy. It's only those outsiders who are armed with sophisticated weapons," the chief minister said.

Singh also expressed disappointment with a recent incident in which two women from Laimanai area in Thoubal district were allegedly assaulted by some people at a place in Bishnupur district.

"Why were the two women assaulted without reason? The matter was known quickly and was amicably settled. It could have blown out of proportion," he said.

Singh also appealed to the people not to take laws into their own hands.

"Whenever there is seizure of drugs or apprehension of robbery, please do not take laws into your hands as it will create tension. Rather, hand them (the accused) over to the police," the chief minister said.



Singh also announced a scheme during the function held to commemorate 'Nupi Lan', Manipuri women's demonstrations against the British during the colonial era.

"The new scheme is applicable to women who are 40 years old and above, have no source of income and are not covered by another scheme. Under the scheme, the beneficiaries will receive ₹ 500 per month," he said.

"The scheme aims to empower women, fostering economic independence and contributing to their overall well-being. The scheme is designed to benefit approximately 4 lakh women in Manipur who are above the age of 40 years," Singh said later in a post on X.

More than 180 people were killed since the violence erupted on May 3 after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts. (PTI)

## Ganesan for documenting and exploring the diverse food choices of NE

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Dec 12:** Nagaland Governor La Ganesan urged the Central Agricultural University (CAU) Imphal to take a leadership role in documenting and exploring the diverse food choices and horticultural bio-wealth of the Northeast region. He also appealed to the university to prepare a comprehensive food atlas focusing on alternative food crops in the northeastern states.

Ganesan said this while addressing the CAU Regional Agri Fair 2023-24 in North East India on the theme 'Connecting Agripreneurs to Circular Economy' as the chief guest at the state agri-expo site at 4th Mile in Chumoukedima on Tuesday.

The fair was organised by CAU Imphal and sponsored by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

He highlighted the traditional organic methods prevalent in northeastern states, underscoring the global shift towards quality agricultural output. Ganesan commended CAU Imphal for its efforts in training students and providing global exposure opportunities. He exhorted the farmers to interact with these young minds, emphasising the wealth of knowledge they possess.

He also said Nagaland has significant potential for an

agricultural revolution.

Deputy chief minister T R Zeliang, who was the guest of honour, highlighted the fair's significance in promoting scientific and sustainable agricultural practices in Nagaland. He said the NE region has vast potential to become a major producer and exporter of agricultural products, given special attention by the government of India.

Zeliang also stressed the importance of vocational education for youth to promote self-employability and entrepreneurial skills. He urged the farmers to embrace innovative and scientific ideas for agricultural improvement and expressed gratitude to the CAU for organising the event.

Adviser to the agriculture department, Mathung Yanthan, spoke on the transformative power of agripreneurs in the region's agricultural landscape. He pointed out the growing demand for organic products and urged agripreneurs to seize the opportunity to develop specific organic crops.

Pointing out the challenges such as lack of infrastructure, processing facilities, and road connectivity in the region, he called for addressing these issues to boost the regional economy. CAU Imphal vice chancellor Dr. Anupam Mishra delivered the keynote address at the event.

## Jawan awarded life term for killing two officers

**AGARTALA, Dec 12:** A court in Tripura's Sepahijala district on Tuesday sentenced a jawan of Tripura State Rifles (TSR), an armed force of the state, to life term for killing two of his officers two years ago.

Additional district and sessions judge Debashis Kar also slapped a fine of Rs 50,000 on the convict Sukanta Das. In default, he would have to undergo imprisonment for one more year.

Rifleman Sukanta Das, posted at Konaban Gas Collecting Station (GCS) in Sepahijala district, turned violent on December 4, 2021, and opened fire at two officers - Subedar Marka Singh Jamatia and Nayak Subedar Kiran Kumar Jamatia - killing them on the spot.

After killing the two, he drove to Madhupur police station with his rifle and surrendered. The police investigated the case based on a complaint filed by TSR Commandant Rangadul Debbarma.

TSR was raised on the pattern of the central armed police forces in the 1980s in view of the growing insurgency at that time. (PTI)

## IED attack on NH 102 averted



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** On Tuesday, a significant improvised explosive device (IED) attack was prevented on National Highway 102 near Bongyang to Sinam village in Manipur's Tengnoupal district, which borders Myanmar on the south.

An alert road opening party of the Assam Rifles saw a plastic bag holding three coils of wire, around thirty metres in length and bright red in colour, and 21 high-powered IEDs close Bongyang to Sinam hamlet, according to the security

forces. These IEDs were placed by the terrorists on the national highway that runs from Imphal to Moreh, the final border town between India and Myanmar in the Manipur region.

There had been a lot of military and civilian vehicles that traversed the area where the device was positioned. A squad of bomb specialists from the state and central forces hastened to the scene as soon as word spread that the explosives had been successfully removed. Sources further stated that the discovered things would thereafter be turned over to the closest police station for additional inquiry and possible legal action.

Notably, in order to bring peace back to this war-torn region, the Indian Army and state forces are still waging campaigns against militants in Manipur, carrying out operations to locate and destroy them.

## SC verdict upholding abrogation of Article 370 beacon of hope for promising future: Arunachal CM

**ITANAGAR, Dec 12:** The Supreme Court's verdict upholding the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution will serve as a beacon of hope for building a promising future, Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu has said.

The apex court on Monday upheld the government's decision to abrogate Article 370, which bestowed a special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, and said steps should be taken to conduct the election to the Union Territory's Assembly by September 30 next year.

"I heartily welcome Supreme Court's verdict on abrogation of Article 370. The historic decision to abrogate Article 370 on August 5, 2019, under the dynamic leadership of Hon PM Shri @narendramodi Ji, has paved the way for peace and development in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. (PTI)

The region has witnessed a drastic decline in militancy and a new wave of positivity since 2019," Khandu said on X.

"There is now a new era of growth & opportunities in the region, with the rights of resilient people being protected. This judgment will serve as a beacon of hope for building a promising future for those who suffered due to Article 370. Let us join hands to build #NayaJammuKashmir," he added.

The Supreme Court directed that statehood to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir be restored at the earliest.

It also upheld the validity of the decision to carve out the Union Territory of Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019. On that day, the government abrogated the provisions of Article 370 and bifurcated the state into the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. (PTI)

## Dalai Lama calls for embracing diversity, secular thoughts to foster tolerance

**GANGTOK, Dec 12:** Tibetan spiritual guru the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, on Tuesday imparted Buddhist religious teachings to around 30,000 devotees at Gangtok's Palzor stadium, calling to embrace diversity and secular thoughts to foster tolerance among people.

The Dalai Lama is on a four-day visit to the Himalayan state after a gap of 10 years.

The 87-year-old Buddhist monk started his sermon by emphasising inner peace and happiness, promoting dialogue among different faiths, and addressing global issues through a compassionate lens.

"All religions are the same," he said, adding that all faiths teach compassion and non-violence to the believers.

"Let us all embrace diversity and secular thoughts to foster better understanding, tolerance, and shared values among all people. By upholding these ideals, societies can strive for inclusivity, harmony, and collective well-being of all people," the Tibetan spiritual guru said. All major traditions preach love and kindness although there may be different



methods and philosophies, he said. He recited a prayer, invoking Avalokiteshvara, for those who lost their lives in the recent floods in Sikkim and for the peace and happiness of the people of the region.

"Our religion teaches us to even forgive the perpetrators of atrocities on us," the 14th Dalai Lama said while delivering the teaching on Gyalsey Thokme Sangpo's 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva ('Laklen Sodunma') and the ceremony of generation of Bodhicitta ('Semkye').

The 37 Practices of Bodhisattva ('Laklen Sodunma') is

an ancient text written in the 14th Century BCE by Tokme Sangpo, a Buddhist monk and an exponent of scripture and reasoning, who was born in Puljung, south-west of the Sakya monastery in Tibet.

It was composed by a monk in a cave in 'Ngulchu Rinchen' for the benefit of all sentient beings as a guideline for their day-to-day behaviour to achieve Bodhisattva, an enlightened being on his or her way to attain full Buddhahood.

It serves as a practical guide for those people seeking to travel on the path of enlighten-

ment.

The Dalai Lama said there is no better way to create merit, purify misdeeds or bring benefit to others than following the path of Bodhisattva.

"By examining the status of one's mind with continuous mindfulness and alertness, one can bring about the good in other," he said, adding that this is the practice of all Bodhisattvas.

"If you cultivate Bodhicitta on a daily basis, it will yield more benefits to yourself," the Dalai Lama said.

The religious teachings by the Dalai Lama were followed by the prayers for his long and a healthy life, with the performing of a ceremony by representatives of the Sikkim government and the Tibetan community of the state.

Governor Lakshman Acharya and chief minister Prem Singh Tamang led the ceremony, praying for a long and healthy life to the Dalai Lama. A colourful dance was performed by the troupes of the Tibetan and Sikkimese communities in the honour of the Dalai Lama.

The Tibetan spiritual guru also virtually laid the foundation of the Karmapa Park project at

Rumtek, where a 52-feet copper statue of the 16th Karmapa will be installed at the cost of ₹ 70 crore by 2026, and the Gyalwa Lhasun Chenpo Statue Project at Simik in east Sikkim.

In his address, the CM extended a warm welcome to the Dalai Lama and said his divide words and blessings will serve as the guiding light for the Himalayan state. The CM also offered a 'khada' (ceremonial stole) to the Dalai Lama as a mark of respect. The Dalai Lama is scheduled to stage a state lunch hosted in his honour by the CM at Samman Bhawan on Wednesday.

He will leave Sikkim for Siliguri on Thursday, where he is scheduled to impart 'Semkye' teachings at Sed-Gued monastery in Salugara area. Elaborate security and traffic arrangements were made in and around the state capital for the visit of the Dalai Lama.

Around 30,000 people from across the world, including dignitaries, officers, monks and people from all walks of life started making a beeline to the stadium since early in the morning in biting cold. (PTI)

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### ADMISSION INTO THE SHORT TERM COURSES INTRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH M/S TATA TECHNOLOGIES LIMITED AT SONITPUR POLYTECHNIC AND NALBARI POLYTECHNIC FOR THE SESSION 2023-24.

Applications are invited from permanent residents of Assam for admission into Short Term Courses introduced in association with M/s Tata Technologies Limited at Sonitpur Polytechnic, and Nalbari Polytechnic for the Admission Session 2023-24. The age of candidates for admission must not be below 14 years on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Candidates may submit the duly filled up application form for registration and for verification of their all-original documents, certificates etc. from 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2023 at Sonitpur Polytechnic and Nalbari Polytechnic. There will be no accommodation provided by the Polytechnics for the short term course.

Contact details:

Sl.No	Name of training center	Email id
1	Sonitpur Polytechnic	sonitpurpolytechnic@gmail.com
2	Nalbari Polytechnic	nalbaripolytechnic@gmail.com

The National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVT) approved Short Term Courses introduced in association with Tata Technologies Limited:

- Junior Robot Operator and Programmer - Material Handling
- Junior Robot Operator and Programmer - Arc Welding
- Junior CAM Programmer CNC LATHE
- Junior CAM Programmer (CNC Milling-Turn Mill)

The students of the Short Term course will be assessed by the Sector Skill Council and on successful completion will be awarded Certificates by Skill India Digital, which can be downloaded from Skill India Digital Platform.

Education Qualification: Passed 10<sup>th</sup> class examination and above

Duration: 3 months

Admission Fees:

Tuition fees:	Rs.1000/- (for 3 months)
Caution money(refundable) :	Rs. 500/- (Refundable)
Registration fees :	Rs. 100/-
Assessment Fees:	Rs. 800/-
Workshop maintenance:	Rs. 250/-
Total	Rs. 2650/-

Tentative Schedule for Admission:

Sl. No.	Event	Date
1	Submission of forms by the candidate at the Polytechnics where applied and verification of all original documents	20/12/2023
2	Publication of provisional selected list on the basis of the documents submitted by the candidates	22/12/2023
3	Admission of the candidate	22/12/2023
4	Class Start date	03/01/2024

Sd/-  
Director of Technical Education  
Assam, Kahilipara-19

### APPLICATION FORM

(To be submitted on scheduled date & time in the Polytechnic where admission is sought)

- Name of the Polytechnic where admission is sought:
- Name of Short Term Course where admission is sought as per choice:

Choice 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Choice 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Choice 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Choice 4 \_\_\_\_\_

- Name of candidate:
- Father's name:
- Mother's name:
- Date of birth of the candidate:
- Gender (male/female):
- Category (Gen/SC/STP/STH/OBC/MOBC/TGL/EX TGL)/PH/EWS:
- Marks obtained in HSLC or equivalent examination:
- Total marks in HSLC or equivalent examination
- Percentage of marks obtained in HSLC or equivalent examination:
- To be filled by candidate

Submitted on Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Place: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a candidate willing to take part in spot admission in the Short Term Course and Polytechnic mentioned above and the particulars stated above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. In case of any false statement I am liable to any action as the Director of Technical Education, Assam may deem fit and proper.

For office use: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of candidate \_\_\_\_\_  
Received on date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Janasanyog /D/14713/23/13-Dec-23



# Vishnu Deo Sai to take oath as Chhattisgarh CM today

*Chhattisgarh cabinet to have maximum of 13 ministers including CM*

**RAIPUR, Dec 12:** The BJP will ensure the swearing-in ceremony of the new Chhattisgarh cabinet under Vishnu Deo Sai on Wednesday will be a 'historic' event which will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah, BJP leaders and chief ministers, state chief Arun Sao said.

"Like the historic victory of BJP in the elections, the swearing-in ceremony of Sai and the council of minister will also be historic," he told reporters on Tuesday.

The BJP on Sunday picked tribal leader Sai (59), a former Union minister who had also served as Chhattisgarh BJP chief, as the new chief minister.

Amid speculations over who will be inducted in the new cabinet and whether the state will get two deputy CMs, Sao said, "The exact number of leaders who will take oath will be known to everyone on time". Preparations are going on in full swing at Science College ground in Raipur, where the swearing-in ceremony will be held at 2 PM. More than 50,000 people are expected to attend the function.

"PM Narendra Modi ji, BJP president JP Nadda, home minister Amit Shah, chief ministers of other states, Union ministers, senior BJP leaders from other states, eminent personalities, and intellectuals will attend the ceremony," Sao said.

BJP workers and common people will be also present in large numbers, he said, adding that all the political parties in the state, including the opposition (Congress), have been invited for the event.

Speaking about the preparations, an official said about 1,000 police



personnel have been deployed for security arrangements. Intensive checks are being conducted at intersections, bus stands, railway stations, airports etc. in Raipur city, he said. He said three separate stages are being built at the Science Ground for the programme.

"The main oath-taking ceremony will take place on the first stage. The middle one is reserved for VIPs, while the third platform is for the newly-elected MLAs," the official said.

Separate sectors are being created at the venue for seating arrangements for special guests, media persons, and common people. LED lights are being fixed so that the event will be visible till the farther end of the ground. Huge screens are also being installed, the official added.

Meanwhile, speculations going on in state political circles suggested that the new council of ministers may be a mix of fresh faces and old-timers.

As per the norm, the Chhattis-

garh cabinet can have a maximum of 13 ministers including the chief minister.

"Several fresh faces were elected in recent elections from the BJP sparking off speculations that the old-timers may find it tough to secure a cabinet berth," said political expert R Krishna Das.

The BJP, which returned to power in Chhattisgarh after five years, will also have to keep social engineering in mind while picking ministers as it had done in the past, he said, adding that women may get a greater representation in the new cabinet.

Speculations are also rife that the cabinet will have two deputy CMs—one each from OBC and the general category.

Sao, who hails from the influential Sahu (Teli) OBC community, is said to be in the reckoning for the deputy CM's post.

The lawyer-turned-politician, Sao, has steered clear of controversies and is seen as a neutral leader who doesn't belong to any camp in

the state BJP unit.

He won the Lormi assembly seat by 45,891 votes against his nearest Congress rival Thaneshwar Sahu in the recent elections.

Another potential candidate for the deputy CM's post is state BJP general secretary Vijay Sharma who trounced influential Congress leader and outgoing minister Mohammad Akbar in the Kawardha constituency by 39,592 votes.

The names of Brijmohan Agrawal and Amar Agrawal (both from the general category), Dharamlal Kaushik and Ajay Chandrakar (OBC), Kedar Kashyap, Vikram Usendi and Ramvihar Netam (Scheduled Tribe), Punnul Mohile and Dayaldas Baghel (Scheduled Caste) and Rajesh Munat (Jain community) are doing rounds as the probable ministers in the Sai cabinet.

Among these leaders, except Dharamlal Kaushik, others had served as ministers in the previous BJP governments in the state.

Names of IAS officer-turned-politician OP Chaudhary, Gajendra Yadav, and Bhavna Bohra are discussed in political circles as potential fresh faces.

Former chief minister Raman Singh is likely to be named as the speaker of the state assembly.

Among women leaders, the names of former Union minister Renuka Singh, ex-MP Gomti Sai, and former state minister Lata Usendi are doing rounds. All three hail from tribal communities.

"Previous BJP governments (from 2003 to 2018) always had a woman minister in each term but this time the number may go up," according to Das. (PTI)

# First-time BJP MLA Bhajan Lal Sharma to be new Rajasthan CM

**JAIPUR, Dec 12:** The BJP on Tuesday picked first-time MLA Bhajan Lal Sharma as Rajasthan's new chief minister, ending days of speculation that followed its victory in the assembly polls.

The surprise choice was announced after BJP MLAs met here and elected the 56-year-old legislator from Sanganer as the leader of its legislature party. He is at present a Rajasthan BJP general secretary. Diya Kumari and Prem Chand Bairwa will be the deputy chief ministers and Vasudev Devnani the speaker of the state assembly, said senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh, who led a team of three party central observers to oversee the meeting. Following the meeting at the BJP office here, chief minister-designate Sharma met Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra and staked claim to form the next government in the state.

The BJP won 115 seats in the November 25 assembly elections, while the Congress got 69 seats. Polling was held on 199 of the 200 seats in the state.

BJP state president CP Joshi presented a letter to the governor, informing that Sharma has been elected as the leader of the BJP legislature party in the state, according to a Raj Bhawan statement.

Kumari is a member of the erstwhile Jaipur royal family and a Rajput, while Bairwa a Dalit leader and Sharma a Brahmin. Vasudev Devnani is from the Sindhi community. At the meeting, the CM-designate's name was proposed by former chief minister Vasundhara Raje, who was herself considered to be in the running for the top post. Sharma is the third in the series of little known MLAs who have been elevated by the BJP to the chief minister's post after the recently held assembly elections, ignoring state stalwarts.



The others are Vishnu Deo Sai, who has been picked as the CM-designate for Chhattisgarh, and Mohan Yadav, who has been picked for the post in Madhya Pradesh. Elections were held between November 7 and November 30 in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram. The Congress won in Telangana and the Zoram People's Movement in Mizoram. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-backed Sharma won the Sanganer constituency with a margin of 48,081 votes. Sharma, who belongs to Bharatpur district, holds a master's degree in political science. Prior to the legislature party meeting, a group photo was taken and Sharma is seen standing in the last row.

Before Sharma, Raje was the preferred choice of the BJP for the post for 20 years. She was chief minister twice -- from 2003 to 2008 and from 2013 to 2018. The Congress was in power in the state in the intervening years with Ashok Gehlot at the helm.

In what was seen as a show of strength following the November 25 polls, several MLAs had met Raje over a number of days leading to the legislature party meeting.

Singh after the meeting told reporters that Raje had proposed Sharma's name for the post of

leader of the legislature party. This was unanimously accepted, the defence minister said.

He said Devnani, Kirodi Lal Meena, Madan Dilawar and Jawahar Bedham were the first to accept the proposal. Following this, Singh said, he declared the name of the leader of the BJP legislature party -- Bhajan Lal Sharma.

"I am assured that in the leadership of Bhajan Lal Sharma, Rajasthan will move on the path of development. All have congratulated Sharma," he said.

Along with this, Singh also declared that Kumari and Bairwa will be the deputy chief ministers and Devnani the assembly speaker. Kumari is a two-time MLA and one-time MP and this time she won from Vidhyadhar Nagar with a margin of 71,368 votes. The 51-year-old BJP leader became an MLA for the first time in 2013 from Sawai Madhopur. In 2019, she was elected as MP from Rajasamand.

Bairwa, who was declared deputy chief minister along with Kumari, is a Dalit face in the BJP. The 54-year-old won the Dudu constituency in the November 25 polls.

He defeated Congress' Babu Lal Nagar with a margin of 35,743 votes. He holds a Ph.D from the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur. (PTI)

## Kerala Gov accuses CM hatching conspiracy after attack by SFI activists

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Tuesday claimed that his car was "attacked" by the Students Federation of India (SFI) activists at the behest of chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan as he has called for a report on the financial health of the state government.

"The chief minister is saying the government is not bound to reply to every query of the Governor. Let him not reply. I will wait for 10 days. And then, if the state is in crisis, it is my duty to make my recommendations to the central government," Khan told reporters at Kerala Bhavan, a day after the incident in Thiruvananthapuram. He said the state chief secretary in an affidavit to the high court has stated that the Kerala government is not in a position to disburse the pension of employees.

The state chief secretary also stated in the affidavit that the Kerala government is not in a position to honour the financial guarantees that it has given, he said, adding "Which means financial emergency in the state. And I have asked for a report". Khan claimed that the state government is "so piqued" by him after he has called for a report on Kerala's financial health following the chief secretary's affidavit to the high court.

CPI(M)-affiliated SFI activists allegedly hit the Kerala Governor's car while he was on his way to the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport to leave for Delhi. "It is the chief minister who has hatched this conspiracy (to attack him). Three days ago, he made a public statement. He said the governor is provoking the students. But he did not give the instance as to how I am actually provoking them," Khan said.

"This is not the first time... In Kannur, they had tried to assault me physically. The one who was preventing police from taking action against those creating disturbance has been rewarded by the chief minister by appointing him his secretary," he charged.

After meeting Khan at Kerala Bhavan, Union minister V Muralidharan and former president of the BJP's state unit slammed the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government over Monday's incident and said it depicted the dangerous situation and the level of law and order situation in Kerala.

"He was attacked thrice during his travel from the Raj Bhavan to the airport... The Kerala chief minister and communist party (CPI-M) and the communist party secretary have been issuing threats to the governor for the last few weeks," Muralidharan alleged. "It's because the governor has been upholding the law and the Constitution and is also taking a firm stand against the corruption of the state government and nepotism. (PTI)

## Govt to move amendment to bring CEC, ECs on par with SC judges

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** The government has decided to retain the status of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other election commissioners on par with judges of the Supreme Court following protests by opposition parties and former chief election commissioners. At present, the CECs and ECs enjoy the status of a Supreme Court judge.

The CEC and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023 introduced in the Rajya Sabha in August this year had proposed to bring the status of the CEC and other ECs on par with the Cabinet Secretary.

The opposition parties and some former CECs had opposed the move, saying it will go against the independence of the institution.

Now the government has decided to move amendments to the Bill pending in the Rajya Sabha.

One of the amendments which Union law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal will move states that "The CEC and other commissioners shall be paid a salary which is equal to the salary of a judge of the Supreme Court."

According to another amendment, a search committee headed by the Union law minister comprising two other members not below the rank of secretary to the government of India, shall prepare a panel of five persons



for the selection committee. In the bill, it was proposed that the cabinet secretary will head the search committee. Through this amendment, the government has upgraded the search committee by replacing the cabinet secretary with the law minister.

The official amendment also seeks to insert a new clause in the bill to protect CEC and ECs from court cases while discharging their official duties. It states that notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, no court shall entertain or continue any civil or criminal proceedings against any and other person who is or was a Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner.

The new clause comes against the backdrop of the Telangana High Court placing under suspension a special sessions judge in

connection with a "direction" given by him to police for registering an FIR against Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and several others, saying the judge acted in "undue haste".

Another proposed amendment made it clear that the chief election commissioner shall not be removed from his office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court. It also states that the other Election Commissioner shall not be removed from office except on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner.

These two clarifications are in line with constitutional provisions mentioned in Article 324 dealing with the Election Commission, a former poll panel functionary pointed out. The bill is listed for consideration and passage in the Rajya Sabha for Tuesday. (PTI)

## SC defers hearing on CBI plea against accused in loan fraud case

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday deferred until January 3 next year the hearing on the Central Bureau of Investigations' (CBI) plea challenging the Bombay High Court order granting bail to former ICICI Bank CEO and MD Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar in a loan fraud case. A bench comprising Justices Bela M Trivedi and Satish Chandra Sharma took note of the submissions of senior advocate Amit Desai, appearing for the Kochhars, that he would like to appear physically before it to argue the case.

Desai, who was appearing virtually from Mumbai, said there were some connectivity issues, and sought an adjournment.

Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, who represented the CBI, opposed Desai's plea for adjournment, saying the hearing be held on Wednesday and not adjourned for a long period. The bench then fixed it for hearing on January 3 next year. The bench had on October 16 sought a response from the Kochhars on the CBI's petition challenging the interim bail granted to them in the case by the Bombay High Court.

ASG Raju had said the high court proceeded on a wrong presumption that the offence is punishable with a maximum sentence of seven years imprisonment without considering section 409 of the

Indian Penal Code (criminal breach of trust by public servant), which entails a sentence from 10 years to life imprisonment. The bench had asked Raju as to how section 409 (criminal breach of trust by a public servant) of the IPC came into play when it was a private bank. The law officer had replied that the bank may be private but the matter involves public money.

Later, the top court had pulled up the probe agency for not objecting to repeated extension of the two-week interim bail granted to Chanda Kochhar and her husband.

The Bombay High Court on January 9 this year granted bail to the couple, saying their arrest was not in accordance with the provisions of law. The CBI appealed against it in the top court. A day after bail was granted, Chanda Kochhar walked out of the Byculla women's prison in Mumbai, while her husband was released from the Arthur Road jail.

The high court had held that the arrest of the Kochhars was in violation of Section 41A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which mandates sending notice for appearance before the police officer concerned. The couple was arrested by the CBI on December 23, 2022 in connection with the Videocon-ICICI Bank loan case. Apart from the Kochhars, the CBI also arrested Videocon group founder Venugopal Dhoot in the case. (PTI)

## MHA approves release of ₹338 crore to Gujarat

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** The Union ministry of home affairs on Tuesday approved the release of ₹338 crore to Gujarat and ₹633 crore to Himachal Pradesh as financial assistance for damages caused by natural calamities. The Union home minister's office said in a post on X that Gujarat was severely affected by Cyclone Biparjoy and, under the guidance of Prime Minister, the Centre and the state made advanced preparations before it, achieving a zero-casualty rate during the natural calamity. In the aftermath of the extremely severe cyclone, the Union ministry of home affairs (MHA) immediately deputed the inter-ministerial central team to assess the damages, without waiting for a memorandum from the state govt. "The MHA has approved the financial assistance of ₹338.24 crore to Gujarat today," the Home Minister's Office said. The Centre had earlier released the first installment of its share, amounting to ₹584 crore, to the State Disaster Response Force. The home minister's office said in another post that the ministry also approved an additional financial assistance of ₹633.73 crore from the National Disaster Response Fund for Himachal Pradesh. (PTI)

## Kerala CM dismisses Cong allegations of lack of amenities in Sabarimala 62,000 pilgrims visited the hill shrine daily during first 19 days of Mandala Pooja

**IDUKKI (KERALA), Dec 12:** Amidst complaints of lack of basic amenities and safety measures in Sabarimala, Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday said nothing unusual has happened at the Lord Ayyappa temple this time and urged officials to make necessary intervention to inform the public about the new arrangements and systems put in place there.

He directed the officials concerned to ensure a more coordinated system to manage the heavy rush and provide necessary facilities for pilgrims at the hill shrine.

He also criticised the UDF MPs who protested in front of Parliament raising the issue of alleged lack of facilities for Ayyappa pilgrims.

The CM directed that arrangements should be made in such a way that it is beneficial for the pilgrims.

He was speaking during a special review meeting held at Thekkady amidst the ongoing Nava Kerala outreach programme in the district.

An average of 62,000 pilgrims visited the hill shrine daily during the first 19 days of the Mandala Pooja season, a CMO statement quoting him said.

In the four days since December 6, the number of pilgrims has increased to 88,000 and this was the cause of the huge rush, he said.

The darshan time has been increased by one hour to resolve the issue, he further said and suggested to limit the spot booking.

"Nothing unusual has happened in Sabarimala. It is necessary to inform the people about the arrangements and the facilities that have been put in place there," he said.

Steps should also be taken to counter the fake news spread in connection with Sabarimala and efforts should be taken to create awareness and inform the people about the arrangements and facilities at the shrine, Vijayan added.

Intervention should be made to counter the false narrative being spread inside and outside the state and authorities including the Devaswom President should remain at Sabarimala and to coordinate this, he further said.

Devaswom Minister K Radhakrishnan, Forest Minister AK Saseendran, Chief Secretary V Venu, Devaswom Board President P S Prashant, State Police Chief Sheikh Darvesh Sahib, Collectors and other officials took part in the meeting via online.

Later, while speaking at a programme as part of the Nava Kerala Sadas here, Vijayan criticised the Congress-UDF MPs who protested outside Parliament on Tues-



day demanding adequate facilities and safety measures for pilgrims at Sabarimala.

"The UDF is not ready to expose the discrimination shown by the Union government towards Kerala. They refuse to address the bias shown towards Kerala and are eager to please the BJP. They are standing with the BJP which is harming the prospects of Kerala," the CM alleged.

While the state government is trying to explain to the people the efforts being made to destroy the federal system, consti-

tutional values and challenges faced by secularism in the country, the UDF MPs are using their time to defame the state in Parliament.

"They are seeking the Union government's interference in the Sabarimala issue. This is a move that may scare the pilgrims from other states," he said.

Vijayan also rejected the UDF allegation that the state government was not paying much attention to the Sabarimala issue.

Meanwhile, the opposition Congress criticised the Left government on the

Sabarimala issue and accused it of failing to ensure basic amenities for the pilgrims at the shrine.

Leader of opposition in the assembly V D Satheesan said unprecedented incidents are happening in connection with Sabarimala pilgrimage.

"Many pilgrims from neighbouring states are ending their pilgrimage abruptly at Pandalam due to the heavy rush," he told reporters in Kochi.

Stating that devotees are forced to stand in queue for over 20 hours, he charged that neither the state government nor the Devaswom Board is showing any responsibility to address their plight.

The Devaswom minister has gone for a 44-day tour and the chief minister and the other ministers are shying away from their responsibilities, he further charged.

The LoP said a UDF team, led by Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan MLA, has gone to Pamba, the base camp, to understand the issues faced by the pilgrims. "We will prepare the suggestions and hand them over to the government soon," he added.

Meanwhile, activists of the Youth Congress took out a protest march to the Travancore Devaswom Board Headquarters in Thiruvananthapuram alleging failure of the TDB in ensuring facilities for pilgrims. (PTI)

India to  
million



# K'taka govt assures strict action, protection to public assault victim's family

Karnataka home minister visits 55-year-old victim undergoing treatment in hospital

**BELAGAVI (KARNATAKA), Dec 12:** Karnataka home minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday assured the assembly that strict action will be taken against the culprits, who allegedly assaulted a woman, paraded her in the nude and tied her to an electric pole in a village in this district, after her son eloped with a girl who was to get engaged with someone else.

While assuring protection to the young "lovers" and the victim's family, he also stressed the need for change in the mindset of society, for such "inhuman" incidents not to repeat.

On coming to know about their 18-year-old daughter eloping with the woman's son (aged 24), about 20 of her family members damaged the man's house at around 12.30 am on Monday in New Van-tamuri village. They are then said to have dragged his 55-year-old mother, who was alone at home, outside, paraded her in the nude and tied her to an electricity pole.

"On getting to know about the incident, police immediately



rushed to the spot, rescued the woman and took her to hospital. Also, seven people have been arrested in connection with the case and necessary legal action is being taken against them," Parameshwara said, detailing the incident in the assembly.

Stating that efforts are to find the young couple, so that they don't take any extreme step on hearing about this incident, he said, "such incidents should not happen, it is

shameful for society."

"Youngsters falling in love and marrying is by and large accepted by society these days, amid some incidents of honour killings...society has to change. Only police taking strong steps won't help, but police will do whatever they can...we will give protection to the young couple and the family, government will not neglect the case in any way," he added.

Parameshwara on Monday vis-

ited the victim at the hospital and the village where the incident took place.

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour, BJP MLA Sunil Kumar said a civilised society which regards women highly, cannot accept such incidents, and such things had not taken place in Karnataka in the recent past.

Stating that such incidents also leads to a question whether there is fear of law and police in the state, the legislator, while appreciating the police for arresting seven people in connection with this case, said, "If there was fear of police, such an incident wouldn't have taken place. Such atrocities and cruelty against women, when we are celebrating 75-years of independence, cannot be tolerated."

Kumar urged the home minister to give free treatment to the affected woman, protection to her family, and that the government should ensure that the young couple are protected, and they don't take any extreme step. (PTI)

## Instagram emerging as marketplace for drugs a matter of concern: Fadnavis

**NAGPUR, Dec 12:** Maharashtra deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday expressed concern over the alarming rise in drug-related activities on Instagram, saying the popular social media platform has transformed into a marketplace for the illicit substances.

Drugs were also being sold through the dark net (an encrypted part of the Internet that is not accessible through search engines), Fadnavis, who also holds the home portfolio, said in the state legislative council here during the ongoing winter session.

"Instagram has emerged as the drug marketplace where orders are being placed, payments are made through GPay and UPI and deliveries are being done," he said.

Decisive measures are being taken in this connection, Fadnavis said while responding to questions from legislators Mahadev Jankar, Sachin Ahir, Anil Parab and others.

He also said courier companies have been appealed to scrutinise parcels, and surprise checks equipped with modern technology were being conducted at courier offices to curb the drug trade.

Ahir raised the issue of a case pertaining to drug racketeer Lalit Patil and removal of Sanjiv Thakur from the post of dean of Pune-based Sassoon Hospital.

Fadnavis assured that proper action would be taken following a thorough inquiry.

Patil emerged as the kingpin of a drug racket that was recently busted by the Sakinaka police in Mumbai in a two-month-long operation, which included the seizure of methedrone worth about Rs 300 crore and a raid at a drug manufacturing unit in Nashik.

The case took a new turn after Patil, who was in Pune's Yerawada prison over his role in another drug case but was admitted to government-run Sassoon Hospital in that city, escaped on October 2 while being taken for X-ray imaging. He was arrested in Karnataka two weeks later.

Fadnavis also said the government has initiated action against 172 Nigerians involved in drug-related offences. A detention centre has been established for Nigerian nationals engaged in such offences, he said. (PTI)

## Mumbai cops form SIT to probe death of Sushant Singh's manager Disha Sallen



**MUMBAI, Dec 12:** Mumbai Police on Tuesday formed a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the death of Disha Sallen, the ex-manager of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput, an official said.

He said Malvani police station senior inspector Chimaji Adhav will investigate the case and the investigation will be supervised by deputy commissioner of police, Ajay Bansal.

Sallen (28) was found dead on June 8, 2020, days before Rajput (34) was found hanging in his flat in suburban Bandra in Mumbai. According to police, Sallen allegedly committed suicide by jumping from a high-rise building in Malad.

Her father Satish Sallen had written to police stating that he didn't suspect any foul play in his daughter's death. He had also expressed "complete satisfaction" with the probe by Mumbai Police.

Reacting to the formation of the SIT, Shiv Sena (UBT)

leader Sanjay Raut said the party cannot be cowed down with such pressure tactics.

Taking a dig at the BJP, Raut said they can hand over the investigation to American and Russian spy agencies, the CIA and KGB, respectively.

"We do not pay heed to such pressure tactics. Set up an SIT or hand over the probe to the CIA or KGB. The Central and state governments are a factory to malign their political opponents," Raut said.

"The time of the current dispensation is spent only on setting up SITs against opposition leaders," he alleged and claimed Maharashtra will see a change of government in 2024.

The death of Sallen was at the center of political allegations in the state with the BJP, then in the opposition, accusing the erstwhile Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government of hushing up the matter.

The announcement to set up an SIT in the Sallen case

was made by deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, who also heads the state home department, in the winter session of the state legislature last year.

Some leaders had alleged that Sallen was murdered and sought to drag the name of MLA Aaditya Thackeray, the son of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, into the case. Notably, BJP MLC Pravin Darekar last week said several leaders had been demanding for long that an SIT be formed. His colleague Prasad Lad had said an SIT would clear all doubts (about Sallen's case).

Earlier in the day, Uddhav Thackeray told reporters in Nagpur that he didn't have any official information about the formation of the SIT in the Sallen case.

"If anything official comes out, then that day we will reveal the information we have about them. If they level false allegations against us, then we will bring out the true information against them," the Sena (UBT) leader said without naming anyone.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve told reporters that the announcement for SIT was made last year as well and that Sallen's death had been investigated on earlier occasions also.

"I demand that an SIT probe also be initiated into Judge Loya's death. If you want to probe Disha Sallen's death, you can do it...Politics is being done," Danve told reporters in the Vidhan Bhavan premises in Nagpur where the winter session of the state legislature is currently underway. (PTI)

## Infant stuck in Odisha bore well, rescue operations on

**BHUBANESWAR/ SAMBALPUR (ODISHA), Dec 12:** An infant was found stuck in an abandoned bore-well in Odisha's Sambalpur district on Tuesday, prompting the state government to launch a rescue operation, officials said.

The bore well at Laripali village in Rengali area is 15-20 feet deep and oxygen is being supplied into it. The baby, apparently newly born, has no claimant, police said.

The state's special relief commissioner sent fire services personnel from Rengali and one team of Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force Jharsuguda to the spot to conduct the rescue operation.

An NDRF team from Mundali in Cuttack is also on its way to the bore-well site, said Gyanranjan

Dash, the managing director of Odisha Disaster Management Authority.

Local people came to know about the presence of the child inside the bore well after hearing cries, police said.

The abandoned bore-well is located in a forest close to the village. The police said it was not known how the infant got into the well. Locals suspect that the infant might have been dumped there by someone.

Sambalpur additional district magistrate Pradeep Sahoo said, "Rescue operation has started and oxygen is supplied into the bore well. The ODRAF team has dug a parallel pit."

He expressed hope that the child would be rescued soon.

In another incident, a five-year-old boy fell into a borewell at a village in Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday, and efforts were on to rescue the child, police said.

The incident occurred around 4.30 pm in Khandala Davri village, about 20 km from the district headquarters, Alirajpur superintendent of police Rajesh Vyas told PTI.

The boy was stuck at a depth of around 20 feet and a rescue operation was underway to save him, he said.

A parallel pit was dug with the help of machines, but the rescue would take time because of the rocky terrain, the official said.

All the necessary precautions would be taken for the child's safety, he added. (PTI)

## PM Modi calls for global framework for ethical use of AI

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday flagged the threat falling of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the hands of terrorists pose to the world as he called for a global framework for the ethical use of AI.

Speaking at the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence Summit, he said AI can become the biggest tool for development in the 21st century, but it also equally be a force in destroying the 21st century.

"Besides the challenge of deepfakes, cyber security, and data theft, AI tools falling in the hands of terrorists pose a big threat. Global security will face a big threat if AI-laced weapons were to reach terrorist organisations. We have to deliberate on this issue and reach a concrete plan to stop the misuse of AI," he said.

The Prime Minister said India had during its G20 presidency proposed creating a responsible, human-centric governance framework for AI.

"Just like we have agreements and protocols for various international issues, we have to create a global framework for the ethical use of AI. This will include a protocol for testing and deployment of high-risk and

frontier AI tools," he said. India is committed to the responsible and ethical use of artificial intelligence, he said.

Modi said AI has the potential to revolutionize India's tech landscape and the government will soon be launching an AI mission.

AI has the potential to transform sectors including healthcare and it can play a big role in sustainable development, he said. But "we have to tread very cautiously."

The direction of AI will be dependent on human values and democratic values, he said. Trust on AI will rise if ethical, economic and social concerns are addressed. Privacy concerns will get addressed if data is secured, he said.

"We have to complete the global framework within a set timeframe," he said adding this was essential for the security and progress of the world and humanity. The Prime Minister said AI has to be made all-inclusive as only then it will yield more inclusive results.

AI, he said, is not just new technology but a world-wide movement. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## 17,861 people granted

Giving some figures, the Centre said 100 foreigners tribunal are presently working in Assam and as on October 31, 2023, more than 3.34 lakh cases have been disposed of and still 97,714 are pending as on October 31. It said the number of cases pending before the Gauhati High Court, arising from the orders of the Foreigners Tribunal are 8,461 as on December 1, 2023.

The government gave details about the working of the Assam Police, fencing of borders, border patrols and other mechanisms adopted to dissuade infiltration. On December 7, the top court directed the Centre to provide data on the number of Bangladeshi immigrants granted Indian citizenship in Assam between January 1, 1966 and March 25, 1971.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, which is hearing a batch of pleas on validity of section 6A of the Citizenship Act had asked the state government to provide the data to the Centre for filing an affidavit.

It had also asked the Centre to inform it about the steps taken to deal with illegal immigration into India, particularly the North Eastern states. Section 6A of the Citizenship Act relates to illegal immigrants in Assam. (PTI)

## Several organizations

by the people during the anti-CAA movement will always be remembered. "We will continue to resist any attempt to implement the CAA," he said. The Nagarkatta Sangshudhani Ain Birudhi Samannai Samiti, a civil society forum against the CAA, also organised a memorial meet in Guwahati.

Eminent litterateur Hiren Gohain, CPI(M) leader Hemen Das and Assam Trinamool Congress president Ripun Bora, among others, attended the meeting. Later, talking to reporters, Gohain said the next course of action by the forum will be chalked out soon.

"Our Constitution does not base citizenship on religion. We will resist all attempts to deviate from its basic tenets. We will soon get together and determine the next course of action to take forward the movement against the CAA," he said.

The CAA seeks to provide Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis entering India on or before December 31, 2014 from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after five years of residence here.

It was passed by both Houses of Parliament and given the Presidential assent in December 2019, though the rules are yet to be notified.

Assam witnessed widespread anti-CAA agitation led by students and other organisations in early 2019 before the Lok Sabha polls, but it subsided after the 2016 format of the Bill lapsed in June 2019 when the term of then Lok Sabha ended as it could not be tabled and passed in Rajya Sabha.

When the Bill of the present CAA was passed in both Houses of Parliament in December 2019, the state witnessed one of the most violent protests for several days as agitators engaged in pitch battles with police and administration in almost every major city or town, leading to the death of five persons. This led to a crackdown by the state government, including arrests of leaders of the agitation, snapping of internet connectivity and imposition of curfew. (With inputs from PTI)

## Economy is moving

The additional expenditure includes ₹ 13,351 crore towards fertiliser subsidy and about ₹ 7,000 crore towards spending by the Department of Food and Public Distribution.

The House also approved an additional outgo of ₹ 9,200 crore spending by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and ₹ 14,524 crore by the Ministry of Rural Development towards MGNREGA.

The total supplementary demands for spending by the Ministry of External Affairs were ₹ 20,000 crore, which would be adjusted against the reduction of expenditure of over ₹ 9,000 crore.

For the full 2023-24, the government has budgeted the fiscal deficit to be ₹ 17.86 lakh crore or 5.9 per cent of the GDP.

The April-October fiscal deficit was 45.6 per cent of the full-year Budget Estimate of the last fiscal. (PTI)

## NC Hills Autonomous

on November 14. He said that with the announcement of poll dates, the model code of conduct has come into effect. "The state police will manage law and order, as central forces typically do not participate in local elections," Kumar clarified.

## Only 7 pc doctors aware

doctors should rigorously inquire about patients' tobacco consumption at every visit. Additionally, novel alternatives like e-cigarettes and heat-not-burn products could play a vital role as substitutes in reducing the burden of tobacco addiction in India.

As the second-largest tobacco consumer globally, with 275 million users, India faces a significant challenge. The Global Adult Tobacco Survey data indicates that only 55.4 per cent of smokers have ever considered or intended to quit, showcasing the urgent need for more effective anti-smoking strategies.

In addressing the survey's stark reality, Dr J Kumar, medical advisor at IMAPH, emphasises the urgent need for a united front against tobacco addiction.

"With only 7 per cent of doctors aware of recent anti-smoking advancements, this signals not just a knowledge gap but a call for revolutionary change," Dr Kumar said.

Dr Kumar sees the survey as a compass guiding us from awareness to action. Prioritising effectiveness over cost and embracing innovative methods, such as behavioural therapy, can bridge the gap, propelling doctors to the forefront of a tobacco-free era in India."

The research highlights the importance of science-backed policy making to empower doctors, researchers, and medical practitioners to explore and recommend safer options. By addressing the gaps in awareness and advocating for effective strategies, India can progress towards achieving the global voluntary goal of a 30 per cent reduction in tobacco consumption by 2025. (PTI)

## Inter College Karbi

tug-of-war; race with pitcher and race. Prizes were given to the winners of the competition in the evening and concluded with a concert.

The next All Karbi Anglong Inter College Karbi Cultural Competition will be held in Volongkom Aji informed president KLJA, Songja Tisso.

## ISRO to put first astronaut on Moon by 2040

Maiden manned mission 'Gaganyaan' to send astronauts into Low Earth Orbit

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Dec 12:** After the historic success of its Chandrayaan-3 lunar mission, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is going full throttle with its plans to send Indian astronauts for the first time to the Moon by 2040, ISRO chairman S Somanath said. The Bengaluru-based space agency is currently working on the country's maiden manned mission, 'Gaganyaan', which aims to send astronauts into Low Earth Orbit and bring them back safely to earth.

Four pilots from the Indian Air Force who were selected for the mission are undergoing training at the Astronaut Training Facility in Bengaluru, the top scientist said.

In an exclusive article for Manorama Yearbook 2024, the secretary of department of space said, "Looking ahead, ISRO aims to take the next step in space exploration with the Gaganyaan programme, planning to launch a crew of 2 to 3 Indian astronauts into Low Earth Orbit (LEO) for up to three days before safely returning them to a predefined site in Indian waters."

The inaugural manned mission involves developing critical technologies, including a human-rated (capable of safely transporting humans) launch vehicle (HLVM3), an orbital module comprising a crew module (CM) and service module (SM) and life support systems.

Two identical uncrewed missions (G1 & G2) besides Integrated Air Drop Test, Pad Abort Test, and Test Vehicle flights will precede the manned mission.

CM is a habitable space with an Earth-like environment in space for the crew and is de-



signed for safe re-entry. Safety measures also include a Crew Escape System (CES) for emergencies, a statement issued by Malayala Manorama said.

The first development flight of Test Vehicle (TV-D1) was launched on October 21, 2023, and it successfully demonstrated in-flight abort of the Crew Escape System, followed by crew module separation and its safe recovery from the Bay of Bengal by the Indian Navy.

"The success of this test flight was crucial for subsequent unmanned missions and the ultimate human space mission, expected to be launched in 2025," said Somanath, who is also chairman of the Space Commission.

Aditya L1, which is India's maiden solar exploratory mission, is also an important mission of the ISRO, he noted.

It will study the sun from the unique vantage point of Lagrange Point 1, showcasing the country's prowess in both lunar and solar re-

search. Launched on September 2, Aditya L1 is poised for a five-year mission.

The spacecraft is on its intended path towards Sun-Earth Lagrange Point 1 (L1), approximately 1.5 million km from Earth, where it will be inserted into a Halo orbit in January 2024, he explained.

On the success of the Chandrayaan-3 mission, he termed it as a 'historic achievement', leading to the declaration of August 23 (landing near the lunar south pole) as 'National Space Day in India' by the Prime Minister.

In the mission life of 14 earth days, it yielded valuable lunar data, discovering aluminium, calcium, iron, chromium, titanium, sulphur, manganese, silicon, and oxygen in lunar soil.

Referring to some ambitious ongoing and upcoming missions, he said these include Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) programme, X-ray astronomy mission XPOSAT (X-ray Polarimeter Satellite), Space Docking Experiment, and LOX-Methane engine.

"Together, these transformative initiatives define a new space saga in India's pursuit of space exploration, fostering scientific progress and an ever-expanding cosmic horizon."

Elaborating, he said SSLV, a three-stage launch vehicle, can launch 500 kg satellite into 500 km planar orbit, and can accommodate multiple satellites.

It has launch-on-demand feasibility, minimal launch infrastructure requirements and low cost. With two flights in the recent past, SSLV is at the stage of transition from developmental flights to operational flights. (PTI)



# SUPERSTAR RAJINIKANTH TURNS 73, WISHES POUR IN FROM INDIAN FILM INDUSTRY

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Kamal Haasan, Dhanush, Jackie Shroff and Kajol were among some of the cinema personalities who greeted superstar Rajinikanth on his birthday on Tuesday.

The celebrities took to social media to wish the actor on his 73rd birthday. Haasan shared birthday wishes for his "dear friend" Rajinikanth on X.

"I sincerely wish you to live a happy life reaping success today and forever," he wrote on the microblogging site. Dhanush, Rajinikanth's former son-in-law, was one of the first celebrities to wish the star on social media.

"Happy birthday Thalaiva @rajinikanth," wrote the actor, who was married to Aishwarya for 18 years.

Jackie Shroff shared a video of himself with Rajinikanth on X and captioned it as: "Happiness Always @rajinikanth."

"Wishing the Thalaivar many more years of bending bullets and breaking walls in every way possible! @rajinikanth #HBDSuperstarRajinikanth," Kajol wrote.

Nelson Dilipkumar, who most recently directed Rajinikanth in the hit Tamil film "Jailer", sent out birthday wishes to "the icon of Indian cinema". (PTI)

## Adivi Sesh, Shruti Haasan to star in pan-India action drama



**MUMBAI, Dec 12:** Actors Adivi Sesh and Shruti Haasan will be seen together in a pan-India action drama, the makers on Tuesday announced.

The untitled film is produced by Supriya Yarlagadda and presented by Annapurna Studios.

The project marks the feature directorial debut of Shaneil Deo, who has previously served as the director of photography for several Telugu blockbusters such as "Kshanam" and "Goodachari", both headlined by Sesh. Deo also directed the acclaimed coming-of-age short, "Layla", which was officially selected for the 68th Cannes Film Festival.

In a press statement, the makers said the film will be shot in Telugu and Hindi separately.

"Every frame, dialogue and scene of the film is being shot separately in Hindi as well as in Telugu. It is being treated differently according to the cultural nuances of each language," they said. The upcoming feature marks Sesh's second Hindi movie outing after his 2022 acclaimed film "Major", which featured him as the 2008 Mumbai terror attack martyr Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan.

The film is co-produced by Suniel Narang, with Sesh and Deo sharing story and screenplay credits. (PTI)



## Amarrass Nights to host The Aahvaan Project, Jumme Khan and others for its last concert of 2023

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Amarrass Nights on Tuesday said that music luminaries like The Aahvaan Project, Jumme Khan, Himali Mou and Guy Velvet Group will bring down the curtain on its last concert for the year 2023.

The concert will be held on December 16 at Sunder Nursery, the 16th century park complex that houses three UNESCO world heritage sites and was once called Bagh-e-Azeem.

Amarrass Nights is organised by Gurgaon-based label Amarrass Records and Amarrass Society for Performing Arts at iconic locations across Delhi since 2009.

Ashutosh Sharma, co-founder of Amarrass Records, said with an eclectic line-up of musicians from India and abroad, Amarrass Nights at Sunder Nursery has added an engorging buzz to Delhi's cultural scene.

"Our programming changes every month, and the music we bring ranges from folk to the very modern, from contemporary jazz to Nusrat's qawwalis.

"With each concert we seek to promote our rich traditions of folk music, as well as to showcase musicians and musical traditions from abroad. It gives me great joy when people tell me that Amarrass Nights @ Sunder Nursery has become an important fixture in Delhi's music calendar," Sharma said in a statement. Sumant Balakrishnan of The Aahvaan Project said the group is happy to return to its birthplace,

New Delhi.

"Aahvaan has not performed in Delhi for some time. To be singing Nirgun (a Bhakti movement philosophy of love based on the works of Sufis like Kabir, Lal Ded and Lalon Fakir) music under a starry winter sky in the beautiful Sunder Nursery is an experience everyone, including us, will cherish and look forward to," Balakrishnan added.

Jumme Khan of Rajasthan will be accompanied by his band of musicians featuring the harmonium, chimta, dholak, and the single-stringed bhapang. Khan is known for his sharp observations on subjects ranging from dowry to the industrial revolution in his poetry.

Kumaoni folk band Himali Mou from Uttarakhand will showcase a diverse array of musical styles from the region, including Jhora, Chanchari, Chapeli, Nyoli and Chaiti -- the first three are dance forms with accompanying music.

Guy Velvet Group, a Blues and RnB band based in Delhi, is well-known for high-energy performances and have enthralled audiences in the capital with their unique blend of blues harmonica, a solid rhythm and brass section.

"It's an absolute honour and privilege to be hosted by Amarrass Nights! It's no secret what Amarrass' contribution towards local folk artists has been over the years! We are looking forward to playing a fantastic show at the iconic Sunder Nursery," added Udayraj, also known as Guy Velvet. (PTI)

## ANNE HATHAWAY says 'lucky thing' that her 'Barbie' movie didn't get made



**LOS ANGELES, Dec 12:** Anne Hathaway is a fan of Greta Gerwig and Margot Robbie's "Barbie" and feels it's a lucky that her version of the movie never took off. The actor was attached to star in Sony's Barbie movie. Alethea Jones was set to direct the movie but the project fell through.

Actress Anne Hathaway was considering playing Barbie for Sony Pictures back in 2017 with Alethea Jones circling to direct. However, that didn't materialise and the actress is glad.

The Oscar-winner said in hindsight, it's a "lucky thing" that never happened, reports Deadline.

The actress said the team behind this year's 'Barbie', "hit a bullseye." She continued, referencing her 2017 project, "Now imagine that version, that much energy, that much anticipation, that much emotion, but it's not the right version." Hathaway offered her assessment on Josh Horowitz's 'Happy Sad Confused' podcast. As per Deadline, she was equally effusive in her praise for the woman who is the producer and eventual actual onscreen Barbie, Margot Robbie.

She said, "Margot is just sublime, period. What she is doing as a creative person and a producer is so exciting and inspiring. And the mythic giants they topped with (Barbie) that have kept certain narratives in place that have not allowed opportunities to develop for so many people. They ran straight through it, dancing, sparkling". She added, "If I believed that the version I was attached to could have done that, yeah, I might feel differently about it, but I genuinely think their (film) was the best possible version. So it's actually very easy to just be thrilled and happy (for them). I'm also a person who loves watching women kill it. I just do, I just love it. And also, to do so well, so undeniably that they actually had to write new records, come on! ... I think it's probably going to make things better". (AGENCIES)

## BRAHMAPUTRA VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL 2023

### 5 major attractions one cannot afford to miss this year

The Brahmaputra Valley Film Festival (BVFF) occupies a unique and cherished space among filmmakers and film enthusiasts of Northeast India. Dedicated to championing good cinema and nurturing local filmmaking talent, the BVFF has served as a crucial bridge, connecting Northeast Indian filmmakers and talent with established personalities of the Indian film industry. Unlike any other film festival in the region, the BVFF boasts of a successful track record, steadily growing in stature without losing sight of its core mission.

Beyond film screenings in various languages of India and the Northeast, the BVFF also prioritizes film education, shaping aspiring filmmakers of the Northeast through workshops conducted in collaboration with the prestigious Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, dedicated masterclasses led by industry experts, interactive sessions, engaging quiz competitions, and many more opportunities.

The highly anticipated Brahmaputra Valley Film Festival (BVFF), returns with its 8th edition, after a three-year unintended break due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Scheduled to be held from December 14th to 17th at Jyoti Chitran in Guwahati, Assam, the 8th edition promises to be bigger and better than ever.

Here's a quick guide of the most notable attractions that you just cannot afford to miss at BVFF 2023:

#### 1. An Exciting Line-up of Highly Anticipated Films

This year, from over 200 submissions, the selection committee has handpicked 30 interesting titles of 10 different languages of India to grace the silver screen across the festival's four-day run.

Among the films that are being planned for screening in the various competition and non-competition sections of the festival includes, Footprints on Water directed by Nathalia Syam and starring Adil Hussain in the lead role, Kooki by Pranab J Deka, Jiya by Kenny Basumatary, Jnanada - Reflection of Light & Shade by Bobbeeta Sharma, Mask Art of Majuli by Utpol Barpujari, Nine Hills One Valley by Haobam Paban Kumar and Before Spring by Shrutismriti Changkakoti, Mariam by Arvind Pratap, Valli by Manoj Shinde, Sangi-Gai by Nyago Ete among others.

Films like Footprints on Water, Mask Art of Majuli and Nine Hills One Valley have already won several national and international recognitions. Before Spring by Shrutismriti Changkakoti was also part of the recently concluded Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival, 2023.

#### 2. BVFF Masterclass Series by Prakash Jha, Krishna DK and Ketki Pandit

This year's BVFF Masterclass series features Prakash Jha, renowned for his impactful storytelling in films like Gangajal,

Rajneeti, Arakshan, Satyagraha, among others, Krishna DK known for movies and series like Go Goa Gone, Family Man, Farzi, and Ketki Pandit, Associate Professor of Screenplay writing at the prestigious Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune. These sessions will provide direct access to the knowledge, experience, and insights of the seasoned filmmakers, allowing aspiring creators to learn from the best in the business.

#### 3. Immerse Yourself in Filmmaking: 3-Day Workshop at BVFF 2023

BVFF 2023 presents an exciting opportunity to delve deep into the world of filmmaking with a 3-day workshop on 'Introduction to Filmmaking'. This intensive program, conducted in collaboration with the prestigious Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, will be led by Dr. Milind Damle, an esteemed Associate Professor of the institute with a wealth of experience. Dr. Damle will guide participants on an in-depth journey through the various stages of the filmmaking process, offering invaluable insights and practical knowledge.

#### 4. Amazon Prime Video Pitch at Your Doorstep

BVFF 2023 has taken a great step by partnering with Amazon Prime Video, offering a special platform for filmmakers from Northeast India. This collaboration grants them the incredible opportunity to directly pitch their ideas to the execu-

tives of the leading OTT platform, potentially revolutionizing the landscape for independent filmmakers in the region. Gone are the days of distant dreams and limited access. BVFF bridges the gap, empowering filmmakers with a direct avenue to showcase their pitches and projects to decision-makers at Amazon Prime Video. The future of Northeast cinema now rests in the hands of its passionate filmmakers.

#### 5. Post Screening Interactive Sessions and Panel Discussions

Along with the mentioned list of film personalities and professionals above, BVFF 2023 will be also graced by esteemed personalities such as Tanuja Chandra, Leena Yadav, Adil Hussain, Ronnie Lahiri, Harshad Nalawade, Miranisha Naik, Paban Haobam Kumar, Sanjay Bhutiani, among others who will take part in the interactive sessions and panel discussions.

Following film screenings, interactive Q&A sessions will be held, inviting viewers to express their thoughts, ask questions, and directly interact with the filmmakers. This will provide an opportunity for the audiences to engage with the filmmakers in a meaningful dialogue beyond the screen. Meanwhile, the panel discussions will tackle topics like: challenges of producing and marketing independent films, strategies for navigating the film festival circuit, decoding the elements of a blockbuster film, and charting the path forward for Assamese cinema and its potential for growth. So, prepare yourself to embark on a vibrant cinematic journey at BVFF 2023, where cinematic diversity reigns supreme with multiple screenings, parallel sessions and representation of diverse culture, perspectives, genres, and storytelling styles and witness captivating stories unfold right before your eyes. The details of all the activities, sessions and workshops are available on the website of BVFF.



# Down with ankle injury, Anwar Ali misses cut in Asian Cup probables

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** India will be missing its key central defender Anwar Ali because of his ankle injury in the upcoming AFC Asian Cup in Qatar starting from January 12.

Owing to a fracture sustained on his right ankle, the 23-year-old central defender has been excluded from the 50-member India probables named on Thursday.

A key member of head coach Igor Stimac's defence, Anwar's injury will upset the Croat's plans as he has taken a gamble to include midfielder Jeakson Singh in the probable.

The Kerala Blasters footballer too

is down with an injury (shoulder) as it remains to be seen if he makes the final cut of 23 ahead of their Asian Cup opener against Australia on January 13.

In the absence of Anwar, the defence is expected to be helmed by Sandesh Jhingan, Pritam Kotal and Subhasish Bose.

Anwar's Mohun Bagan teammate Ashique Kuruniyan, who is down with an ACL injury, has not been named in the probables on expected lines.

India, 102 in the FIFA rankings, is the lowest rung side in its Group B as



Stimac's task is cut out to make the Round of 16.

After taking the world No 25 Australia, the Stimac-coached Blue Tigers will face Uzbekistan (January 18), and Syria (January 23).

The side will be pruned to 25 members before they head to Doha for the national camp beginning on December 30.

**India Probables**

**Goalkeepers:** Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Amrinder Singh, Vishal Kaith, Dheeraj Singh Moirangthem and Gurmeet Singh Chahal.

**Defenders:** Naorem Roshan Singh,

Bikash Yumnam, Lalchungnunga, Sandesh Jhingan, Nikhil Poojary, Chinglensana Singh, Pritam Kotal, Hormipam Ruivah, Subhasish Bose, Asish Rai, Akash Mishra, Mehtab Singh, Rahul Bheke, Narender Gahlot and Amey Ranawade.

**Midfielders:** Suresh Singh Wangjam, Rohit Kumar, Brandon Fernandes, Udanta Singh Kumam, Yasir Mohammad, Jeakson Singh Thounaojam, Anirudh Thapa, Sahal Abdul Samad, Glan Martins, Liston Colaco, Deepak Tangri, Lalengmawia Ralte, Vinit Rai, Ninthoinganba Meetei and Naorem Mahesh Singh. (PTI)

## Newcastle's rise under Saudi ownership faces big test with Champions League future on the line

**LONDON, Dec 12:** Newly flush with Saudi cash, Newcastle has chosen to tread a strategic and methodical path in its bid to reach the summit of European game under the richest owners in soccer. The club is encountering some teething problems by playing the slow game.

Qualifying for the Champions League last season arguably came ahead of schedule for Newcastle and manager Eddie Howe, and they're struggling to juggle the demands of playing in Europe's top competition while also keeping up with their rivals in the Premier League.

With a relatively shallow squad hit by a spate of injuries and running on empty amid a packed fixture schedule, the team has dropped to seventh in the league following back-to-back losses last week and, on Wednesday, faces the very real prospect of being eliminated from the Champions League before the knockout stage.

Newcastle hosts AC Milan with both teams on five points, two behind second-place Paris Saint-Germain and five adrift of already-qualified Borussia Dortmund. Newcastle needs a win at St. James' Park and for PSG to draw or lose against Dortmund in Germany to seal a top-two finish and advance to the last 16.

Loss and Newcastle would be out of Europe completely, not even dropping into the Europa League playoffs courtesy of a third-place finish in the group.

It's a huge night, then, for the northeast team and its Saudi ownership — the Public Investment Fund — following the 300-million-pound (then \$409 million) purchase of the club in 2021 that invited accusations of sportswashing amid scrutiny of the kingdom's human rights record. Failing in the Champions League, the biggest show in club soccer, would be an early blow to its new-found status as a major disruptor for the established elite.

Maybe it shouldn't come as a

surprise, though.

After all, Newcastle was placed with three storied opponents in the toughest group in the Champions League, meaning every match has been a big occasion for a club playing in the competition for the first time in 20 years.

Coupled with that is an absentee list of which Howe has never seen the likes before. Sven Botman, Dan Burn, Callum Wilson, Harvey Barnes, Sean Longstaff, Jacob Murphy, Nick Pope and Elliot Anderson are among those who are or have been injured, while off-season signing Sandro Tonali was banned for 10 months in October for breaching betting rules. Against Tottenham on Sunday, Newcastle fielded the same 10 outfield players for the fifth straight game and looked to be running on empty as it slumped to a 4-1 loss.

"Physically we looked fatigued," Howe said, "and there was not much we could do about it. We're not affluent with options." Given their wealth, they could be.

All the talk after the 2021 takeover was which of soccer's so-called "galacticos" would be heading to Newcastle. Kylian Mbappe? Erling Haaland? Neymar?

When Manchester City came under Abu Dhabi ownership in 2008, its first signing was a jaw-dropper — Robinho, a flamboyant Brazil winger at the time.

Newcastle's first arrival in the Saudi era? Kieran Trippier, a solid English right back.

Indeed, Newcastle's transfer strategy has been sensible rather than spectacular, with the new owners keeping within financial limits in their slow build and operating like a normal club when it clearly isn't anymore.

Newcastle, having joined the ranks of the state-owned clubs, will likely be a force at the top of English and European soccer for years to come — but maybe not this season given the scenario it currently finds itself in. (AP)



## INTER MILAN LEAD THE LEAGUE, TWO POINTS AHEAD OF JUVENTUS

# Empoli draw with Lecce, Cagliari win from behind in Serie A

**ROME, Dec 12:** Empoli drew at home to Lecce 1-1 and extended the visitor's winless run to 10 matches in Serie A on Monday.

Also, Cagliari scored twice in injury time to beat visiting Sassuolo 2-1 and move out of the relegation places into 16th place, one behind Sassuolo.

It was the fourth game in a row Lecce drew and it moved to 17 points, five ahead of Empoli, which sat one place above the relegation zone.

It could have been different for Lecce after it took the lead in the 64th minute thanks to a goalkeeping error by Etrit Berisha. Zambian winger Lameck Banda tried his luck from almost 30 meters out, and although the shot appeared to pose little danger it bounced right in front of Berisha and between his legs.

Empoli, though, struck back seven minutes later with an equally fortunate goal. Defender Hamza Rafia stuck out a leg to stop a cross from the right but the ball hit his knee and deflected in over his own keeper.

Sassuolo scored against Cagliari after seven minutes thanks to a Martin Erlic header, and was managing well even after a red card for defender Ruan Tressoldi 17 minutes into the second half.

But injury time was action-packed. Just seconds after Sassuolo saw a second goal ruled out for offside, Gianluca Lapadula equalized. Then, with almost the last kick of the game, Leonardo Pavoletti scored from an overhead kick to put Cagliari ahead and give the Sardinian side only its third win of the league.

Inter Milan leads the league, two points ahead of Juventus. (AP)



## 1 in 5 players at Women's World Cup abused online, FIFA says

**ZURICH, SWITZERLAND, Dec 12:** Players at the Women's World Cup were 29% more likely to receive online abuse than those at the men's tournament in 2022, said a report published on Monday.

One in five players (152) at the Women's World Cup received "targeted discriminatory, abusive or threatening messaging," according to FIFA and global players' association FIFPRO.

They released data from FIFA's Social Media Protection Service (SMPS), which tries to help shield players, teams and officials from online abuse and hate speech.

Almost 50% of "detected and verified" abusive messages were homophobic, sexual and sexist, SMPS added.

"The abuse that persists online impacts football players all over the world and it cannot be ignored. This toxic online environment is a risky place to be in for players and it affects their mental

health and wellbeing," FIFPRO president David Aganzo said. "Football has a responsibility to protect the players around their workspace."

The SMPS was launched last year and has been used in eight FIFA tournaments. It uses artificial intelligence to try and prevent abuse on participants' social media feeds.

The report analysed abusive content from all the major social media platforms during the Women's World Cup co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand in July and August. FIFA said 5.1 million posts and comments in 35 different languages were analysed. More than 400,000 comments were reported and hidden.

"There can be no place on social media for those who abuse or threaten anyone, be that in FIFA tournaments or elsewhere," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said. "Discrimination has no place in football and no place in society." (AP)

## No. 10 Gonzaga rebound from loss, roll past Mississippi Valley State 78-40

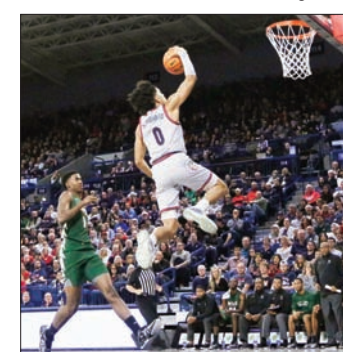
**SPOKANE, Wash., Dec 12:** Braden Huff scored 17 points, Graham Ike added 13 points and eight rebounds, and No. 10 Gonzaga cruised to a 78-40 victory over Mississippi Valley State on Monday night.

The Bulldogs (8-2) earned their 11th straight home win and bounced back from a 78-73 loss on the road to Washington last Saturday. "Nobody was too happy with how things went (against Washington), so to get that bad taste out of our mouths and play 48 hours later was nice for us to kind of get this one done," Huff said.

Ben Gregg added 11 points and four rebounds off the bench for the Bulldogs. Anton Watson had eight points, four rebounds and three assists.

Mississippi Valley State (0-10) was led by Rayquan Brown, who finished with 19 points and nine rebounds. Brown was the only Delta Devils player who scored more than five.

The Bulldogs opened the game



on a 14-2 run, making six of their first nine shots. Gonzaga went on another spree midway through the first half, scoring 11 straight points to expand its lead to 18, and led 38-18 at halftime.

Huff and Gregg had nine points each in the second half to help the Bulldogs go on several more scoring runs, including an 11-0 stretch to go up by 31 with 13 minutes left. Gonzaga led by as many as 41.

Gonzaga scored 36 points in the paint, but was just 5 of 24 from 3-point range.

"We're taking the right shots," coach Mark Few said. "It's just shooting — you've got to take the right shots, do your prep and get your reps in."

Mississippi Valley State shot 29.1% overall and was outrebounded 42-33.

Gonzaga returns to action Friday for a neutral-site game against UConn in Seattle. It will be the first matchup between the programs since the Huskies rolled to an 82-54 win in the Elite Eight of last season's NCAA Tournament.

"You come to a school like (Gonzaga) to play big games like that," Huff said. "It's going to be a fun one. I'm excited to play them in Seattle in front of what should be a lot of our fans and hopefully we get a good crowd and come out with a lot of energy." Mississippi Valley State: The Delta Devils are one of two winless teams in the SWAC. It's been a brutal early slate with losses to Gonzaga, UConn, LSU, Oklahoma and TCU. (AP)

# India banking on coach Amol Mazumdar's experience to get into Test mindset: Mandhana

**NAVI MUMBAI, Dec 12:** With the Indian women's team lacking enough red-ball exposure, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana said her young teammates are picking the brains of new head coach Amol Mazumdar to get into red-ball mindset ahead of the one-off Test against England.

Two years ago, India had played a couple of Tests in England and Australia in June and September with both the four-day games ending in draws.

In comparison, England have had a more recent experience of playing red-ball cricket as their last game was against Australia in the Women's Ashes in June this year.

Mandhana, who herself has played just four Tests in a decade-long career, feels the presence of Mazumdar, a former domestic player and captain, will be crucial as they prepare for the four-day game starting here on Thursday.



"We have an experienced coach in Amol sir. He has played so much of Ranji Trophy cricket and is used to playing a lot of four-

day (cricket)," Mandhana told the media here ahead of India's training session.

"More than two or three of us,

he has more experience of red-ball cricket. I can see a lot of girls approaching him and asking how his mindset was," she added.

Even though the Indians were away from top-flight red-ball cricket for the past 24 months, they have been training with the red ball under Mazumdar, who was appointed as head coach in October this year.

The team had a training camp in Bengaluru and also took part in an intra-squad match for four days.

"We did have one practice match, all the girls were a part of it. I was not able to play because of a little bit of physical issue but we had a good match in Bangalore for four days, India A versus India A, that was a good prep to get the girls into the habit of playing red-ball cricket," Mandhana said.

"In Bangalore, before the girls left for the zonal (competition), we focussed on both white ball and red ball. Even the players who were not a part of the T20I squad were practicing on their own. Today and tomorrow

(Wednesday) are going to be important."

Both India and England have got only a three-day gap to prepare for the one-off Test to be played at the DY Patil Stadium.

"It starts from today — the mental and physical preparation — and hopefully we can execute what we have thought about the way the Test formats needs us to," Mandhana said.

India will also play a Test against Australia at the Wankhede stadium from December 21.

"It requires both the aspects - the mental and the physical - because the bodies are not used to playing four days of cricket. We generally play T20s and ODIs a lot more which has gaps.

"More than the physical (it) being four days, (we have to be) mentally there, more active, trying to focus on each and every ball, especially the way you bat will change a lot."

Mandhana hoped there would

be more long format games at the international level which would force the national bodies to focus on four-day matches in domestic cricket.

"To be fair, we play a lot of T20Is and one-dayers in the last 4-5 years. The domestic structure is formed in terms of getting us the T20 and one-day experience because we had more World Cups," she said.

"The structure was designed according to that. We did not play as many, of course, I have played only four in 10 years.

"The more amount of Test matches increase internationally, we will see maybe a new tournament in domestic which will be focussed on two-day or four-day, whatever the long form they decide on.

"It is always the international demands, whatever they are, the domestic are designed according to the way the demand is going to be," she added. (PTI)



# Mandhana bats for Women's WTC but England's Beaumont says long way to go

**NAVI MUMBAI, Dec 12:** India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana on Tuesday welcomed the idea of organising a World Test Championship in women's Test cricket, but England veteran Tammy Beaumont said it would be unfair to have such a competition when only three countries are playing regularly.

In men's Test cricket, the ICC's World Test Championship began with 2019-2021 as the first two-year cycle. It is currently in its third edition. The women's game, however, does not have any such competition.

There is a huge disparity among women's teams in terms of playing Test cricket as only England, Australia and India have played in the longest format regularly even though there is a long gap.

"I would love to be a part of the World Test Championship but that is for the boards and the ICC to decide," Mandhana told the media ahead of India's training session here on Tuesday.

"Having watched a lot of men's Test cricket and championships that would be really exciting to be a part of something of that sort. But as I said, that would be their (administrators') decision," she added.

India and England will face-off in a one-off Test starting here on Thursday at the DY Patil Stadium. It will be after two years that the hosts will be playing a Test.

For England, the gap has been of about six months since they last played Tests, taking on Australia in the opening game of the



Women's Ashes which they lost by 89 runs.

The 32-year-old Beaumont, who has featured in eight Tests since her debut 10 years ago, says it is still not the right time for a women's WTC given the existing disparity in terms of number of matches played.

"I do not think it is quite the right time, if

I am honest. At the moment there is only three or four nations that are playing Test match cricket regularly and potentially (there are) only three or four governing bodies that can afford to host women's Test cricket," Beaumont said.

The England batter said she does not ex-

pect ICC to be investing into any such tournament.

"That will have to be a very big investment from the ICC. I do not think they are probably willing to put into," she said.

Beaumont advocated the countries to have more matches during a bilateral tour and get other nations like Pakistan, Sri Lanka and New Zealand playing more women's Test cricket.

"They are still trying to develop the T20 game across the globe, the way you have seen Thailand and other countries come into T20 cricket. I think that should stay as a focus, however, I would love to see more nations do maybe like a multi-format series like we do in the Ashes," she said.

"So say, India come over and we do Test match, ODI and T20Is and (get an) overall winner from that. We do that from South Africa and New Zealand and all those teams and build from there."

"One day, I would love to see a World Test Championship but at the moment I do not think it would be fair when you have India, Australia and England have played a lot of Tests in the last four years but other teams like Pakistan, Sri Lanka and New Zealand have not played any Test cricket in the last 15 years," Beaumont added.

"The imbalance is still there, we need to build it from ground up a little bit longer and definitely have many Tests," said the England opening batter. (PTI)

## KASAGFC shines in Assam State Women League



**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Dec 12:** The Karbi Anglong Sports Association Girls Football Club (KASAGFC), in their third encounter of the 1st Assam State Women's Football League organised by Assam Football Association (AFA), defeated Duliyan Tea Estate FC by 2-1 in the match played at Bijni stadium, Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). For KASA FC, Meghasmita Kropi has scored two goals. The first goal came in 63 minutes assisted by Ahoi Kipgen and the second goal was scored in 77 minutes through an assist by Dorothy Oreyia.

In their second encounter with Awanche Sports Club played on December 10 at Bijni stadium, Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) the KASA girls won 2-0. Their first match was played on December 9 with Royal Brothers FC. The KASA girls won the match by 4-0. Their next match will be on December 14 with OIL, Dibrugarh. The KASA girls after three matches have collected 9 points and are top of the table in Pool -B.

Team manager is Longbamon Terang and the coach is Rostom Engti. There are 12 clubs participating in the league.

## Mirabai Chanu set to miss Asian Championships

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Injured Mirabai Chanu's return to the weightlifting arena has been further delayed as the Olympic silver medalist is set to miss the Asian Championships in February next year.

Chanu, who competes in the 49kg weight class, is still recovering from the hip tendinitis injury she sustained in October while competing at the Asian Games.

The former world champion, who did not lift any weight at the ongoing IWF Grand Prix II, was earlier targeting to get fit by the Asian Championships, scheduled to take place from February 3 to 10 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

"I will not participate in the Asian Championship this time. Instead, I will participate in the World Cup," Chanu told PTI on Tuesday.

Under the Paris Olympic qualification rules, a lifter has to compulsorily compete in the 2023 World Championships and the 2024 World Cup, slated from March 31 to April 11 in Phuket, Thailand.

Apart from the above, the lifter also has to participate in three of the following events — the 2022 World Championships, the 2023 and 2024 Continental Championships, the 2023 Grand Prix I and the 2023 Grand Prix II.

Chanu, who is undergoing rehab in Patiala, is also planning to travel to the USA in February to work



with Dr. Aaron Horschig, a former weightlifter-turned-physical therapist and strength and conditioning coach in the US.

Chanu has been consulting Horschig since 2020.

"Right now because of injury, I have not planned for a trip abroad. But most likely in February, I will travel to the USA to my physiotherapist to do muscle strengthening and some high performance training."

"I feel more comfortable with my trainer in the US to do training. He helps me a lot, my overall performance also gets better. A foreign

coach is not needed. A good physiotherapist can help you train well," she added.

Missing the Asian Championships will not hamper Chanu's qualification chance. The 29-year-old is currently ranked second in the Olympic Qualification Ranking (OQR). The list will be updated after the conclusion of the Grand Prix II.

"I am still in rehab at Patiala. But I am trying my best to change the colour of the medal this time around and give my best for sure to make the Indian flag fly high in Paris." (PTI)

## Amee in hunt for a treble

**CHENNAI, Dec 12:** Defending champion Amee Kamani kept herself in the hunt for a treble by making the quarterfinals of the 15 Red women's snooker at 90th Senior Nationals for cue sports here on Tuesday.

Two days after regaining the women's 6-Red snooker crown, Amee beat Snenrtha Babu of Tamil Nadu 2-0 (65-12, 55-44) in the pre-quarterfinals.

She thus set her eyes on repeating the treble -- 6-Red snooker, 15-Red snooker and billiards in the same year -- a feat she achieved in 2017.

Meanwhile, the experienced R Umadevi led a Karnataka trio that included Vidya Pillai and last year's runner-up Keerthana Pandian into the quarters, while Tamil Nadu's Anupama Ramachandran and RT Mohita also advanced to the last-8 stage.

In the men's snooker round-robin league, Abdul Khader (TN) edged out Shoaib Khan (RSPB) and Anuj Uppal (Delhi) beat Shahbhaz Adil Khan (PSPB) by an identical margin. (PTI)

taking mindset," she said.

"Potentially won't have quite as funky fields as Ben Stokes in the Ashes when he was at silly point to a seamer but at the same time we want to try and inspire the next generation of female cricketers not just in England but across the world," added the opening batter.

Beaumont said despite the lack of playing red-ball cricket, she expects hosts India to have more knowledge of the conditions.

"We tend to focus on ourselves, we are feeling happy and how we want to play our red-ball cricket and what our method is and what our ethos are around it," she said.

"Having regular Test matches have helped us get to this point but again India have probably played more in the last 2-3 years than they have done in the last 10 years."

"I am sure they have got their learnings and probably have little more knowledge of the surface here at the DY Patil, having played here in the WPL and other times," Beaumont added.

Beaumont struck 208 in the Women's Ashes Test in June, a knock that the batter says unlocked new aspects of her game.

"Took a lot of learning from that. It unlocked something in terms of how I want to play red-ball cricket and actually play a long innings across a couple of days," she said.

"In particular, how we want to play Test cricket. My dad reminds me every time that you start on nought, so, I am not going to be thinking I am on 208 but it gave me a lot of confidence knowing I can do it and I have to try and find a way to get somewhere close to that," Beaumont added. (PTI)

media here after England's training session on Tuesday.

"If that goes well, I can see in the future doing two-Test or three-Test series against the top Test nations which will be amazing," she added.

Beaumont said even though on field England's mindset does not look similar to the men's Bazball approach, they share similar values in terms of trying to move the game all the time.

"The mindset is very similar, in terms of, we want to move the game forward at all times and be putting bowlers and batters under pressure. Having that wicket-

## India women's performance against England, Australia could lead to multi-Test series: Beaumont



**NAVI MUMBAI, Dec 12:** England batter Tammy Beaumont feels India's performances in the two women's Tests at home could determine the length of a red-ball series going forward.

The Indian women's team will take on England in a one-off Test starting on December 14, followed by another one-off Test against Australia to be played from December 21-24.

"Every single one of us in the dressing room would love to play more Test cricket. I am interested to see how India cope during our Test then the Australia Test straight after," Beaumont told the

## Junior World Cup Hockey: India sweeps aside the Dutch to cruise to semis



**KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 12**

India produced a spectacular display of grit and character to advance to the semifinals with a thrilling 4-3 win over the Netherlands in the hockey men's Junior World Cup here on Tuesday.

Trailing 0-2 at half-time and 2-3 in the third quarter, India exhibited immense resilience to beat the Dutch in the quarterfinal and set a last four clash against Germany.

The Netherlands set the ball rolling early in the first quarter with a penalty corner conversion from Timo Boers (5').

Despite the Indian side playing a solid defence, Pepijn van der Heijden (16') scored for the Netherlands in the second quarter through another penalty corner conversion taking their lead to 2-0 at half-time.

India came back strongly in the third quarter with a goal from Aditya Lalage (34') assisted by Arajjeet Singh Hundal.

Two minutes later Arajjeet scored the equaliser for India with a penalty stroke. The India colts kept the pressure on the

Dutch but they managed yet another penalty corner that was converted by Olivier Hortensius (44') late in the third quarter as the Netherlands snatched a narrow lead of one goal at the end of the third quarter.

With less than ten minutes remaining, the Indians raised the tempo of their game and it proved fruitful as Sourabh Anand Kushwaha (52') found the back of the net off a rebound following a brilliant attack to get the score reading 3-3.

Another opportunity for a penalty corner conversion was created, this time in favour of India and they made full use of it with captain Uttam Singh (57') scoring to put India ahead with just three minutes left.

India colts victory was backed by a grand show of character to hold off pressure from the Dutch side, and the cynosure of India's defence was Rohit who was hard to breach – as he blocked away six successive PCs in the final quarter ensuring India emerge victorious. He was awarded player of the match for his efforts. (PTI)

## It was a fair decision: Woakes on being left out of India Test

**BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS), Dec 12:** Pacer Chris Woakes conceded that England took a fair call by leaving him out of the Test series against India given his record in the sub continent.

The 34-year-old was not included in England's 16-member squad for the five-match Test series, starting January 25 in Hyderabad and Woakes said he was at ease with the decision.

"It's mixed emotions," Woakes was quoted as saying by 'ESPN-Cricinfo'.

"Whenever there's a Test squad announcement, you're always desperate to be in it. But at the same time, at my age, with my away record - particularly in the subcontinent - I feel like it's a fair decision," he added.

Woakes has done well in home conditions, boasting of a bowling average of 21.88 but it balloons to 51.88 overseas. In the three Tests in India in 2016, Woakes managed only three wickets at a cost of \$1.3.

"We had conversations about where my best cricket is likely to be played moving forward and naturally in Test cricket, it looks likely to be at home."

"It doesn't mean to say that when there's not subcontinent tours that I won't be available. But I feel at ease with the decision, if that makes sense. The communication was good, I know where I stand so it's fine by me."

The last time Woakes played an away Test series, it didn't go so well. In the absence of veterans James Anderson and Stuart Broad, Woakes had been promoted to the role of an opener. But he could manage only five scalps in three Tests at an average of 48.80.

"I tried to bowl my heart out and really struggled with my body. My

knee was sore at the time, I ended up having surgery after that and I missed six months of cricket."

Woakes feels missing the tour of India could help extend his career.

"I wouldn't want that to be the same case going to India, bowling on tracks which are unresponsive to my type of bowling; slamming the front knee down at 34 is not really ideal when I want to play a lot of white-ball cricket moving forward."

"It's different when that's just your sole focus but when you want to play all forms, it makes it a wise decision."

Former England skipper Michael Vaughan believes the all-rounder deserved to be part of the squad.

"It tells you England think he can't bowl in India, it's as simple as that. I'm staggered by it really," Vaughan told foxsports.com.au.

"That you've got a player that came into the Ashes with Mark Wood and they were 2-0 down against Australia in three Test matches. To think a few months later (he's left out), his all-round ability, he bats well, fields well and I guess they just feel he has been in those conditions before in the past and he's not going to have an impact."

Woakes had played a vital role as England fought back from 0-2 to draw the Ashes 2-2 earlier this year. The pacer was adjudged the player of the series during the Ashes earlier this year.

"They are clearly thinking it's going to be a five-match series where spin is going to play a prominent part."

"I think England are thinking they are probably only going to play two seam bowlers and with that Woakes is not the kind of seamer they are going to require in Indian conditions. (PTI)

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