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**6 WORLD** ● UK extends visas for Ukrainians amid war in Europe

**7 NATION** ● PML-N, PPP fail to reach consensus on power-sharing formula

● Pak increases telecom towers in PoK to help terror groups: Officials

● Double engine govt means 'double blow' to unemployed: Rahul slams BJP

Vol .No. XXV Issue No. 40 RNI-ASSEN/2000/12862 DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2024 PAGES 8 PRICE ₹ 8

**Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee Prosperity of farmers**

**1 lakh 25 thousand PM Kisan Samridhi Kendras developed as one stop shop; Farmers are getting modern facilities and information close to home**

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

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**HT BRIEFS**

**VP two day visit**

**ITANAGAR:** Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar will arrive here on February 20 on a two-day maiden visit to Arunachal Pradesh. The vice president will attend the 38th Statehood Day celebration at Indira Gandhi Park here besides other official programmes, official sources said. Dhankhar will also attend the state award ceremony at Raj Bhawan on February 21. Meanwhile, Capital Deputy Commissioner Talo Potom in an executive order has promulgated 144 CrPc within a radius of 500 metres around Raj Bhawan here from Saturday, apprehending disturbance of public peace and tranquillity. The order has prohibited the assembly or gathering of more than four persons. It, however, exempted government officials, security forces and invites to the said programme. The prohibitory order would remain in force till February 21.

**UPPL party**

**KOKRAJHAR:** Bringing a surging message of gaining up mass momentum of UPPL party, social activist Birkhang Boro formally joined the ruling party United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) along with his over thousand supporters at a programme held at Habrubarri playground under Dotma constituency in Kokrajhar district on Sunday. He comes from the greater Dotma area by profession of businessman. Boro, and several hundred new members from different political parties and social organisations, including BPF, AAP, Manav Seva Sangha have joined the UPPL party amidst presence of Raju Kumar Narzary, UPPL general secretary, senior party leaders.

**Best director**

**SHILLONG:** Meghalaya-based filmmaker, Simi Khongtiang, won the "Best Director" Award for her film 'Ka Chithi' at the Prag Cine Awards, 2024, North East India. The event was held in Jorhat on February 16, 2024. Her film in the Jaintia language was nominated in three categories, namely, "Best Film", "Best Actor (Female)" and "Best Director". "This is certainly a proud moment for the 'Ka Chithi' family."

## Conrad bats for ILP to tackle CAA 'spillover effect'

Schedule 6 exempts Meghalaya from CAA ambit

**SHILLONG, Feb 18:** Concerns of Meghalaya over the Citizenship Amendment Act have been addressed as most areas of the state come under Schedule 6, which is exempted from the citizenship law, chief minister Conrad Sangma said, even as he added that the Inner Line Permit (ILP), which will restrict the entry of outsiders. In an interview to PTI, Sangma, who also heads the National People's Party (NPP), expressed concern over 'spillover effect' in the state if the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is implemented, and stressed on the requirement for Inner Line Permit (ILP), which will restrict the entry of outsiders. Asked about the CAA, the state that shares more than 400-km-long border with Bangladesh, Sangma said his concerns have been addressed as it excludes Schedule 6 areas. "When the CAA had come out in the first draft, there was no provision of exemption for any state. After we raised the concern, we met the home minister, we met other leaders, then there was a revision in the entire draft and they



came up with a provision where Meghalaya and other areas with Sixth Schedule and ILP were exempted," Sangma said. "In every area in Meghalaya, except a few square metres in Shillong... a small area which we call the European ward, is the only area which is a non-scheduled area. Majority of the state is a scheduled area. Once an exemption is there, we don't have any concerns. So our concerns have been addressed," Sangma said. "We have just requested the Government of India if we can still have the ILP... Because whatever happens in other states could have a spill-over effect here, we have requested for that. We are happy that the Government of India exempted Meghalaya. We have asked if the non-scheduled area can also be exempted, though it is very very small," he said. He also mentioned a resolution passed by the state Assembly to extend the ILP to the state. (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

## Tension grips Karbi Anglong and WKA amidst social unrest

**DIPHU, Feb 18:** The atmosphere in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts remained tense yet manageable, with no major incidents reported, although the prices of essential commodities have surged by over 100 per cent. Both hill districts are experiencing an unofficial shutdown, as no specific organisation has claimed responsibility for the bandh. Commercial activities have ground to a halt, with private vehicle movement notably scarce. The current state of affairs stems from an attack on the evening of February 15 targeting activists from the

Karbi Students Association (KSA). The assault occurred at Kheroni Sariali as the activists were returning from a protest demonstration against the demands of the Rachnatmak Nonia Sanyukta Sangh (RNSS) regarding land rights on Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) and Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR). Despite the prevailing tensions, the popular weekly market in Diphu, known as the Sunday Market, commenced operations. However, prices of perishables, particularly tomatoes, surged from ₹ 20/- per kg to ₹ 50/- per kg, marking a staggering 150 per cent increase. (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

## 10 coal miners abducted by suspected militants in Arunachal

**DIBRUGARH, Feb 18:** In a significant development, at least 10 coal miners working at the coal mine in the Finboro area of Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh, were reportedly abducted on Sunday by suspected cadres of The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I).

Speaking on the incident, Tinsukia Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhijit Gurav stated that the abduction occurred in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. "We are yet to confirm the exact number of people abducted, but it has been confirmed that some individuals working in the Finboro area were taken. It's unclear whether workers from Assam were among those abducted. We hope to have more clarity soon," said Tinsukia SP. Further, sources claimed that a group of suspected militants, consisting of seven members, abducted the workers at gunpoint and transported them in a dumper to Old Longto, a remote area in Arunachal Pradesh. One of the abducted individuals has been identified as



Gyan Thapa. "The security forces have initiated a large-scale search operation to locate the abducted workers," the sources added. However, the motive behind the abduction by the militant groups is yet to be ascertained. "Tirap, Longding, and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh have been heavily affected by insurgent activities due to their proximity to Myanmar. Many militants, (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

## UNLFP cadres involved in violence in Manipur despite ceasefire, say officials

**NEW DELHI/IMPHAL, Feb 18:** Security agencies have voiced concerns over the escalating violence in Manipur perpetrated by the banned United National Liberation Front (UNLFP) despite the armed group signing a ceasefire agreement with the Union government last November, officials said on Sunday. Led by Kh Pambai, the UNLFP (P) became on November 29, 2023 the first Meitei armed group in the Imphal Valley to enter into a ceasefire agreement with the government and agreed to renounce violence. However, officials said the group has failed to disclose the number of its cadres who were supposed to be kept in a secure area, and they have not surrendered their weapons either. Reports also indicate the group's members have been setting up camps in the outskirts of areas predominantly inhabited by the Kuki population with an aim to target the tribal, the officials said. They said that based on the

## Jaishankar meets Chinese counterpart in Germany

**BEIJING/MUNICH, Feb 18:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi have met briefly in Germany on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, their first meeting in more than six months. Video footage from the Munich Security Conference showed Jaishankar and Wang having a brief chat on the sidelines of the prestigious event attended by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other top diplomats from across the world. However, there is no official word on the gist of their discussion from both capitals. This was the first meeting between the two leaders in over six months. The two last met in July in the Indonesian capital Jakarta at the ASEAN Regional Forum. The India-China relations have remained frozen since May 2020 when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) amassed troops in eastern Ladakh led to a deadly clash. Since then both countries have held 20 rounds of corps commanders-level talks and agreed to pull back forces at four points. India is pressing the PLA to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas, maintaining that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal. Wang along with Jaishankar and a host of ministers from various countries attended the Munich Security Conference, an important forum for the exchange of views by global policymakers. Wang in his address to the conference on Saturday said protectionism and concerns about security have impacted the world economy, while unilateralism and bloc politics have dealt a heavy blow to the international system, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. (PTI)

## Opposition lacks road map for 'Viksit Bharat', only BJP can deliver it: PM Modi

**NEW DELHI, Feb 18:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Sunday that the BJP's return to power with a strong mandate is the first condition for India to realise its big goals as he exhorted thousands of party members to work with renewed energy, vigour and enthusiasm for the next 100 days to ensure a big victory. Addressing nearly 11,500 BJP delegates from across the country at Bharat Mandapam here, he said he is seeking power not for "satta bhog" (enjoying power) but for the country's benefit, and slammed the opposition, especially the Congress, saying they make all kinds of false promises but lack a road map for making the country developed. This is something only the BJP can do, he said, exuding confidence about his return to power while noting that many foreign coun-

tries have invited him for engagements in July, August and September. This suggests that these countries also know that "aayega toh Modi hi" (Modi's re-election is inevitable). In his 65-minute valedictory speech at the BJP's national convention ahead of the Lok Sabha elections expected in April-May, the prime minister stuck to the message of the country's growth and rising global standing besides his government's measures for empowering every section of society, especially the poor. He asked BJP members to connect with all sections of society, including those who have not been inclined to the party, saying they have to earn the trust of everyone. When everyone makes an effort, then the BJP will win more than 370 seats and the NDA led by it 400-plus seats in the 543-member (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

## Tribal body urges govt employees to refrain from going to office over cop's suspension

**IMPHAL, Feb 18:** The Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) has urged government employees in Manipur's Churachandpur district to refrain from attending work from Monday over the suspension of a head constable who was allegedly seen with armed men in a video grab. The tribal outfit has made the call to press for its demand for the revocation of the suspension of head constable Siamlpaual and "immediate replacement" of superintendent of police Shivannar Surve and deputy commissioner Dharun Kumar. At least two people were killed and 30 injured in firing by security forces after a mob barged into a government complex housing the SP and DC offices, torched vehicles and ransacked government property in Churachandpur, hours after the suspension of the



head constable on February 15. "More than 24 hours have passed since the ITLF gave an ultimatum to cancel the suspension order of head constable Siamlpaual (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

## The conference targeted a wide range of audience and participants from across the globe International meet moots collaborations for skilling North East youths

**GUWAHATI, Feb 18:** Collaborations with foreign institutions for developing skills in youths of the North Eastern region in the electronics and IT sector and aligning their education with industry needs were mooted during an international conference here on digital technologies, an official release said on Sunday. The importance of international internship and leveraging online platforms and smart classroom concepts for the maximum benefit of the students were also explored during the two-day meet, which concluded on Saturday. The conference targeted a wide range of audience and participants from across the globe covering researchers, academicians and industry professionals, the release said.



In his keynote address, Prof Rajeev Ahuja, director of IIT Ropar, underlined the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration, emphasising the collective strength that emerges when di-

verse expertise converges towards shared goals. During the discussions at the conference organised by the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT), Karel Sterckx from Bangkok University spoke about collaboration models in Thailand and the variety's internship programme. He emphasised the importance of international internship programs in exposing students to diverse cultural and engineering perspectives. Sterckx also highlighted the benefits of hosting students from different countries, including India, and the opportunities for collaboration that arise from such exchanges. Nitin Kumar Tripathi, acting vice-president for Academic Affairs at the (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

## Centre 'deactivating' Aadhaar cards to stop people from getting welfare scheme benefits: Mamata

**SURI (WB), Feb 18:** West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday alleged that the BJP-led central government "deactivated" Aadhaar cards of people in the state ahead of the Lok Sabha polls to stop them from availing the benefits of various social welfare schemes. Speaking at a public distribution programme here in Birbhum district, Banerjee said her government would continue with the state-run welfare programmes irrespective of the beneficiaries not having an Aadhaar card. "Be careful, they (BJP-led Centre) are deactivating Aadhaar cards. Several Aadhaar cards have been made inactive in many districts of Bengal. They are doing this so that people do not get benefits of schemes like 'Lakshmi Bhandar' through bank transfer and free ration before the polls," she claimed. "My clear instruction to the chief secretary is to ensure that people are not deprived of the benefits even if they do not have active Aadhaar cards. People of

Bengal need not be worried. I am there for you," the CM said. She alleged that Aadhaar cards of 50 people at Jamalpur in Purba Bardhaman district and several others in Birbhum, North and South 24 Parganas as well as in North Bengal have been "delinked". "If I get to know that they (BJP-led Centre) have a hidden agenda behind deactivating Aadhaar cards, I will not allow a single scheme to be linked with those documents," she said. "First, the Union government asked people to obtain Aadhaar cards, even for admission to schools. And now, it is deactivating the unique identity numbers without informing you... How many such cards do people need? What will they do with so many of these?" the chief minister said. Banerjee also directed the chief secretary to launch an online portal where people, "whose Aadhaar cards have been deactivated", could lodge their complaints. She said that if banks don't allow transactions for customers without Aadhaar cards, (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)



## Excitement mounts as new model college set to open in Sonitpur

### CM Himanta to inaugurate college building in March



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Feb 18: Sonitpur district is abuzz with excitement as preparations are underway for the formal inauguration of the much-anticipated Government Model College in the Balipara-Mansiri area under the jurisdiction of Chariduar Police Station.

Scheduled to be officially inaugurated by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, in the first week of March, the college marks a significant addition to the higher education landscape in the district.

The Government Model College, Balipara, sanctioned by the Government of Assam under order no ecf. 291750 dated July 31, 2023, with a focus on Arts stream, has created 18 assistant professor positions across six

subjects.

Dr Ranjan Kalita, principal of Rangapara College, has been entrusted with the additional responsibility of serving as the in-charge principal of the new Government Model College in Balipara, ensuring the seamless functioning of academic and administrative operations.

"Students have been admitted for the BA first semester for the academic session 2023-24.

Presently, the college is operating from the Rangapara College campus, with civil works on the college building completed by the Public Works Department (PWD), poised for formal inauguration by the chief minister in the first week of March," stated Dr Kalita.

In a significant development

enhancing the academic prowess of Balipara Government Model College, 14 out of 17 newly appointed assistant professors have joined the institution, injecting a wave of enthusiasm into the faculty.

Notable additions include Dr Manisha Bordoilo, Dr Masuma Firdaus, Moushumi Pathak, Biswajit Saikia, Rajen Timung, Bhargav Das, Amanisha Borah, Biki Boro, Bismita Deka, Priyanka Sarkar, Hemanga Gogoi, Sushma Das Biswas, Jyotisika Bhuyan, and Dikhya Rani Gogoi, with the remaining three teachers set to join next Monday.

Simultaneously, three newly appointed assistant professors, namely Bikhita Saikia, Priyadarshini Baruah, and

Shivam Yadubonshi, have commenced their roles at Rangapara College.

Deba Kumar Mishra, district collector of Sonitpur and chairman of the Governing Body, along with Dr Ranjan Kalita, principal of Rangapara College & Government Model College, expressed their delight at the recruitment of the new assistant professors, underscoring the institutions' commitment to fostering an environment of continuous growth and learning.

With these accomplished professionals on board, Government Model College, Balipara, and Rangapara Colleges are poised to embark on an enriching academic journey, ensuring a brighter future for their students.

FIR against additional secretary Jitendra Gupta and two other officials

## CBI filing FIR against Nagaland officials was on expected lines: NPCC

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Feb 18: The Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) said the recent filing of an FIR by the CBI against additional secretary of the Nagaland agriculture department and two other high-ranking officials working in the Fostering Climate-Resilient Upland Farming System (FOCUS) project in the state in a bribery case involving more than ₹ 2 crore was on expected lines considering the "stranglehold" of corruption at all levels of governance in the state authored and patronised by the "morally bankrupt" oppositionless state government.

The CBI filed the FIR against additional secretary Jitendra Gupta and two other officials working in the FOCUS project for allegedly receiving bribes of more than ₹ 2 crore.

According to reports, the central agency had filed the FIR against the trio following a complaint from the air intelligence unit of the income tax department that they were travelling from Dimapur to New Delhi in a flight on December 17, 2023,



allegedly with huge cash.

In a release issued by its communication department on Sunday, the NPCC lauded the welcome intervention of the law enforcement agency in the case. However, it said, it is nowhere near enough because what is being witnessed is just the tip of an all-pervasive mammoth iceberg of cancer eating away at the rights and wellbeing of the common people of Nagaland, one painful bite at a time.

"The rot is systemic, entrenched,

and starts at the top, necessitating a troubleshooting exercise at a scale much more proportionate than the one under play now," the NPCC said.

Strongly condemning what it called the vulgar fallout of corruption unfolding before "our eyes", the Pradesh Congress Committee called upon the powers that be to mend their ways lest the "culture of decadence and ineptitude that they so shamelessly espouse now drags us all down to a point of no return".

## RPF apprehends 6 persons involved in passenger belongings theft

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 18: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of NF Railway, while conducting regular checks and drives within the zone from February 13 to 16, 2024, apprehended 6 persons involved in the theft of passengers' belongings.

During these checks at different stations and on trains, they successfully recovered valuables worth approximately ₹ 72.5 thousand from trains and railway stations at Guwahati, Dimapur, Kishanganj, Katihar, Alipurduar, New Jalpaiguri, etc.

All the apprehended persons, along with the recovered valuables, were handed over to the respective in-charge of GRP for further legal actions.

In a recent incident on February 16, 2024, RPF of Alipurduar jointly with CPDS and CIB teams of Alipurduar conducted checking on train no 02517 UP (Kolkata-Guwahati Special) and apprehended one person with two stolen mobile phones worth around ₹ 20 thousand.

On the same day, the RPF team of Guwahati jointly with the CIB team of Guwahati conducted a check at Guwahati Railway Station and apprehended one person with two stolen mobile phones worth around ₹ 10 thousand.

On February 15, 2024, the RPF train escort team of New Jalpaiguri, while escorting train no 15657 UP (Brahmaputra Mail), apprehended one person with two stolen mobile

phones worth around ₹ 9.5 thousand.

On February 14, 2024, the RPF team of Katihar (East), jointly with the CPDS team and GRP of Katihar, conducted a check at Katihar Railway Station and apprehended one person and recovered one stolen lady purse containing cash worth ₹ 3 thousand. On the same day, the RPF team of Kishanganj, jointly with the CIB team of New Jalpaiguri, conducted a check at Kishanganj railway station and apprehended one person and recovered one stolen mobile phone worth around ₹ 15 thousand.

On February 13, 2024, the RPF team of Dimapur conducted a check on train no 15666 DN (BG Express) at Dimapur Railway Station and apprehended one person and recovered one stolen mobile phone worth around ₹ 15 thousand.

During the month of January 2024, the RPF of NFR arrested 30 persons involved in the theft of passengers' belongings and recovered 40 mobile phones, 1 laptop & cash, etc., totalling around ₹ 6.52 lakhs. All the apprehended persons, along with the recovered valuables, were handed over to the respective in-charge of GRP for further legal actions.

The RPF of NF Railway is always ready to provide services to extend guidance and assistance to rail users besides their task of ensuring security for passengers. Railway passengers can dial 139 (toll-free) if they come across any problems during their train journey.

## Conflict erupts during Ali Aye Ligang celebrations

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Feb 18: The tranquil evening of February 15 in Borguri Mising Gaon near Demow was intended for a jubilant celebration of Ali Aye Ligang, a cherished cultural event. However, the atmosphere turned tense as a section of guardians residing in Borguri Gaon and its surroundings expressed apprehensions regarding the timing of the event, coinciding with the ongoing HSLC and HS Final Examinations 2024.

In response to the concerns raised, the Nitaipukhuri Outpost was promptly alerted. Subsequently, Nitaipukhuri Police arrived on the scene, urging the organisers to bring the festivities to a halt. Unfortunately, what began as an attempt to address community concerns quickly escalated into a situation marked by heated verbal exchanges and disorder.

The intervention of the Demow Police was necessary to restore order and diffuse the escalating tensions. However, the aftermath of the incident revealed deeper rifts within the community. Reports emerged of physical altercations involving the officer-in-charge (OC) of the Nitaipukhuri Outpost, who allegedly clashed with a prominent BJP

leader from Borguri and several youths associated with the event's organising committee.

The following day saw a show of discontent as supporters of the BJP gathered at the Nitaipukhuri Outpost, demanding accountability and stringent action against the OC. The incident has cast a shadow over the tranquility of the community, prompting discussions about the need for better communication and conflict resolution strategies.

In the wake of the turmoil, plans are underway to transfer the OC of Nitaipukhuri Outpost to the Haluwating Police Station.

## Sivasagar District Senior Citizens' Conference held

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Feb 18: "Vivekananda lived only 39 years, Anandaram Baruah lived only 35 years, and hence we should not measure our lives only by calendar years," said Suresh Saikia, president of the All Assam Senior Citizens' Association, while addressing the Senior Citizens Annual Conference held at Peoli Phukan Stadium on Sunday under the aegis of the Sivasagar District Senior Citizens' Association. Members from 15 regional committees joined the conference.

In the forenoon session, traditional sports were held, inaugurated by Manik Rajkonwar, vice president of the All Assam Senior Citizens' Association. The Gaurisagar team won the tug-of-war contest, defeating Rajgarh. In the women's section, Sivasagar defeated Gargaon.

The open session was presided over by Deven Chandra Baruah, while secretary Dilip Saikia initiated the proceedings. Earlier, traditional sports and games were inaugurated by Manik Rajkonwar, vice president of the association. Radio artist Dilip Das, Manoj Kr Borthakur, Bijumoni Dutta, Anju Sadhanidar, Ranju Phukan, and Haren Buragohain performed modern songs. Robin Borthakur, Jaya Dutta Bhunya, and Yasmin Ara Rajjak recited poems. Indra Bailung, Suresh Chetia, Ajit Khatanari, and Tilak Das performed Bihu and dhol badan.

## Congress' Yatra may not fetch votes: Conrad Sangma

SHILLONG, Feb 18: The Congress' Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, which passed through several northeastern states, has created a "big media buzz" but may not fetch the party votes, Meghalaya Chief Minister and National People's Party president Conrad Sangma has said.

"I don't think they will get the outcome that they desire," he told PTI in an interview.

The amount of energy and resources that the Congress has put in for this Yatra "may not convert into real votes and real seats," Sangma said.

The Yatra, led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, began from Manipur on January 14 and crossed Meghalaya on January 22. It covered five of the eight northeastern states ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, due in April-May.

Sangma said, "When you do something, whatever energy you put, will obviously have some impact in one way or the other. The question is how much impact it will have. The amount of energy that has been put into this Yatra, would it fructify into equivalent amount of votes

being changed or coming in favour of Congress party...I doubt it."

"Yes, it's a big media buzz but winning election is more than just a Yatra. The Congress has a lot of issues internally, organisationally, and there are so many factors that need to be resolved. The Yatra is going on, and so many people are leaving the party. It is reflecting that there is a concern that they need to address, that they have to get their house in order in one way," he said.

Congress' Vincent Pala is the MP from Meghalaya's Shillong constituency, while NPP's Agatha Sangma is the MP from Tura.

The NPP has announced the candidature of state minister Ampareen Lyngdoh from Shillong this time. Agatha Sangma will fight again from Tura.

Asked if the NPP may win the Shillong seat this time, Sangma said, "We never take election lightly, we are working very hard. We never take our opponent easy. It's going to be tough, we will work hard and people will give our candidate an opportunity to represent them in the Lok Sabha." (PTI)

## NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati hosts 'Anand Mela' Former librarian passes away

### Two day event showcases local flavours, handicrafts, and talent

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Feb 18: National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Bongaigaon Salakati, in collaboration with the Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, successfully organised a vibrant two-day 'Anand Mela' on Saturday and Sunday, under the theme 'NTPC Illuminating Lives' at the NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati complex in Kokrajhar.

The Mela was inaugurated by Pradeep Kumar Dwivedi, district commissioner, Kokrajhar, in the presence of Pushpraj Singh, superintendent of police, Kokrajhar, Karunakar Das, business unit head, K C Muraleedharan, CGM, NTPC Bongaigaon, Vani Reddy, and Jhumita Biswas, senior member, Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club. The inauguration ceremony, graced by esteemed guests, marked the beginning of a celebration of culture, community, and creativity.

Over 25 stalls showcased the rich flavours of India through various food items, meticulously prepared by members of the ladies' club, captivating the entire gathering. Additionally, stalls featuring ethnic handicrafts, handlooms, organic food items, and innovative cane and bamboo furniture added to the diverse array of offerings.



Participation from medical, IT, and safety departments, as well as automobile companies, enriched the Mela's offerings, reflecting the region's entrepreneurial spirit and innovation.

Speaking on the occasion, Dwivedi spoke about how NTPC Bongaigaon has been powering the region and the country and congratulated the team of professionals for lighting the nation 24x7.

He expressed his satisfaction with the arrangements of the Mela and the effort by the power station in bringing all vendors and family members under one roof.

Earlier, Karunakar Das, business unit head of the station, expressed his gratitude to Dwivedi and senior management of ER-II headed by Sudip Nag, regional executive director, for showering their blessings on the celebrations.

Cultural performances by troops from BTR and the region showcased the state's rich cultural heritage, while an army band infused the event with patriotic fervour through synchronised symphonics, captivating the audience at the annual mela.

Attendees also enjoyed activities such as game stalls by NTPC employees, stalls from Bal Bhawan, creating a vibrant atmosphere of joy and camaraderie.

In a noble initiative, as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, NTPC Bongaigaon distributed solar lanterns to the 40 GEM Girls of 2023 on the occasion.

The GEM (Girl Empowerment Mission) initiative aims to empower young girls by providing them with access to education, skills training, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. NTPC Bongaigaon recognises the importance of sustainable energy solutions and distributed solar lanterns to the GEM Girls of 2023, enabling them to study and pursue their dreams. Dwivedi and Das personally handed over the solar lanterns to the GEM Girls, emphasising NTPC Bongaigaon's commitment to supporting the education and empowerment of girls in the community.

The distribution of solar lanterns to the GEM Girls represents NTPC Bongaigaon's dedication to leveraging its resources for the betterment of society, particularly in promoting education and gender equality.

The Mela also showcased captivating ethnic dance performances, dynamic fashion shows, and vibrant cultural programs by esteemed artists from both the state and the region, enriching the event's cultural fabric. The presence of IS Reddy, GM (Maintenance), A Biswas, GM (Operation), GM Thangzom, commandant, CISO, A Nallie, general secretary of Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, Ashish Kumar, deputy commandant, CISO, Onkar Nath, AGM(HR), Paresh Mathur, AGM(TS), officials from district and state administration, HODs from various departments, and representatives of unions and associations added to the grandeur of the occasion.

The Anand Mela exemplified NTPC Bongaigaon's commitment to fostering community engagement, promoting local talent, and celebrating the vibrant cultural mosaic of Bodoland Territorial

Former librarian passes away

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Feb 18: Suren Kalita, a revered resident of Seta Satra and former librarian of THB College, breathed his last on Sunday at his residence, succumbing to old age-related ailments.

He was 78 years old. Kalita, a well-known figure in the Jamugurihat area, had deep-rooted associations with numerous socio-cultural organisations in the greater Jamugurihat region. He held the esteemed position of founder librarian at THB College and retired as head librarian in 2005.

The news of his demise has enveloped Jamugurihat in sorrow.

Kalita was admired and respected by many for his contributions to education and culture in the community. He is survived by his daughter, Uddipana Kalita, a scientist who was part of the Chandrayaan II mission, a son, and a large circle of relatives. Various organisations and individuals, including THB College, Bapuji Bhawan Natya Samaj, Baresohoria Bhaona Committee, Naduar Press Club, Jamuguri branch of Sahitya Sammilani, Natun Sahitya Parishad, and All Jamuguri Students' Union, among others, have come forward to pay heartfelt tributes to Suren Kalita, recognising his invaluable contribution to society.









## INDIA REGISTER BIGGEST-EVER TEST WIN

# India annihilate England by 434 runs in 3<sup>rd</sup> Test, take 2-1 lead

**RAJKOT, Feb 18:** Yashasvi Jaiswal's sensational double hundred found harmonious co-existence with the stunning craftiness of five-wicket man Ravindra Jadeja as ruthless India demolished wasteful England by a record 434 runs on the fourth day of the third Test here on Sunday.

England resisted their desire to play 'Bazball' but the Indian bowlers led by Jadeja (5/41) were an irresistible force, as they hustled out the tourists for 122 in their second innings while chasing an improbable 557-run target.

India, now, lead the five-match series 2-1.

This was also India's biggest win in Test cricket in terms of runs, bettering the previous 372-run win over New Zealand at the Wankhede Stadium in 2021.

Jaiswal's unbeaten 214 off 236 balls, in which he equalled the highest number of sixes (12) in a Test innings, was the cornerstone of India's second innings total of 430 for four declared, which gave them a massive lead of 556 runs earlier in the day.

It was also a perfect platform for Jadeja to weave his magic as England's claims of fancying themselves in big chases through an aggressive approach came to

nothing.

India's plan of attacking the wickets took the wind away from the sails of England, whose top order crumbled without any significant contribution.

With Jadeja finding ample support from Kuldeep Yadav (2/19), Jasprit Bumrah (1/18) and Ravichandran Ashwin (1/19), who rejoined the match on this day after attending a medical emergency at home, England found no way out.

Ben Duckett (4) ran himself out, Zak Crawley (11) was trapped leg-before by Bumrah and Jadeja struck twice in quick succession to see the back of Ollie Pope (3) and extended Jonny Bairstow's (4) misery on this tour.

Struggling desperately for runs on this tour, Bairstow was trapped leg-before while trying to sweep Jadeja.

England's hero of the win in the first Test, Pope cut one straight to Rohit Sharma at first slip as Jadeja shook their top-order.

After a brief period of resistance, Joe Root (7) missed a sweep with the umpire declaring him out leg-before off Jadeja, and the replays confirmed that the ball would have flicked the top of off-

stump.

Captain Ben Stokes (15) had a similar fate, missing a sweep off Kuldeep Yadav as England slumped to 50 for six.

Ashwin took the field in the post tea session and contributed his bit with the scalp of Tom Hartley.

For a while, it seemed England would fold for one of their lowest-ever totals against India, but a late burst from Mark Wood (33, 15 balls, 6x4s, 1x6s) took them to 122 from 82 for eight.

But before Jadeja and his horsemen of apocalypse ran through England, Jaiswal and debutant Sarfaraz Khan showcased their brilliance in no little measure.

Shubman Gill too displayed his class with a 91 after India resumed the fourth day from 196 for two. The knock combined with his hundred in the previous Test might have brought him considerable time and confidence.

But none shone as bright as Jaiswal. Having notched up his overall third century and second of the series, Jaiswal continued with his red-hot form to become the first player to hit 20 sixes in a series with two more matches left. (PTI)



## Dhoni picked as skipper of IPL's all-time greatest team

**NEW DELHI, Feb 18:** Iconic Indian cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni was on Sunday selected as the leader of IPL's all-time greatest team which was picked to celebrate the success of world's most-popular T20 league which was launched in 2008.

The selection panel consisted of former cricketers Wasim Akram, Matthew Hayden, Tom Moody and Dale Steyn. About 70 journalists were also part of the selection process. Australia's fiery David Warner and India's batting mainstay Virat Kohli were chosen as openers while 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle was given the number three spot in batting order.

The middle-order consisted of Suresh Raina, AB de Villiers, Suryakumar Yadav and Dhoni, while Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja and Kieron Pollard were the three all-rounders in the 15-member squad.

Rashid Khan, wily Sunil Narine



and Yuzvendra Chahal formed the spin attack while Lasith Malinga and Jasprit Bumrah were the unanimous choice for the fast bowlers' slots. The marquee tournament will complete 16 years of the first-ever IPL auction on February 20, 2024.

In the realm of IPL cricket, few names shine as brightly as that of Dhoni. Widely regarded as one of

the most successful captains in cricket history, his leadership prowess has garnered praise from peers and pundits alike.

Speaking exclusively on the 'Star Sports Incredible 16 of IPL' show, former South Africa fast bowler Dale Steyn echoed sentiments shared by many when he hailed Dhoni as the epitome of leadership excellence.

"It has to be MS Dhoni. He has won everything -- World Cup, IPL, ICC Champions Trophy," said Steyn. "He's a leader of men, and you've got a bunch of men here that are all at the highest level of their game, and they need someone who has been there and done that and can manage them extremely well on and off the field, so I will have to go with MS Dhoni," he said. Former Australia cricketer and coach Tom Moody emphasised on Dhoni's remarkable feat.

"It has to be MS Dhoni for me, the reason being MS Dhoni has won the title with very good squads and average squads, and that tells me a lot about the captain and how he can lead a variety of talent in a squad to success." Rohit Sharma has been a brilliant captain for MI but MI have always had the best squads or up there with the best squads in the IPL since its inception," he said. (PTI)

## Ranji Trophy: Saurashtra secure quarters berth after innings win against Manipur

**RAJKOT, Feb 18:** Saurashtra's veteran left-arm spinner Dharmendrasinh Jadeja bagged his 22nd five-wicket haul as the defending champions scored an innings and 243-run victory against Manipur to move into the Ranji Trophy quarterfinals from Group A here on Sunday.

Saurashtra's victory was a foregone conclusion on day two itself when they had reduced Manipur to 55/3 in their second innings on Saturday, and the task was completed by the 33-year-old Jadeja, who bagged a five-for on day three as the visitors slumped to a big defeat at the Sanosara Cricket Ground.

Manipur had made 142 in the first innings batting first, and following that Saurashtra had declared their lone innings at a

mammoth 529/6.

Manipur then folded up at 144 in 51.5 overs in their second essay to hand over the hosts the victory with a bonus point.

Besides Jadeja (5/55), Yuvraj Singh Dodiya (3/51) and India white-ball pacer Chetan Sakariya (2/28) too contributed to the big win.

The difference in class between Saurashtra and Manipur was all too visible from the opening day of the seventh and concluding round of the Ranji league matches.

After dismissing Manipur for a paltry 142, with Jadeja taking four wickets, Saurashtra piled up tons of runs with stand-in skipper Arpit Vasavada (148), Prerak Mankad (173) and Cheteshwar Pujara (103) scoring centuries as

the home team batters declared at 529/6.

Then, Saurashtra bowlers Sakariya, Jadeja and Dodiya picked up a wicket each in the final session on Saturday to put the hosts in a commanding position. The home team bowlers continued the good work on Sunday bagging the remaining seven wickets.

Saurashtra, with 29 points from seven games, are the only team from the Group A so far to have secured a place in the quarterfinals, while Vidarbha (27 points, six games) and Haryana (24, six games) too are in with a chance to make the grade.

A clear picture will emerge at the conclusion of the seventh round of matches on Monday. (PTI)



## Test cricket is tough, but I'm determined to make it count: Jaiswal

**RAJKOT, Feb 18:** Playing an aggressive brand of cricket, Yashasvi Jaiswal has already hit two double hundreds in his nascent career and the young India opener says though Test cricket is "tough" he believes in making it big after getting a start.

The left-handed attacking opener scored unbeaten 214 off 236 balls to steer India to a commanding 430 for 4 declared in their second innings, setting England a mammoth target of 557 runs.

It was his second double hundred in just six matches, having made his debut against the West Indies in July 2023.

Jaiswal also entered the

record books by hitting the highest number of sixes (12) by an Indian in a Test innings in the Rajkot Test that India won by a massive 434-run margin.

"Test cricket is hard, but I thought that when I'm in there, I need to give my 100 per cent," Jaiswal said after India took a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

"I'm just trying. Whenever I'm set, I try to make it big. Because in Test cricket you never know, when you're playing well you have to make it big."

Analysing his double century, Jaiswal said he just tried to play session by session and



also had to overcome a back problem en route the knock.

"It was pretty difficult for me because initially I wasn't getting runs. So had to play the session, and get set. That's when I felt I could score runs."

"After a while my back was not good. I didn't want to go out (of the field) but since it was too much, I went out. Today when I came, I wanted to make sure that I take the game forward and bat till the end," he said.

The left-hander said as an opener his job is to give the team a good start.

"I felt there was something in the wicket and the ball was hard. For me, it is important

## Indian women clinch historic Gold in Badminton Asia Team Championships

**SHAH ALAM (MALAYSIA), Feb 18:** Anmol Kharb yet again performed when it mattered, winning the decisive fifth rubber to lead the Indian women to a historic Badminton Asia Team Championships title with a tight 3-2 victory over a depleted Thailand, here Sunday.

The young sprightly group of Indian women's team, led by seasoned PV Sindhu, defied all expectations to come up trumps against two-time bronze medalists Thailand.

"I'm very happy that we bagged the gold medal because this is the first time India are winning the gold at the Badminton Asia Team Championships," Anmol said after the match.

"It is a big thing because history has been scripted here. Yesterday (after the semifinal win) it went crazy in India because beating powerhouses like Japan and China was such a big thing. Today, it will be full-on celebration in India and in the team as well."

"I wanted to play my 100 per cent but there was no pressure on me at all. We were confident of winning the fifth match."

It is the first-ever major title for Indian women in team championships and provides a big boost to the side ahead of the Uber Cup, which is set to be held in Chengdu, China from April 28 to May 5.

India had won two medals in the past with the men's team claiming bronze medals in the 2016 and 2020 editions.

Though like most of the teams in the competition, Thailand were not at full strength, they still had higher-ranked players in their side.

Thailand were without their top two singles players -- world No. 13 Ratchanok Intanon and Pornpawee Chochuwong, who is ranked 16th in the world.

Two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu provided India a confident start, riding on her power and placement to outclass world number 17 Supanida Katethong 21-12, 21-12 in the first singles and hand India a 1-0 lead.

World No. 23 Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand then dished out another gritty performance to shock the world number 10 pair of Jongkolpan Kititharakul and

Rawinda Pra Jungjai 21-16, 18-21, 21-16 to put India in the driver's seat.

Playing the second singles against world ranked 18 Busanan Ongbamrungphan, expectations were high from Ashmita Chaliha after her stunning win against former world champion Nozomi Okuhara on Saturday.

The Indian, who had defeated Busanan during the Singapore Open in 2022, stayed in the match till 14-14 in the second game but a string of unforced errors thereafter cost Ashmita dearly as she went down 11-21, 14-21 against her experienced rival.

Young Shruti Mishra and Priya Konjengbam, the senior national champions, then lost 11-21, 9-21 to the world number 13 combination of Benyapa Aimsaard and Nuttakarn Aimsaard to leave the tie evenly poised at 2-2.

Anmol then shouldered the responsibility of taking India through once again, producing a dominating 21-14, 21-9 victory over world number 45 Pornpicha Choeikewong in the deciding third singles.

"It's a big achievement at 17 years old. Now I have to train harder to beat tougher opponents," she said.

Soon after the win, the entire squad got into a huddle to lift Anmol, celebrating the magnificent win at the Setia City Convention Centre.

"It is a great moment for Indian badminton. I give a lot of credit to these youngsters. They displayed great spirit, they were supporting each other and the atmosphere was just like it was when India won the Thomas Cup. So this is a special moment for India," former India coach Vimal Kumar told PTI.

Sindhu opened a 5-1 lead after Supanida struggled with her control in drifty conditions, committing too many unforced errors.

A powerful smash on Supanida's forehead gave Sindhu an 8-2 lead as she kept dictating the terms, moving to a massive 11-4 advantage at the break.

Sindhu played at a good pace and was also far more polished at the net. Soon she was 18-9 up with another lethal jump smash and pocketed the game after her opponent sprayed into the net a couple of times. (PTI)

## Pro League matches are vital for Paris Olympics preparations, says Fulton

**ROURKELA, Feb 18:** Indian men's hockey team chief coach Craig Fulton on Sunday said the ongoing FIH Pro League matches are vital to his team's preparation for the Paris Olympics scheduled for July-August. The Indians have so far played four matches in the Pro League out, winning three and losing one against the mighty Australia. "It (Pro League) gives us 18 games that you are looking in the build up to Paris. So it is important. Whether some teams are putting their strongest teams or not is out of our control," Fulton said during a virtual press conference.

"Everything we are looking forward to is to have more perspective about our game, develop our game with the squad we have."

"We know we can compete in all the games, in different phases we have to do different things and do them better. So the Pro League is really important for now because this is the only competition we have". India captain Harmanpreet Singh too agreed with his coach.

"These are the major matches we are getting before the Olympics and they are very important for us. We started on a good note but as the coach said from the Australia game we have learnt a lot," he said. "We will definitely get a lot of advantage by playing these matches. Before the Olympics these are the games we are getting and we had made a good start as well and these matches will definitely help us in Olympics." (PTI)