

6 WORLD UK Parliament raises concerns over attacks on Hindu minority No relief for arrested Hindu leader in Bangladesh 8 NATION Shinde visits hospital ahead of BJP legislature party meeting Akhilesh blames BJP for Sambhal violence, says focus on Mansarovar

Himanta, 3 Central ministers to Advantage Assam 2.0



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 3: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma held a series of meetings in the national capital aiming to successfully host the investor summit in Assam which is scheduled for February next year.

invite Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @JM\_Scindia ji to the #Advantage-Assam summit to be held in Guwahati on Feb 2025. "We also discussed about the upcoming #AshtalakshmiMahotsav being driven by @MDoNER\_India and avenues related to ongoing development projects in the State," he added.

occurred that included the building of the Kaziranga elevated corridor and Guwahati ring road projects.

The state government has been considering the timely implementation of three flagship projects including the proposed construction of an underwater tunnel in the Brahmaputra River between Gohpur and Numaligarh.

Sarma said that the Union road transport ministry is keen on completing these works within the stipulated time.

In an X post, he said, "Happy to share! Just concluded an excellent meeting with Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @nitin\_gadkari Ji. I am truly impressed by the unwavering support from @MORTHIndia in expediting priority infrastructure projects in Assam ensuring they are completed on time."

He further mentioned that the construction of the Guwahati Ring Road, Kaziranga Elevated Corridor, and underwater tunnel between Gohpur and Numaligarh in the Brahmaputra River will commence in time.

Meanwhile, the works on national highway between Jorhat and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Jaishankar articulates 3 key principles for engagement with China

Gaurav ridicules govt on rise in import from China

NEW DELHI, Dec 3: Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi on Tuesday questioned the rising imports from China at a time when relations between the two countries are strained.

Initiating a debate on the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 in the Lok Sabha, Gogoi wondered how the trade deficit with China has increased when the government claims to have "no relations" with China since 2020.

Earlier today, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar informed the House that India-China ties have been abnormal since 2020 when peace and tranquillity in border areas were disturbed due to Chinese actions.

"The external affairs minister said our relations with China are not same as earlier ... they are not normal. This government's left hand does not know what the right hand is doing," Gogoi said.



"The foreign minister says that ever since we have had clashes with China on border our relation is not same but how is that the import from China has increased... we are importing even more from China, trade deficit with China has increased... is this the proof?" he questioned.

The Deputy Leader of Congress also questioned the government over demonetisation and electoral bonds. Earlier, India on Tuesday said it is committed to remaining engaged with China to find a fair and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary issue but made it clear that its ties with Beijing will be contingent upon strictly respecting the sanctity of the LAC and adhering to the pacts on border manage-

ment with no attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo.

Making a statement in the Lok Sabha in which he articulated three key principles for engagement with China, Jaishankar said the disengagement of troops has been achieved in "full" in eastern Ladakh through a step-by-step process, culminating in Depsang and Demchok. India now expects the commencement of talks on remaining issues that it had placed on the agenda, he added.

Jaishankar's detailed statement came weeks after the armies of India and China completed the disengagement of troops from two last face-off points in eastern Ladakh, effectively ending the over four-year military face-off along the LAC in that region.

"The next priority will be to consider de-escalation, that would address the massing of troops along the LAC (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

UNCCD goals

NEW DELHI: India on Tuesday said that adequate financing holds the key to achieving the objectives of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). During a ministerial dialogue on finance at the 16th UN conference to combat desertification in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Union environment minister Bhupendra Yadav also shared that India has already restored 22.5 million hectares of degraded land against the target of 26 million hectares by 2030.

Centre failed to make Dhaka provide security to Hindus: Assam Cong women wing

GUWAHATI, Dec 3: The Congress women's wing in Assam on Tuesday alleged that the "wrong" foreign policy of the Centre has made it "ineffective" in pursuing the authorities of Bangladesh in providing security to Hindus there. During the day, the Congress and several organisations held protests across Assam against atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh and demanded the security of people belonging to the religious minority in the neighbouring country.

The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) staged a demonstration in Guwahati, and party activists raised slogans against the Bangladesh government as well as the BJP-led Centre. Congress' state women's wing president Mira Borthakur participated in the protest, and said, "We demand that our Prime Minister must sit with Bangladesh leaders and ensure the safety of Hindus in the neighbouring country."

of peace in the neighbouring country and an end to the atrocities on Hindus there.

The Lok Jagaran Manch organised protests across the state with its district committees taking out processions and staging demonstrations against the harassment of Hindus in Bangladesh.

In Guwahati, its members held a sit-in, displaying placards for the safety of Hindus.

Protesters were taken out and demonstrations were staged by Lok Jagaran Manch members and workers in different parts of the state, including in Nagaon, Nalbari, Jorhat, Biswanath, Sivasagar, and Udalguri.

The protesters demanded that the Bangladesh government take steps for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

List matter before a bench I am not a part of: CJI on CEC, EC pleas

NEW DELHI, Dec 3: Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna on Tuesday recused himself from hearing a batch of pleas challenging the exclusion of the CJI from the panel meant for selecting the chief election commissioner and election commissioners.

Justice Khanna, who became the 51st CJI after former CJI D Y Chandrachud demitted office, said the cases would now be listed before another bench in the week commencing January 6, 2025.

At the outset, the CJI, who was sitting on the bench with Justice Sanjay Kumar, told the advocates appearing for six separate petitioners that he couldn't hear the pleas now. "List the matter before a bench of which I am not a part of," the CJI said.

Additionally, the bench instructed the union government and the Election Commission to file their responses to the raised challenges.

The bench, which issued notices on the pleas, had not agreed to the contention that the new law on appointment of the CEC and the ECs be stayed.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan and lawyer Prashant Bhushan said the previous bench headed by Justice Khanna had issued the notice and passed interim orders in the matter and they had no objection if he continued hearing

"Suspension of legislation pending consideration is an exception and not the rule," it had said while dismissing pleas challenging the appointment of election commissioners under a 2023 law. Interfering with the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

IISF concludes, total footfall at 45,000

GUWAHATI, Dec 3: The 10th edition of the India International Science Festival (IISF) 2024 concluded on Tuesday, with more than 45,000 people attending the event over the past four days.

Assam minister for science, technology and climate change Keshab Mahanta, speaking at the valedictory programme, said IISF 2024 has been a celebration of India's scientific achievements.

"Over four days, we have witnessed an inspiring display of innovation, collaboration and knowledge-sharing, with participants from all walks of life coming together to explore the transformative power of science," he said.

Mahanta said Assam is continuing efforts to advance science and technology in the region, and leverage it to build a more sustainable and self-reliant future for India.

In her presidential address, N Kalaiselvi, director-general, CSIR, said, "It is proud to contribute to India's scientific progress... We are committed (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Coach restaurant

GUWAHATI: A new rail coach restaurant was inaugurated here at the Uzan Bazar riverfront by the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), in an effort to offer passengers a "unique dining experience". The initiative is part of NFR's broader vision to transform decommissioned train coaches into aesthetically designed restaurants with a touch of local heritage, said a release issued here on Tuesday. The rail coach restaurants aim to provide a "nostalgic railway dining ambience while catering to the needs of passengers, tourists and residents alike", it said. At present, 17 such restaurants are operational across several locations and major stations of NFR, including the newly inaugurated one. The Guwahati rail coach restaurant "offers a diverse menu with a variety of food, snacks, and beverages, providing visitors with a quick yet delightful meal options," the release said.

B'desh suspends visa services in its Agartala mission over 'security reasons'



AGARTALA/KOLKATA, Dec 3: The Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Tripura's capital Agartala on Tuesday announced the suspension of all visa and consular services with immediate effect until further notice because of "security reasons", a day after the mission's premises was breached by a group of people protesting against the arrest of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das in Dhaka.

Also on Tuesday, police registered a suo motu case and arrested seven people for their alleged involvement in the incident at the Bangladesh mission. Action was also taken against four policemen for dereliction of duty, West Tripura district SP Kiran Kumar K said.

"Given the security situation, all visa and consular services at the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission, Agartala, will remain suspended until further notice. This comes into effect immediately," Md Al-Ameen, the first secretary to the Bangladesh mission, said.

Condemning the incident, chief minister Manik Saha said, "during the protest rally, a group of youth tried to barge into the Assistant High Commission office of Bangladesh in Agartala. I condemned the incident. Peaceful protest (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Rahul Gandhi, other Congress MPs from UP to visit Sambhal today

LUCKNOW/SAMBHAL, Dec 3: Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi along with the five other Congress MPs from Uttar Pradesh will visit violence-hit Sambhal on Wednesday, Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajay Rai said.

Newly-elected Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is also likely to accompany the delegation, he said.

The party's general secretary and UP in-charge Avinash Pande will be there too, Rai told PTI.

Curbs under section 163 (power to issue order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) were set to expire on Sunday and have now been extended till December 31.

When asked about Rahul Gandhi's visit to Sambhal, Superintendent of Police of Sambhal Krishan Kumar told PTI, "Section 163 of the BNSS is already imposed in Sambhal. No outsider is allowed to enter Sambhal. If they come, then they will be served a notice."

Sambhal has been in the eye of the storm since November 19, when a Mughal-era mosque was surveyed on court orders following claims that a Harihar temple previously stood at the site.

Violence erupted during a second survey on Novem-



ber 24 as protesters gathered near Shahi Jama Masjid and clashed with security personnel. Four people died and several others were injured in the violence that ensued. Meanwhile, UP Congress general secretary Sachin Chaudhary told PTI in Sambhal, "National secretary Pradeep Narwal, state vice-president Rizwan Qureshi and I met the family members of deceased Bilal and Noman, and helped them talk to Priyanka Gandhi ji. Priyanka ji enquired about their wellbeing."

Chaudhary also said that Rahul Gandhi will come to Sambhal on Wednesday and there is a programme to meet the family members of the deceased. Samajwadi Party MLA from Sambhal (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Direct Guwahati to Ziro flight on anvil

ITANAGAR, Dec 3: Alliance Air will operate two flights a week from Guwahati to Ziro in Arunachal Pradesh, an official said on Tuesday. The domestic carrier will operate flights on Mondays and Wednesdays, Lower Subansiri deputy commissioner Vivek HP said.

The flight will depart from Guwahati at 12.10 pm and land in Ziro at 1.25 pm. The return flight from Ziro will leave for Guwahati at 1.50 pm and reach there at 3.05 pm.

Ziro has established itself as a MICE tourism destination, and with the beginning of the direct flights from Guwahati to Ziro, tourism in the valley will receive a boost, he said. MICE tourism destinations are cities and regions equipped to host meetings, incentives, conferences, and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2024 Govt launches 16 initiatives to empower 'Divyangjans'

NEW DELHI, Dec 3: Marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2024, Union Minister Virendra Kumar on Tuesday launched 16 initiatives aimed at empowering 'Divyangjans' (persons with disabilities) across the country.



He described the initiatives as milestones in the journey towards ensuring accessibility and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities (PwDs).

"This momentous occasion reflects our unwavering dedication to creating an inclusive society. Through these initiatives, we aim to ensure equal opportunities, accessibility, and empowerment for every Divyangjan," he said.

Secretary of Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD), Rajesh Aggarwal also spoke on the occa-

sion. He reaffirmed the government's resolve to dismantle barriers and foster new opportunities for PwDs.

He emphasised that the initiatives embody the vision of an equitable India where individuals of all abilities can lead lives with dignity and self-reliance.

One of the key initiatives, the

Sugama Bharat Abhiyan, focuses on empanelling accessibility auditors to create inclusive infrastructure.

A complementary programme, Sugama Bharat Yatra, invites PwDs to assess public spaces' accessibility using an AI-enabled app.

The launch of Pathways to Access - Part 3 Compendium further

empowers PwDs by providing key government documents on employment, financial services and healthcare.

Innovations in assistive technology were also unveiled, including high-power spectacles developed by CSIR-CSIO and the Kadam Knee Joint, an indigenously designed device by IIT Madras, to enhance mobility and durability for persons with disabilities.

At the event, the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) marked its 50-year journey with the release of an e-coffee table book celebrating its contributions to the sector.

In the field of inclusive education, accessible storybooks were launched in Braille, audio, and large print formats. A draft for a standardised Bharti Braille code in 13 Indian (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Protests held in Diphu against B'desh atrocities

DIPHU, Dec 3: In solidarity with the Hindu minority in Bangladesh over the alleged violence against them, the Hindu community here in Diphu town came out on the streets to protest against the atrocities by organising a sit-in demonstration in front of the Post Office on Tuesday.

The sit-in demonstration was organised under the aegis of the Lokh Jagaran Manch and was attended by hundreds of Hindus irrespective of caste, tribe, community, and language as people participated from every walk of life. They condemned the Bangladesh government for failing to protect religious minorities.

Politicians, elected members, businessmen, International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) Prabhus were also present during the demonstration.

Tutan Acharjee, Motmandir Achak Pramukh, Vishva Hindu Parishad, and Madhaya Karbi Anglong said the Hindus were gathered

there to protest the attack on religious minorities in Bangladesh. A memorandum will be submitted addressed to Muhammad Yunus, the government of Bangladesh on the immediate crisis and lawlessness in Bangladesh.

The memorandum, submitted through the DC of Karbi Anglong, has expressed strong resentment against the atrocities being committed by Islamic extremists in Bangladesh.

The Hindu community through their memorandum also expressed deep concern about the religious minorities of Bangladesh and believed that they have the right to live with dignity and peace, free from arbitrary interference by the government of Bangladesh and any Islamic extremists.

It pointed out, "The media reports reflect the dire situation of religious minorities including spiritual leaders, particularly Sadhus and saints in Bangladesh. How-

## Rajya Sabha passes bill to boost investment in oil and gas exploration

**NEW DELHI, Dec 3:** The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed a bill that seeks to amend existing law governing exploration and production of oil and gas, and delink petroleum operations from mining operations to boost investment in the sector.

The Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024, introduced in the Rajya Sabha in August this year, was passed by a voice vote.

Replying to the debate on the bill, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said that the oil and gas sector involves high investment and long gestation period.

"We need oil and gas sector for 20 more years. We need to bring this legislation here to provide a win-win confidence not only to our own operators but also to foreign investors so that they can come and do business here with a view to benefit everyone," Puri said.

He said policy stability, dispute resolution and sharing of infrastructure, especially for small players are new provisions in the bill.

The bill aims to decriminalise some of the provisions of the original 1948, the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, by introducing "penalties, adjudication by an adjudicating authority and appeal as against the order of adjudicating authority".

The bill proposes to introduce 'petroleum lease' and expands the definition of mineral oils to include crude oil, natural gas, petroleum, condensate, coal bed methane, oil shale, shale gas, shale oil, tight gas, tight oil and gas hydrate. This is with a view to raising domestic output and cutting reliance on imports.

Several opposition members demanded that the bill be sent to a standing committee for further scrutiny.

Opposition member N R Elango (DMK) demanded that the Bill must be referred to a select committee saying the "mining word is being replaced only to take away the rights of the states".

"I want to assure all members



that this is not about handing over to the corporate sector, this is not about taking the powers of the states away. The petroleum mining leasing will still have to be granted by state governments, no matter what changes have been brought about," Puri asserted.

The government has nothing to hide on this and this bill is a win-win for the states," he asserted.

Puri said as India grows economically on the way to become a developed nation by 2047, its energy requirements are increasing and there is a need to enhance the domestic production of oil and gas to meet the rising demand and secure its energy supply.

"We currently produce about 30 million metric tonnes (mmt) of crude oil and 36.5 billion cubic metres of natural gas annually. As against this production we consume 235 mmt of petroleum products and 68 billion cubic metres of natural gas. There is clearly a very large gap between what we produce and what we consume," he said.

Puri lamented that between 2006 and 2016 "virtually nothing was done on the exploration" front, the implications of which are felt currently with domestic production falling.

The minister said all the provisions in the Bill intend "to substantially improve the ease of doing business and make India an attrac-

tive destination for enhanced production of oil and gas to monetise our vast reserves."

"We want to ensure that investors will have more confidence to come here unlike the dull period between 2006 and 2014. There will be one lease, one licence. If there is dispute then for dispute management there will be predictability and stability," Shaktisinh Gohil (Cong) contested Puri's claim of the previous government not doing anything on the exploration front citing the examples of Mumbai High, Neelam and Heera, which account for ONGC's 59 per cent of production, were built between 1976 and 1984.

He also drew the attention of the minister to a particular clause of the amendment saying it provides "very wide discretionary rule-making powers to the central government with respect to petroleum lease".

Asking the government to continue with the existing arbitration provision as per model production sharing contracts, he said the proposed amendment could be seen by international oil and gas companies as a risk where the government has disproportionate power to control and interfere with contractual disputes.

Participating in the debate, Aam Aadmi Party member Sanjay Singh said that BJP leaders promised to lower diesel prices to ₹ 40 per litre

and petrol to ₹ 50 but it was never fulfilled.

He said in 2014 crude oil prices were USD 135 per barrel but neither diesel nor petrol prices reached ₹ 100 per litre. When crude oil price dipped to USD 19 per barrel even then petrol and diesel were sold at high rates, he added.

He said that the bill proposes to bring in new investors and encourage big corporate houses in the sector where public sector unit ONGC is making a profit of ₹ 40,000 crore.

Treasury bench members interrupted Singh's speech when he praised former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for giving free electricity, free education, free treatment and cheap petrol and diesel compared to a BJP-ruled state and a union territory.

AIADMK member M Thambidurai expressed concern over the impact of hydrocarbon exploration on farmers in Tamil Nadu.

He said that during the DMK rule, it was hydrocarbon exploration in green fields but the AIADMK chief stopped it later to save farmers in Thanjavur area.

NCP member Fauzia Khan and CPI Member PP Suneer expressed concerns over the decriminalisation of offences under the new bill.

The bill has a provision to impose the highest penalty of ₹ 25 lakh and removes clauses related to imprisonment.

"BJP's priority is corporate comfort over the exploitation of our precious natural resources. State-led enterprises like ONGC should be prioritised instead of private players in the sector for the sake of economy and people. ONGC is a competent organisation but the government is aggressively promoting private players in the sector," Suneer said.

BJP member Ghanshyam Tiwari lauded the bill and said that it has been brought under the five pledges taken by Modi government to replace old laws that have the influence of the colonial era. (PTI)

## Courtyard by Marriott Siliguri introduces luxurious wedding menu packages

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Dec 3:** Courtyard by Marriott Siliguri, a five-star luxury hotel, has solidified its reputation as the premier wedding destination in the region with the launch of its exclusive Silver, Gold, and Platinum wedding menu packages, an official statement said on Tuesday.

The price starting at ₹ 22,200+ taxes per guest; these packages offer a luxurious and customisable culinary journey featuring authentic cuisines such as Marwari, Bengali, Nepali, and Bihari, showcasing the vibrant cultural heritage of the region.

It was known for its breathtaking venues, the hotel provides the perfect setting for grand weddings and intimate gatherings, blending elegance, modernity, and tradition seamlessly.

Courtyard by Marriott Siliguri takes pride in its exceptional service, ensuring every celebration is unforgettable for couples and their guests alike.

With impeccable hospitality, versatile venues, and extraordinary culinary offerings, the hotel is setting a new benchmark for wedding celebrations in the region. For bookings and enquiries, contact 70299 00130 / 70299 00131 / 70299 00132.

## Smart IAS Foundation introduces Assamese medium classes

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Dec 3:** In a significant step towards inclusive education, Smart IAS Foundation, a leading institute for APSC and UPSC coaching, has launched Assamese medium classes to meet the growing demand from aspirants who prefer learning in their native language, an official statement said on Tuesday.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Dipankar Dutta, founder and owner of CEC, alongside students and distinguished guests.

The event also marked the launch of Indian Polity, authored by the institute's Director, Aashirvad Kumar, and published by Oswal Publications.

Speaking at the event, co-founder Animesh Hazarika highlighted the importance of Assamese for civil service preparation. He noted that studying in one's native language enhances understanding and retention, making complex subjects easier to grasp. "This initiative ensures that language is not a barrier to success for any aspirant," he stated.

The institute has further announced complimentary study materials and library facilities for students enrolling in the Assamese medium programme. Dipankar Dutta expressed his enthusiasm for the initiative, reaffirming the institute's commitment to providing accessible and high-quality education for all.

Contd. from Page 1...

## Gaurav ridicules govt on

with associated accompaniments," he said. "It is also evident that the management of the border areas will require further attention in the light of our recent experiences."

The external affairs minister, referring to previous disengagements in some of the other friction points along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, said the temporary steps can be "revisited". (PTI)

## Himanta, 3 Central ministers to

Dibrugarh was also discussed in the meeting. "Review of the double laning of the Baihata Chariali to Mission Chariali highway. A comprehensive review of ongoing projects under @NHAI\_Official, @nhidcl, and @MOR-THIndia across the State. Together, we are committed to transforming Assam's infrastructure and unlocking its immense potential," the chief minister added.

Meanwhile, Sarma also held a meeting with Union commerce minister Piyush Goyal and extended an invitation to the investor summit. "I am extremely grateful to the Hon'ble Minister for giving his time - our second meeting in less than a week - and providing his valuable guidance. We are looking forward to the Commerce Ministry's support in inviting potential investors and other stakeholders to attend this key summit," Sarma mentioned.

The chief minister also met today Union minister and BJP national president J. P. Nadra.

CM Sarma invited Nadra to attend the investor summit—Advantage Assam 2.0 which is scheduled to happen in Guwahati on February 24 and 25 in the next year.

In a post on X, the chief minister wrote, "I had the honour to meet Adarniya @BJP4India Adhyaksh and Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @JPNadra Ji in New Delhi today. On behalf of the people of Assam, I invited him to grace the #AdvantageAssam Summit 2025." Meanwhile, the duo also discussed the progress of different beneficiary programs in the state. "I also used the opportunity to brief him on the great progress Assam is making on the implementation of PMJAY, Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and other central schemes to support the healthcare sector," he mentioned in his X post.

Earlier, CM Sarma extended the invitation to the investor summit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, external affairs minister S Jaishankar and others. "Advantage Assam 2.0", the Investment and Infrastructure Summit will bring Assam's rich cultural legacy to the world stage.

According to the chief minister, the event, which is set for February 24 and 25, would highlight the traditional Jhumur dance of the tea tribe clans. Sarma said, "This summit is a platform to showcase Assam's rich traditions to a global audience in addition to attracting investors."

## Centre failed to make Dhaka

the safety of Hindus and temples in the neighbouring country. They also maintained that Hindus all over the world are with those facing religious persecution in Bangladesh. (PTI)

## List matter before a bench

selection process would lead to "chaos and a virtual constitutional breakdown", it noted. The pleas have challenged the validity and sought a stay on the operation of Section 7 of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners Act, 2023, which excludes the CJI from the panel that picks the CEC and ECs.

The petitions questioned the constitutional validity of Sections 7 and 8 of the Act, which outline the process for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs).

The 2023 Act introduced significant changes to the appointment process of election commissioners, replacing the earlier provisions of the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991.

The most contentious aspect of the new legislation is the exclusion of the CJI from the selection committee.

Instead, appointments are now made based on the recommendations of a three-member panel comprising the Prime Minister, a cabinet minister and the Leader of the Opposition or the leader of the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha. Section 8 of the Act further empowers the selection committee to regulate its own procedure transparently and allows consideration of candidates beyond those recommended by a search committee led by the Union law minister. (PTI)

## IISF concludes, total footfall

to nurturing innovative ideas from the student hackathon and tackling key challenges through mission-driven programmes." The IISF featured several sessions, including the Science Institutional Leaders Meet and roundtable discussions on topics such as sustainability, education, manufacturing, healthcare and agriculture, a release said. The discussions brought together policymakers, industry leaders, and academicians to chart a roadmap for leveraging innovation to achieve self-reliance and global competitiveness, it said.

Over 50 per cent of all participants in the events at IISF 2024 were from the northeast, the release said. The total footfall is estimated to be around 45,000, averaging more than 10,000 attendees per day. More than 400 resource persons and over 7,000 registered delegates attended the technical sessions, it added. (PTI)

## Direct Guwahati to Ziro

exhibitions (MICE). He also hoped that it would enable the citizens needing specialised medical attention to travel to big cities in the shortest time possible, giving them access to specialised healthcare. (PTI)

## Rahul Gandhi, other Congress MP

Iqbal Mahmood late on Monday evening said that he had gone to meet the families of the four deceased and expressed sympathy to them. "The atrocities that have happened in Sambhal will be raised in the Parliament and state assembly, and after December 10, a Samajwadi Party delegation will come here. There are some things that these people (state government) want to hide. When such incidents happen in any part of the country, everyone wants to go there," Mahmood told reporters. The SP MLA said his party has demanded that this incident should be investigated by a sitting judge of the High Court. "We do not have faith in the judicial commission inquiry. The governor and the chief minister have formed the panel...it will work under the pressure of the government," he said.

Meanwhile, Maulana Tauqeer Raza, the president of Ittehad-e-Millat Council (IEMC), on Tuesday said that anything can come out from the excavation of religious places, and it would be better to abandon the idea of excavation in the country and to work towards development. Speaking to reporters in Bareilly, Raza said, "For the unity and integrity of the country, the idea of excavation should be abandoned and development should be thought about. Skeletons of extinct dinosaurs can also be found."

"Times are changing. We should move with the changing time," he said. Raza also expressed displeasure over not being allowed to meet the people, who were injured in the Sambhal violence, in the private medical college hospital.

He also alleged that the government itself is creating riots and blaming others. On Monday, scores of Congress workers jostled with police personnel and tried to scale barricades outside the party office in Lucknow as a party delegation led by state unit chief Rai was prevented from leaving for Sambhal, which has been made out of bounds by administration after the November 24 violence.

Amid high drama, Rai, who took the driver's seat in his car with senior party leader PL Punia next to him, could not leave for the "fact-finding" visit even as scuffles broke out between the police and the slogan-shouting party workers, who tried to clear the way for their leaders. Rai drove the car to some distance inside the Congress office complex but it was stopped by the police at the gate. After this, he sat on a dharna outside the party office along with Congress workers. Punia had said. (PTI)

## B'desh suspends visa services

can be allowed but such behaviour is not acceptable." In a related development, the All Tripura Hotel & Restaurant Owners' Association (ATHROA) said its members would not serve Bangladeshi guests given the insult to the Indian flag there. ATHROA general secretary Saikat Bandyopadhyay said the decision was taken at an emergency meeting held on Monday.

"We are a secular country and have respect for all religions. Our national flag has been desecrated and minorities are facing oppression by a section of fundamentalists in Bangladesh. Earlier too such incidents used to take place but now it has crossed the limit," he said. In Kolkata, leader of the opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, said human rights have been violated in Bangladesh as lawyers of arrested Hindu monk Chimroy Krishna Das could not appear in a court as they were allegedly beaten up by fundamentalists. A Bangladesh court on Tuesday deferred to January 2 next year hearing on the bail petition of Das on a government plea as no lawyer appeared on his behalf. Das, a spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested from Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on November 25 for alleged sedition. He was denied bail and sent to jail by a Chattogram court on November 26, triggering protests by his supporters. (PTI)

## Protests held in Diphu against

Bengali Federation Yuva Manch have extended moral support and their members have also physically participated in the demonstration, Acharjee informed.

## Govt launches 16 initiatives

languages was introduced to ensure compatibility with Unicode standards. To enhance employability, the government released a skill development book in 11 Indian languages. Other initiatives include the E-Sandhya portal for neurodiverse individuals, developed in collaboration with the Tata Power Community Development Trust, and an Indian intelligence test tailored to cultural sensitivities by the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID). (PTI)

## Stock markets extend winning run to 3<sup>rd</sup> day; Sensex up 597 pts as RIL, HDFC Bank advance



**MUMBAI, Dec 3:** Extending the winning run to the third straight day, benchmark Sensex jumped 597 points on Tuesday on buying in blue-chip stocks like HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and firm trends in global markets.

The 30-share index jumped 597.67 points or 0.74 per cent to settle at 80,845.75. During the day, it surged 701.02 points or 0.87 per cent to 80,949.10.

The broader NSE Nifty rose by 181.10 points or 0.75 per cent to 24,457.15.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Adani Ports surged nearly 6 per cent. NTPC, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank and Reliance Indus-

tries were the other big gainers. Bharti Airtel, ITC, Sun Pharma, Asian Paints and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the laggards.

"Benchmark indices continued to demonstrate resilience amidst positive global sentiment. Investors are now focusing on potential growth drivers, assuming that weak economic data has already been reflected in the recent lacklustre corporate earnings," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Banking stocks gained the most ahead of the RBI Monetary Policy Committee meeting while metal stocks benefited from increased import duties and favourable manufacturing data from China.

The BSE smallcap gauge

jumped 1.03 per cent and midcap index climbed 0.92 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, services rallied 2.13 per cent, followed by utilities (1.41 per cent), industrials (1.36 per cent), capital goods (1.23 per cent), power (1.20 per cent) and commodities (1.16 per cent).

Telecommunication and FMCG were the laggards.

As many as 2,740 stocks advanced while 1,219 declined and 108 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher. European markets were trading in the green.

US markets ended mostly in the positive territory on Monday.

Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth ₹ 238.28 crore on Monday, while domestic institutional investors bought shares worth ₹ 3,588.66 crore, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.13 per cent to USD 72.64 a barrel.

Recovering the early loss ground, the BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 445.29 points or 0.56 per cent to settle at 80,248.08 on Monday. The Nifty surged 144.95 points or 0.60 per cent to 24,276.05. (PTI)

## Asian shares rise after tech stocks pull Wall Street to another record

**TOKYO, Dec 3:** Asian shares mostly rose Tuesday, after technology stocks pulled Wall Street to another record finish.

The S&P 500 rose 0.2% Monday from the previous session's all-time high to post a record for the 54th time this year. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 128 points, or 0.3%, while the Nasdaq composite gained 1%.

Some analysts think Japanese issues could end up benefiting as a result of Donald Trump's latest threat on tariffs on China and other nations. The president-elect on Saturday threatened 100% tariffs against a group of developing economies, including China and Brazil, if they act to undermine the U.S. dollar. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 jumped 1.8% in morning trading to 39,215.99. Tokyo Electron issues surged 4.4%.

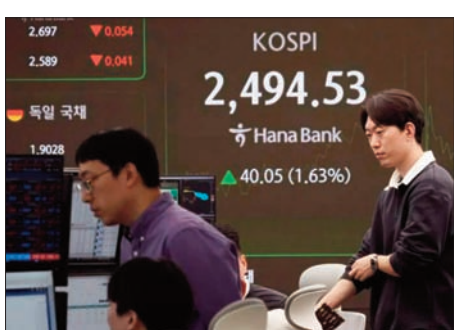
Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.7% to 8,504.00. South Korea's Kospi jumped 1.7% to 2,495.80, after inflation data showed a rebound but remained low enough to keep rate-cut thoughts alive for early 2025.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.2% to 19,595.53, while the Shanghai Composite edged up 0.2% to 3,370.74.

On Wall Street, Super Micro Computer, a stock that's been on an AI-driven roller coaster, soared 28.7% to lead the market.

Following allegations of misconduct and the resignation of its public auditor, the maker of servers used in artificial-intelligence technology said an investigation found no evidence of misconduct by its management or by the company's board.

Big Tech stocks also helped prop up the market. Gains of 1.8% for Microsoft and 3.2% for



Meta Platforms were the two strongest forces pushing upward on the S&P 500.

Intel was another propellant during the morning, but it lost an early gain to fall 0.5% after the chip company said CEO Pat Gelsinger has retired and stepped down from the board. Intel is looking for Gelsinger's replacement, and its chair said it's committed to restoring investor confidence.

Intel recently lost its spot in the Dow Jones Industrial Average to Nvidia, which has skyrocketed in Wall Street's frenzy around AI.

Stellantis, meanwhile, skidded following the announcement of its CEO's departure. Carlos Tavares steps down after nearly four years in the top spot of the automaker, which owns car brands like Jeep, Citro n and Ram, amid an ongoing struggle with slumping sales and an inventory backlog at dealerships. The world's fourth-largest automaker's stock fell 6.3% in Milan.

The majority of stocks in the S&P 500 likewise fell, including California utility PG&E. It dropped 5% after saying it

would sell \$2.4 billion of stock and preferred shares to raise cash.

All told, the S&P 500 added 14.77 points to 6,047.15. The Dow fell 128.65 to 44,782.00, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 185.78 to 19,403.95.

In the bond market, Treasury yields gave up early gains to hold relatively steady. The yield on the 10-year Treasury climbed above 4.23% during the morning before falling back to 4.19%. That was just above its level of 4.18% late Friday.

This upcoming week will bring several big updates on the US job market, including the October job openings report, weekly unemployment benefits data and the all-important November jobs report. They could steer the next moves for Federal Reserve, which recently began pulling interest rates lower to give support to the economy.

Economists expect Friday's headline report to show US employers accelerated their hiring in November, coming off October's lackluster growth that was hampered by damaging hurricanes and strikes.

We now find ourselves in the middle of this Goldilocks zone, where economic health supports earnings growth while remaining weak enough to justify potential Fed rate cuts, according to Mark Hackett, chief of investment research at Nationwide. In energy trading, benchmark US crude lost 9 cents to \$68.01 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 3 cents to \$71.80 a barrel.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar rose to 149.91 Japanese yen from 149.51 yen. The euro cost \$1.0493, down from \$1.0502. (AP)

## Lok Jagran Manch leads rallies in Hojai, Dibrugarh, Nagaon and Jorhat

# Massive protests across state against atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh

### HT Correspondent

**HOJAI, Dec 3:** The Lok Jagran Manch, in front of the District Commissioner's Office at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar in Hojai district, organised a massive sit-in on Tuesday morning, drawing hundreds of men and women demanding an end to communal violence and atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh.

Hundreds of participants held placards demanding justice and immediate action.

The event saw significant participation from prominent leaders and organisations. Along with hundreds of demonstrators, local MLA Ramkrishna Ghosh, Lumding MLA Sibum Mishra, ex-MLA Shilditya Dev, Habib Mohammad Choudhury, and advocate Amarjyoti Saikia, accompanied by other eminent personalities, marked their attendance to showcase their protest against the Bangladesh government.

The sit-in underscored growing concerns over communal tensions in the region and called for both international and local efforts to address the issue. The Lok Jagran Manch, which has been vocal on matters of social justice, vowed to continue its efforts to raise awareness and press for action until the violence is halted.

At the culmination of the protest, a memorandum was submitted to Prof Muhammad Yunus, the chief adviser of the interim government of Bangladesh, via the district commissioner of Hojai district. In the memorandum, an urgent appeal was made to take immediate steps to end the violence, protect the rights of minority communities, and ensure justice

for the victims of communal atrocities.

**Our Dibrugarh correspondent adds:** The Lok Jagran Manch of Dibrugarh on Tuesday organised a protest against attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh, including assaults on ISKCON temples.

A march was held from Chowkidingee playground to the District Commissioner's Office, with protesters holding placards and banners.

The protesters called the attacks intolerable, terming them an assault on the global Hindu community, and urged the Indian government to intervene and stop the persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh.

"We have staged a protest against the Bangladesh government for filing false cases against Hindus. We demand the Bangladesh government stop atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh," said a member of Lok Jagran Manch.

He added, "Our main demand is to stop atrocities on Hindus and other minority communities in Bangladesh. We urge all Hindus to unite and raise their voices against the crimes and atrocities committed against the Hindu population living in Bangladesh."

The protesters submitted a memorandum to the chief adviser of Bangladesh's interim government, Muhammad Yunus, through the Dibrugarh district commissioner.

Bangladesh's minority Hindus, who constitute only about 8 percent of the 170 million population, have faced over 200 attacks in more than 50 districts since the fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government on August 5.

**Our Nagaon correspondent adds:**



Lok Jagran Manch, Nagaon—a socio-cultural organisation—staged a massive protest rally in Nagaon on Tuesday against the atrocities committed against Hindus as well as other religious minorities in the neighboring country, Bangladesh.

The rally, which started from Nehrubali Field, passed through the main streets of Nagaon town, culminating at the District Commissioner's Office.

Prominent leaders, including MLA Rupak Sarma, Ambika Majumdar, and Simanta Bara, addressed the gathering, condemning the attacks on Hindus, temples, and saints in Bangladesh. They de-

mandated that the Bangladesh government ensure the safety and security of Hindus and put an end to the destruction of temples and monasteries there.

The protest rally was attended by various organisations and individuals from different walks of life. A memorandum was submitted to the district commissioner, Nagaon, to be forwarded to the Bangladesh government, urging immediate action to stop the atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh.

Earlier, a protest rally was also organised at Nagaon's Nehrubali Field, where prominent dignitaries from various fields participated and spoke against the ongo-

ing atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh since the rule of the caretaker government under the leadership of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. The protest rally was mentored by Brajen Kakoti, the vice-president of Lok Jagran Manch, Nagaon.

**Our Jorhat correspondent adds:** The Jorhat district unit of Lok Jagran Manch took out a rally to protest against the ongoing atrocities committed by a section of Bangladeshis against the religious minorities in Bangladesh.

The rally, led by the former Congress MLA who is now in the BJP, Rana Goswami, Jorhat district president Hemanta Kalita, and several other BJP leaders, took out the protest rally from the Jorhat Stadium to the District Commissioner's Office, where a memorandum addressed to Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser of the interim government of Bangladesh, was submitted through the Jorhat district commissioner.

The memorandum stated: "We, on behalf of Lok Jagran Manch, express our strong resentment against the atrocities being committed by Islamic extremists, including attacks, killings, looting, arson, and inhumane persecution of women, etc., against Hindus and other religious minorities in Bangladesh. We are deeply concerned about the religious minorities of Bangladesh and believe that they have the right to live with dignity and peace, free from arbitrary interference by the government of Bangladesh and any Islamic extremists."

Current media reports reflect the dire situation of Bangladesh's religious mi-

norities, including spiritual leaders, particularly Hindu sadhus and saints. However, the current Government of Bangladesh and other concerned agencies have remained silent, failing to take necessary steps to stop these incidents.

The current government of Bangladesh's oppression of peaceful democratic rallies by Hindu minorities, who are seeking self-protection against these atrocities, is unjust and contrary to human and democratic values. The arrest of ISKCON sanyasi Puja Shri Chinmoy Krishna Das ji by the current Bangladesh government, while he was leading a peaceful protest by Hindu minorities, is unfair and undemocratic, the memorandum further said.

"At this critical juncture, we urge you to take immediate action to stop the atrocities being committed against Hindus and other minorities and release Puja Shri Chinmoy Krishna Das of ISKCON from prison. We believe that you will take prompt action to stop the gross human rights violations against Bangladesh's religious minorities and take necessary steps to protect their lives, dignity, and rights, including those of women, children, religious places, and spiritual leaders such as Hindu sadhus and saints," the Lok Jagran Manch stated.

Rana Goswami said that India had always maintained cordial relations with Bangladesh, and after the new government came into existence, atrocities on religious minorities had begun, which was condemnable and required action to be taken.

## Karbi Anglong DSW marks International Day for PwDs

### HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Dec 3:** District Social Welfare (DSW) department, Karbi Anglong observed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) on Tuesday in a befitting manner by inviting disabled persons to join in the observation held here at Home for Destitute and Vagrant Children, Birla, with the theme "Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future".

Under Secretary, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and in charge DSW department, Deepanjit Baruah said by observing the international day for PwDs serves as a reminder of the global commitment to fostering inclusivity, advocating for the rights of PwDs, and creating equitable opportunities for all.

He emphasised that the government has launched various schemes for the welfare of PwDs and should come forward in taking the benefit.

Baruah also informed that the annual observance of International Day of disabled persons was proclaimed by the United

Nations General Assembly in 1992. The DSW department is there to help the PwDs with whatever possible means like informing welfare schemes dedicated for them, the process of filling up forms for getting disabled certificates from government and how to avail the opportunities given to them by government. There are Anganwadi workers and supervisors, who regularly visit homes to enquire about the problems and needs of the PwDs. Besides this the PwDs can come to DSW office for any queries and support needed.

The District Information & Public Relation Officer (DIPRO), Utpal Dimasa informed the PwDs present, where the Central government has introduced various welfare schemes for the uplift of PwDs.

"Schemes like Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP Scheme), Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme, National Awards and National Scholarships for persons with disabilities, DISHA an early intervention and school readiness scheme for children with disabili-

ties up to 10 years old, VIKAAS a day care scheme for people with disabilities above 10 years old and SAMARTH a care scheme for people with disabilities from BPL and LIG families have been implemented by the government," Dimasa said.

To be self confident in oneself and resilience the DIPRO said, "One should not be disheartened, but have a strong will power. Being disabled doesn't mean incapable. There are many persons with disabilities, who are more successful than those who are fit and you have the capacity to do things."

Dipen Saikia, one among the PwDs attending the observation informed the DSW in charge Baruah, where some disabled persons don't have walking sticks. There are some PwDs whose names are not enrolled in the DSW department and are being deprived of the benefits from the government. With the suggestion made by Saikia the DSW in charge provided walking sticks to the disabled persons. PwDs Persons presented songs and dances at the programme.

## Sur Sadhana marks 22 years with annual cultural prog

### HT Correspondent

**NAGAON, Dec 3:** Sur Sadhana, a cultural organisation dedicated to promoting music, has completed 22 years here.

Over the past 22 years, Sur Sadhana has celebrated its annual cultural programme, featuring students of Sur Sadhana Music College performing various songs, including classical music, folk songs, and compositions by noted Assamese artists like Dr Bhupen Hazarika.

This year's programme was special as it was dedicated to the memory of the late musician Digen Mahanta. The event featured various songs performed by the students. The chief guest, noted music director Anupam Choudhury, emphasised the importance of formal music education in his speech. He also mesmerised the audience with his music.

The programme was attended by several distinguished guests, including artists like Ariful Haque, Krishna Dulal Baruah, and Anup Baruah. The event was inaugurated by Nava Kumar Mahanta, while Parimita Deka, a talented young artist, mentored the entire programme. Suwag Moni Mahanta, the head of the musical institution, briefed the audience on the achievements of Sur Sadhana over the past 22 years and welcomed the guests and other attendees.

## Project INROAD completes 1.25 lakh hectares of rubber plantation

### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Dec 3:** Natural Rubber (NR) plantation in the North East under Project INROAD (Indian Natural Rubber Operations for Assisted Development) for FY2024-25 stands completed. In the first four years of the project, an area of 1,25,272 hectares (ha) has been covered under new NR plantations across 94 districts in the North East and parts of West Bengal. This represents one of the highest NR plantation achievements ever in the country within a span of four years. INROAD is a landmark initiative and the first of its kind in the world, where the tyre industry is contributing directly towards the development of rubber plantations. The project entails the development of 200,000 ha of rubber plantations in the North Eastern states and West Bengal, financially supported by four members of the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA), including Apollo, Ceat, JK, and MRF. The project is being implemented by the Rubber Board of India.

"Notwithstanding challenges, nearly 90 percent of the plantation target for the first four years under Project INROAD has been achieved. Beyond expanding planting areas, the project has seen significant progress in strengthening local nurseries and building grower capacities—a testament to the collaborative efforts among tyre companies and the Rubber Board of India," said Rajiv Budhraja, director general, ATMA, on the completion of four years of INROAD.

During the last four years of the project, a record 5.3 crore planting materials have been distributed. The



project has reached out to resource-deprived populations in the designated states, engaging farmers with landholdings of less than one acre. Once completed, the project is poised to uplift the economic and social status of 2.5 lakh beneficiaries.

The share of the North East in India's area under NR plantation before the launch of the INROAD project was 23 percent. Once the objective of developing plantations in an additional 2 lakh ha under the INROAD project is achieved, it is estimated that the share of NE states will increase to 38 percent. Similarly, the share of the North East in India's NR production will rise from 16 percent currently to 32 percent. "As the plantation reaches a critical stage, the next component of the project is the development of infrastructure, such as the creation of model smokehouses and the dissemination of new practices among rubber growers," added Budhraja.

## BJP rejects APHLC leader's 'tribal land' statement

### HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Dec 3:** Countering the statement of All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) president, Jones Intgi Kathar saying "Karbi Anglong is a tribal land", the BJP—East Karbi Anglong District Committee has condemned Kathar's statement and demanded to withdraw his statement.

In a mass joining programme at Hidipi on November 26, the APHLC president Kathar has reportedly stated, "We will fight elections together as sixth scheduled means tribal areas. It has not been mentioned if this is Karbi area, Khasi area, Rengma area, Kuki area or Garo area. It is mentioned as 'tribal area' and all tribes including Nagas Adivasis and indigenous Assamese who have entered Karbi Anglong at a particular time during

1968 and before their children and grandchildren will get land pattas and their names should be included in voter list of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council."

In a press conference held here at BJP office the party spokesperson Laichan Englung said, "There are certain political parties and leaders who are misleading the people. The Mikir Hills now Karbi Anglong was created under the special provision of Sixth Scheduled for protection of the rights and privilege of the Karbis and other recognised tribes under Sixth Scheduled provision listed in Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council. Kathar should have not made such a provocative statement that is creating confusion among the people. He should withdraw his statement."

Englung further stated "Karbi

Anglong being a tribal land does not mean that everyone can come and settle here. There are recognised and unrecognised tribes as listed in the KAAC. Our Chief Executive Member (CEM) of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang has clarified that whether Muslims or Hindus from Bangladesh and Kukis from Manipur entering Karbi Anglong as illegal migrants cannot be given protection. We understand Kukis are tribals that doesn't mean all Kukis can come and settle in Karbi Anglong. The Kukis living here since 1952 are recognised. They are permanent settlers. They enjoy voting rights and other benefits like any other tribes by KAAC. The Kuki influx entering recently in Karbi Anglong in the aftermath of Manipur violence cannot be provided land here."

## Cairn-Fijeeha webinar focuses on sattras' legacy & sustainable growth

### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Dec 3:** On Asom Divas, experts highlighted the need for collective efforts to ensure the state's youth acknowledge and embrace the vibrancy of Assam's spiritual and cultural legacies while contributing to sustainable growth. At a webinar titled 'Sanksaar - Spotlight on the Legacy of Assam's Sattras', organised by Cairn Oil & Gas and Fijeeha (Forum for Indian Journalists on Education, Environment, Health & Agriculture), historians, cultural scholars, and community leaders emphasised the rich heritage of Assam's sattras and their continuing significance in shaping the region's cultural identity.

The discussion centered on the significance of sattras, established by Srimanta Sankardev, which have shaped Assam's spiritual and cultural legacy. These institutions, founded in the 15th century, are not just spiritual centers but also hubs for art, music, social reform, and community service. With over 65 sattras established since the first in Majuli, they embody ideals of unity and resilience, balancing tradition and modernity while preserving Assamese culture.

The session, moderated by writer Dibya Jyoti Baruah, stressed the role of cultural preservation in Assam's self-reliance. Baruah highlighted the sattras as symbols of cultural pride and guidance for the future. He emphasised that empowering communities requires a balance of heritage and progress, with the youth playing a crucial role as torchbearers of innovation and sustainable growth.

Arunabh Parasher, director, Northeast at Cairn Oil & Gas, underlined the need to balance heritage preservation with progress. He emphasised Cairn's commitment to Assam's cultural legacy, particularly the sattras, as pillars of the state's identity, while supporting Assam's journey toward self-reliance and development.

Tracing the origins of sattras to Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev and highlighting their evolution into vital centers of Assamese religious and cultural life, Dr Bina Kalita, a retired professor and historian, emphasised their lasting impact on Assam's social and cultural fabric, resonating through generations.

Mridu Mausam Borah, a manuscript expert, stressed the importance of documentation and collaboration with academic institutions to preserve the sattras' heritage. He called for comprehensive strategies to safeguard their rich history and teachings through accurate records and educational partnerships. Highlighting the evolution of satriya dance, Dr Anwesha Mahanta, a renowned satriya dancer and researcher, emphasised its classical status and the need to preserve its traditional essence amid modernisation to maintain Assam's cultural identity.

Dr Saswati Bordoloi and Tinku Moni Das from Royal Global University discussed connecting youth with their heritage through digital media, storytelling, workshops, and cultural festivals.

Cairn Oil & Gas's initiative aims to ensure Assam's heritage thrives by blending traditional practices with sustainable progress, envisioning a future that honours its past while embracing development.

## NTPC Bongaigaon distributes mosquito nets to combat malaria

### HT Correspondent

**KOKRAJHAR, Dec 3:** In a heartfelt effort to combat the recent surge in malaria cases in the Kokrajhar district, NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati, under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, in association with Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, distributed 100 mosquito nets to underprivileged families.

The initiative was carried out in collaboration with the Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, reaffirming NTPC's commitment to community welfare.

Sangeeta Singh, president of Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, and

Soumya Kar, vice president, along with the club's office bearers, led the distribution drive. The mosquito nets were distributed in partnership with the Salakati Anchalik Senior Citizen Mancha, ensuring the support reached those in need.

The coordination of the initiative was facilitated by Roshan Dugdug, DGM (HR); Madhurya Singha Lohkar, DGM (Corporate Communication), NTPC Bongaigaon; Pranami Handique, senior manager (HR); and Aditya Thakuri, executive (CSR), in collaboration with local stakeholders.

## Jagiroad College hosts international seminar on 'Viksit Bharat @2047'

### HT Correspondent

**JAGIROAD, Dec 3:** Jagiroad College organised a two-day international seminar on 'Viksit Bharat @2047: Voice of Youth: Transforming India through Empowering Youth' to suggest a roadmap for India to become a developed nation by 2047. The international seminar was sponsored by ICSSR and organised by the Research and Innovation Cell of IQAC, Jagiroad College.

Distinguished keynote speakers included Prof Manjula Vithanapathirana from the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Prof Hiranya Nath from Sam Houston State University, Texas, USA. Indian keynote speakers included Dr Rajani Panchang from Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune; Prof Sherwin M Sungle from North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong; Prof Nil Ratan Roy, Dr Antara Dey, and Prof Santi Gopal Maji from Tezpur University; Prof Dhruvajyoti Saharia and Prof Ratul Mahanta from Gauhati University; and Dr Daisy Das from Cotton University.

In the inaugural session, Dr Bhaben Ch. Neog, principal of the College, delivered a welcome address, emphasising the importance of India's freedom struggle in the context of 'Viksit Bharat @2047'. Dr Neog highlighted that during the freedom movement, all efforts were directed toward achieving independence. Similarly, achieving the



dream of a 'Developed Nation' by 2047 requires collective effort, particularly by empowering and motivating the youth to actively participate in this mission.

Keynote speakers, including Prof Manjula Vithanapathirana and Dr Rajani Panchang, emphasised the importance of such seminars in encouraging young minds to engage in innovative research and contribute to the vision of Viksit Bharat. Prof Nil Ratan Roy and Dr Antara Dey praised the college for organising this international seminar.

The program was coordinated by Dr Utpal Rajguru, coordinator of the Research and Development Cell, and Dr CR Sarkar, coordinator of IQAC. Dr Gitumoni Rajbongshi, assistant professor in Economics and the seminar convener, elaborated on the significance of the theme. She highlighted that the seminar

aligns with the Prime Minister's vision of 'Mission Viksit Bharat @2047' and provides a platform for academicians to generate ideas, brainstorm solutions, and address challenges to achieve this goal.

Prof Manjula spoke on 'Education in the Context of the Indian Economy - From the Perspective of a Sri Lankan Educator'. She emphasised that India's demographic dividend provides an opportunity to use education as a tool for economic, social, and technological progress. She outlined key priorities, including equitable access to education, alignment of curricula with 21st-century skills, cultivation of social values, and integration of research and innovation.

Prof Hiranya Nath, delivering his keynote address online from Texas, USA, highlighted India's demographic dividend as a critical

asset. He stressed the importance of inclusive development and effective governance to address economic imbalances and ensure sustainable progress.

A total of 94 papers were presented during the seminar, with participants from Assam and across India, including West Bengal, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Sikkim, and Meghalaya. The seminar featured detailed discussions on various topics, such as improving the education system, skill development for youth empowerment, infrastructure's role in economic transformation, and human resource management for ecological sustainability.

The seminar concluded with a valedictory session, attended by eminent personalities including Dr R Panchang, Prof Santi Maji, Dr Narayan Sharma, Dr Pranab Bujarbaruah, Dr B C Neog, and Dr C R Sarkar. They commended the systematic conduct of the conference and the quality of research presented. Certificates were distributed to participants, and a vote of thanks was delivered by Dr Gitumoni Rajbongshi.

A cultural program showcasing Assam's rich heritage was held on the evening of the first day. Students performed Borgeet, Dasha-Avatar, Tribal Folk Dance, Mime, and Bihu, which were warmly appreciated by the guests.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

When one teaches, two learn  
- Robert Half

## Supreme Court has its task cut out

There is more to the communal fire into which people of India are being systematically pushed, both through illegal and legal stratagem. There are instances of even misusing the apex legal platform of the country, the Supreme Court of India. Hearings by various courts in relation to the Places of Worship Act 1991, can be cited as examples, which provides maintenance of religious character of a place as existed on August 15, 1947, when India became independent. The Supreme Court of India will be hearing only one aspect of the issue — its constitutional validity — on December 4, 2024, but there are much more things that need to be addressed, to rescue the people from the communal fire. Presently, about a dozen of known and much publicized cases are being heard by the courts of India across various states, and every case has its unique background. However, one thing is common — claims are being made that Mosques or Dargah (places of worship) were built on the places where there were Hindu temples.

The Ayodhya Ram Mandir and Babri Mosque issue is well known. Mosque was demolished in 1992, following large-scale loss of lives and properties in Hindu-Muslim riots across the country. The Supreme Court of India delivered a judgement in favour of the Ram Temple in 2019 while ordering land to be allotted somewhere else for the Babri Mosque. Ram Temple was built, and PM Narendra Modi inaugurated it in January 2024. The provision under the Places of Worship Act 1991 prohibited any change in character of any religious place, and the objective of the Act was to put a stop on escalation of such cases in the country to save lives and properties from the communal fire. It should be noted that Kashi was one of places in the rhetoric and slogans. The Gyanvapi case came to the Supreme Court of India, and in 2022, Chief Justice DY Chandrachud led bench observed that the 1991 Act did not prohibit ascertaining the religious character of the structure, even if its use cannot be changed. It was an oversight of the basic purpose of the Act. His decision opened the floodgate of cases against the Mosques and Muslim places of worship, which are ultimately leading to communal disturbances. It should not be out of place to mention that Justice Chandrachud was also one of the judges of Ayodhya judgement of 2019.

A bench consisting of Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar will conduct the hearing on December 4, 2024 on only one aspect, i.e. the constitutionality of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. Six petitions altogether have been filed. One set of petitions filed on behalf of Hindus have challenged the constitutional validity of the Act, while the other set of petitions have supported the legislation. Some of the Hindu petitioners had filed the case against the Act in 2020, while Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind had filed its petition in support of the Act in 2022. The Supreme Court has greater responsibilities than to decide on only the constitutional validity of the Places of Worship Act 2019.

## Syria's reigniting civil war has been kept simmering by the NATO powers

By: Ben Chacko

Reignited civil war in Syria is down to destabilising shockwaves from Israel's wars of aggression in the Middle East and the malign role of NATO powers in shielding the jihadist forces in Idlib now terrorising Aleppo.

There is no ignoring the overlapping alliances which shape this conflict. Syria is allied to Iran, which Israel has repeatedly attacked, including through bombing an Iranian consulate in Syria itself. Both are allied to Hezbollah, which has fought on the Bashar al-Assad government's side in the civil war and which Israel seeks to crush by invading Lebanon.

It does not follow that every outbreak of violence in the region is part of a master plan, but perceptions that Hezbollah and Iran have been weakened by Israeli attacks will have encouraged the terrorist regime in Idlib to reopen hostilities.

And it is a terrorist regime, though Western reportage since the civil war began 13 years ago has been coy about the nature of Syria's opposition.

The Idlib-based Syrian Salvation Government is dominated by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), itself a merger of a number of al-Qaida-affiliated Islamist groups, including Jaysh al-Sunna, whose recruitment of child soldiers was exposed in 2016, and Nour al-din al-Zinki, notorious for filming the beheading of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy in the same year.

Ahrar al-Sham, the largest of the groups, has been nicknamed the Syrian Taliban and its rule is just as repressive. An EU asylum agency briefing noted in 2020 that "the jihadist coalition HTS has been responsible for the repressive social norms and policies against female residents ... resulting in further violations including executions, corporal punishments, restrictions of freedom of movement, of dress, on work, education and on access to healthcare."

The open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary forces in Syria has continued in the country's north-west to date through

the illegal presence of NATO armies on Syrian soil.

It is the presence of the Turkish army that has stopped Syria's military stamping out the last bastion of jihadist rule in the country, just as it is the presence of the US military in the north-east which has prevented reintegration of Kurdish areas.

The official rationale for stationing troops in Syria against its will is to prevent a revival of the Islamic State terror group, though once-and-future president Donald Trump was more honest when he stated the US was in Syria "only for the oil," hundreds of thousands of barrels of which have been illegally exported via Iraqi Kurdistan — with Damascus estimating revenues lost to this theft at hundreds of billions of dollars.

This underlines the hypocrisy of US officials now blaming Assad for failing to engage in a "political process" to end the war. The process has been prevented by foreign occupying armies.

Assad too has his foreign allies, and Russian bombers are again conducting air raids over rebel-held territory: if HTS assumed Russia was too overstretched in Ukraine to engage (the apparently accurate assumption of Azerbaijan when it marched past Russian peacekeepers to drive the entire Armenian population out of Nagorno-Karabakh last year) it may have miscalculated.

That only emphasises the potential of Syria's war to draw in great powers, powers which are now far closer to direct conflict than in the war's earlier stages. The spread of war across the Middle East comes at a huge cost in human lives, and increases the number of flashpoints for a new world war.

The answer must be to redouble our efforts for peace. These wars cannot be considered in isolation. Stopping Israel's genocide in Gaza and attacks on Lebanon, prioritising a ceasefire and negotiations to end great power conflict in Ukraine, and demanding British pressure on our NATO ally Turkey to stop its jihadist allies rampaging through Syria are related priorities for the peace movement. (IPA Service)

# Guardians of the Sea: Indian Navy Day

Indian Navy Day is celebrated on December 4 every year to honor the role and achievements of the Indian Navy. This day holds great significance for the country as it reminds us of the bravery and dedication of the naval forces in protecting India's maritime borders and maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean region. It is a day to recognize their contributions and show gratitude for their service to the nation. The celebration of Navy Day also highlights the importance of maritime strength and the vital role it plays in the country's defense and economic growth.

The Indian Navy is a branch of the Indian Armed Forces responsible for safeguarding the country's maritime interests. Its history dates back to 1612 when it was established as the East India Company's Marine. Over time, it evolved into the Indian Navy, becoming a modern and powerful force. Today, the Indian Navy is one of the strongest naval forces in the world, equipped with advanced technology, warships, submarines, and aircraft. It plays a crucial role in protecting the nation's coastline, ensuring safe trade routes, and responding to natural disasters.

Navy Day is observed on December 4 to commemorate the success of Operation Trident during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. On this day, the Indian Navy launched a daring attack on the Karachi harbor, causing significant damage to the enemy's naval and fuel installations. The operation was a decisive victory and showcased the strength and strategic capabilities of the Indian Navy. It remains a proud moment in India's military history and a symbol of the courage and professionalism of the naval forces.

The celebration of Navy Day is marked by various events and activities across the country. Naval bases, ports, and ships are open to visitors, allowing the public to get a glimpse of the life and work of navy personnel. Demonstrations of naval exercises, air shows, and exhibitions are organized to showcase the skills and technology of the Indian Navy. These events aim to inspire young people to consider a career in the Navy and instill a sense of pride and respect for the armed forces.

The Indian Navy is not just a defender of the nation's waters but also plays a vital role in humanitarian and disaster

relief operations. During natural disasters like cyclones, tsunamis, and floods, the Navy is often the first to respond, providing rescue and relief to affected areas. The Navy's role extends beyond national borders as it participates in international missions, joint exercises, and efforts to combat piracy and terrorism. Its commitment to peace and stability in the region reflects India's position as a responsible global power.

Maritime trade is a key aspect of India's economy, and the Indian Navy plays an essential role in ensuring the security of sea routes. India has a vast coastline of over 7,500 kilometers and numerous ports that facilitate trade and commerce. The Navy protects these trade routes from threats like piracy and ensures the safe movement of goods and resources. By maintaining a strong presence in the Indian Ocean, the Navy helps secure the nation's economic interests and strengthens its position in global trade.

The Indian Navy also focuses on fostering partnerships and cooperation with other countries. Through joint naval exercises, goodwill visits, and participation in international maritime events, the Navy builds strong ties with other nations. These efforts promote mutual understanding, enhance maritime security, and contribute to global peace. The Navy's presence in international waters demonstrates India's commitment to maintaining a secure and stable maritime environment.

The Indian Navy's motto, "Sham No Varunah," means "May the Lord of the Oceans be auspicious unto us." This reflects the Navy's dedication to safeguarding the seas and serving the nation with honor and courage. The men and women of the Navy undergo rigorous training and face challenging conditions to fulfill their duties. Their discipline, determination, and sacrifice are a source of inspiration for all Indians.

On Navy Day, we also remember the sacrifices of those who have served in the Navy. Many have lost their lives in the line of duty, protecting the nation and its people. Their bravery and dedication are honored through ceremonies and tributes. The day serves as a reminder of the cost of freedom and the importance of supporting and respecting the armed forces.

The Indian Navy is constantly evolving to meet new chal-

## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Satyabrata Borah

## Lebanon ceasefire and the future of Hezbollah

By: Asad Mirza

The ceasefire in Lebanon apart from giving respite to the beleaguered Lebanese, will also be a litmus test for the Hezbollah on whether it can continue to flourish as a political and militant outfit in Lebanon or not.

It would not be wrong to say that the whole of the world and the Middle East and in particular Lebanon took a cautious sigh of relief as the fragile ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel, was announced last week.

The main concern however was whether this ceasefire could hold, as claims and counter claims by attacks and incursions by both the parties were reported in the first twenty-four hours. But precariously so far, the ceasefire has been held by both the parties. While fighting may be over, or at least paused, attention now shifts to another challenge facing Lebanon and Hezbollah: internal reckoning. In addition, what ace does Iran has, as it ordered its proxy to agree to a ceasefire in Lebanon. But the larger question is whether Hezbollah will be able to survive this ceasefire as a political and militant group in Lebanon or not.

While some segments of the Lebanese population and Hezbollah's supporters, see the ceasefire as a victory for the party, others have decried the bloodshed and destruction caused by a conflict they did not back.

Hezbollah opened a limited battlefront against Israel on 8 October 2023 in support of Hamas and Palestinians under attack in the Gaza Strip. The conflict started last year after Hezbollah began firing rockets into northern Israel following Hamas's October 7 attack, before Israel launched a full-scale invasion in September.

Imad Salamey, a Middle Eastern politics expert at the Lebanese American University, told UK-based website Middle East Eye that "Hezbollah's claim of victory holds little weight outside its core constituency. The war was not widely popular among the Lebanese people, many of whom are more focused on the devastating economic losses inflicted during the conflict."

For more than a year, the conflict was mostly limited to clashes in the border areas between Lebanon and Israel. However, the picture changes in September, when Israel exploded thousands of pagers used by Hezbollah members before launching a widespread bombing campaign across the country followed by a ground invasion. More than 3,900 people in Lebanon were killed and over a million displaced.

While Lebanese have largely acted in solidarity with those displaced and killed by Israel, and stood by their compatriots in the face of Israeli forces, how the conflict has shifted domestic political dynamics may determine Lebanon's fate for years to come.

In fact, the presence of Hezbollah and its militant arm has been a point of contention for decades Lebanese politics. Salamey says that Hezbollah is "likely concerned about growing opposition within Lebanon, which could create two polarised camps, one supporting Hezbollah and the other pushing for disarmament."

"To suppress dissent and maintain control, Hezbollah may feel compelled to take domestic actions, including using its influence to neutralise political opponents or deter their activities through various actions," he added.

In contrast, Qassim Qassir, an analyst close to Hezbollah, told MEE that the group remains "reassured" about its internal political position in Lebanon. The group is currently reviewing its latest actions and will "define its future vision and is reassured that the results of the battle were in its favour", according to Qassir.

Qassir said further that these people have so far "failed" to take advantage of the war and its consequences to score political points against Hezbollah.

The US-brokered ceasefire agreement is

intended to erode Hezbollah's ability to operate freely in its bastion of southern Lebanon, barring the group from having a military presence south of the Litani River. Those close to Hezbollah say it is unclear whether that means its fighters — many of whom are residents of villages and towns in the south — would be able to return.

Hezbollah's ability to continue firing heavier projectile barrages deeper into Israel, including anti-tank missiles and drones, shows it still possesses potent military capabilities. People close to the group also point to its ability to prevent Israel from advancing deep into Lebanon, killing about 50 Israeli soldiers, as proof of its capability.

Unlike in 2006, when Hezbollah was able to ignore a similar deal that ended a war that year, the group will now have to show that it is actively complying with the terms of the ceasefire. The weak Lebanese state — already worn out by a yearlong conflict and festering economic crisis — could pay the price if it does not.

That may open the door to opponents demanding the dismantling of Hezbollah, which remains a powerful representative of the country's Shias, one of its largest communities, with vast reach into the levers of the state.

Hezbollah's victory narrative will be embraced for now by its constituency, many of whom will be relieved to be able to start going back home. But the message will be undermined without massive reconstruction, compensation, and resumption of social welfare in the face of widespread destruction and displacement.

The World Bank estimates the war has caused \$8.5 billion in damage and economic losses — more than one-third of Lebanon's GDP. Hezbollah insists that money for reconstruction will not be an issue, but given that its own main backer Iran has its own economic woes and Hezbollah's unpopularity with other Middle Eastern governments, it is unclear who may contribute funds for reconstruction, and with what conditions.

As powerful a representative as Hezbollah remains for Lebanon's Shia, its domestic political rivals are always looking for an opportunity to exploit claims that the group brings nothing but trouble to the country as a whole.

These rivals include Christian leaders who are keen to shift the levers of power in Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system in their favour. The danger as in Lebanon's past that such challenges to power end up in sectarian violence is a spectre the country has long lived with.

Janna Kadri and Tala Alayli, in their piece on the website Al Mayadeen opines that Hezbollah's steadfast ability to endure and confront one of the most technologically advanced militaries on the planet highlights its endurance power David Pratt, Foreign Editor with The Herald on Sunday sums it up pithily opining that by steadfastly championing Palestinian rights and opposing external domination, Hezbollah amplified its influence far beyond Lebanon's borders. It became a beacon of resistance against the forces of oppression, inspiring solidarity across diverse communities united in the pursuit of justice.

Sayed Nasrallah's role as a rallying figure cemented this legacy, while also galvanising a shared vision of dignity and sovereignty in defiance of foreign domination. Through its actions and narrative, Hezbollah solidified its position not just as a regional force but as an emblem of global resistance against colonialism and imperialism, Pratt wrote further.

Perhaps nowhere will the post-ceasefire political landscape be tested more than in the country's south, much of which are inhabited by Lebanon's Shia population and therefore Hezbollah heartlands. (The author is a New Delhi-based senior commentator on national, international, defence and strategic affairs, environmental issues, an interfaith practitioner, and a media consultant)

## Rising counterfeit Indian currency threatens to unsettle economy

By Nantoo Banerjee

It is a matter of grave concern that counterfeit ₹ 500 notes from the Mahatma Gandhi (new) series have nearly quadrupled between 2018-19 and 2023-24. And, the detection of counterfeit ₹ 2,000 notes has tripled since 2020-21. The ₹ 2,000 notes continue to remain legal tender and can be exchanged at RBI offices. According to the latest Reserve Bank of India report, 98 percent of the ₹ 2,000 denomination notes have been returned since its May 2023 move to withdraw the currency notes.

It is the fast-expanding circulation of fake ₹ 500 and ₹ 200 notes which has become a matter of real concern. The ₹ 500 note has become the backbone of day-to-day transactions, with its circulation witnessing consistent growth over the years. Both the government and the RBI are worried. Last week, Union Minister of State for Finance PankajChaudhary expressed concerns in Lok Sabha about the rising prevalence of counterfeit currency in the country.

Going by the official data, in 2018-19 21,865 million pieces (mpcs) of the fake currency notes were detected. It reached its peak at 91,110 mpcs in 2022-23, before slightly declining to 85,711 mpcs in 2023-24. This is a sharp increase from 21,865 mpcs detected in 2018-19. However, the number of undetected counterfeit currency notes is anybody's guess. Usually, they are in circulation in rural or semi-urban markets. The operators and customers avoid banks to dodge detection. Fake Indian currency notes are mainly used in terror-related activities to cripple the country's economy and create economic terror.

West Bengal and Assam are believed to be key entry points of fake Indian currency from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. Both Bangladesh and Pakistan are said to be using Nepal to despatch counterfeit Indian currency to the eastern part of the country. Lately, in a major crackdown on counterfeit currency operations by the police, four individuals were arrested from the Ghulam Patti area of Assam's Golaghat town. Police seized sophisticated currency printing equipment and fake notes of various denominations and arrested several persons including Dudu Ali and Rajibuddin Ahmed branded as key operatives. However, kingpins manage to stay under shadow.

A recent RBI estimate showed that nearly 80 percent of the total counterfeit notes seized in the country enter through three Indo-Bangladesh border districts of Malda, Murshidabad and Nadia. Malda accounts for the biggest share of the amount of counterfeit Indian currency notes. They are pushed into the country through these three Muslim-majority West Bengal districts bordering Bangladesh. A sizable section of the youth from these districts earns their livelihood as contractual labour working in states such as Gujarat, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Many of them are said to be used as couriers of counterfeit Indian currency notes smuggled through Bangladesh. The Reserve Bank of India estimates that about 80 percent of the total counterfeit notes seized in the country enter through three Indo-Bangladesh border districts of Malda, Murshidabad and Nadia. Malda accounts for a majority of that amount that are pushed from these three districts. Bangladesh is not only an important conduit for fake Indian currency, but counterfeit notes are also being printed there.

Lately, the supply and distribution networks of fake Indian currency notes appear to have proliferated in Bangladesh. The recent spurt in the illicit despatches of fake Indian currency notes into India through the border has become a cause of concern. Not long ago, the police in Dhaka had seized a large number of gunny bags filled with huge quantities of fake Indian currency notes. The Bangladesh police were quoted by the local media in Dhaka saying that a Lahore-based syndicate in Pakistan prints such fake notes, which are then transported to Bangladesh via Sri Lanka in containers loaded with marble stones. The consignments are hidden in "special chambers" at the homes of syndicate members before being smuggled into India. The counterfeit Indian currency notes boom in Bangladesh was also unearthed by the Indian police following an investigation.

It was found that those illegal currency notes were printed in Pakistan and then illicitly imported into India either directly through the border with Nepal and Bangladesh or through other routes linking Dubai, Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Colombo. Pakistan and Bangladesh are two major producers and distributors of fake Indian currency notes. The goal is to fund terrorism, raise inflation rates in India, and reduce confidence in the currency. According to the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL), counterfeiting financial instruments fuels the economy of the underground and promotes the activities of organised criminal networks and terrorists. To correctly assess the amount of money that is counterfeited, countries use Parts Per Million (ppm) for measurement.

Counterfeit currencies pose a global problem. The US\$ is said to be the world's most counterfeited currency. Some of the counterfeited US dollars are reported to be of very high quality. Fraudsters try to sell them as legitimate currency, or use them to get loans or lines of credit. The second most popular counterfeited banknote is Euro since the currency was launched in 2002. However, central banks in several parts of the world have been working to mint counterfeit-proof currencies using the latest technology with features that are difficult to fake.

Such features include raised intaglio printing on bills, serial numbers, watermarks, and security threads and milled or recessed edges on coins. For trained eyes, identifying fake Indian currency notes is not very difficult. Genuine Indian currency notes have a security thread embedded in the note. To check, one has to hold the label transparent and rotate it slightly. However, smart currency counterfeiters too have access to the latest technology. That is posing a big problem before the central banking system. Fraudulent groups or individuals are accessing emerging technology to counterfeit banknotes and other financial instruments across the world.

Among the world's most counterfeited notes are: US Dollar, British Pound, Euro, Australian Dollar, Philippine Peso, Canadian Dollar, South African Rand, New Zealand Dollar and Malaysian Ringgit. Incidentally, they are all convertible currencies. On the other hand, Indian Rupee (INR) is only partially convertible. While it can be freely converted into foreign currency and vice versa for trade in goods and services, it is not fully convertible in the capital account meaning that it can only be exchanged for foreign currencies and vice versa for limited reasons. Thus, counterfeited Indian currency remains mostly an Indian problem. (IPA Service)

# DNA of Dignity: Women Shaping Humanity

By: **Aubaid Ahmed Akhoun**

Women are the architects of society, the nurturers of life, and the silent strength behind every great achievement. Their influence is woven into the fabric of civilization, from raising leaders to shaping communities. Allama Iqbal, the great philosopher-poet, beautifully encapsulates the essence of womanhood in his poetry:

*“Wujood-e-zan se hai tasveer-e-kainaat mein rang*

*Isi ke saaz se hai zindagi ka soz-e-daroon*  
*Sharf mein barh ke surayya se musht-e-khaak iski*

*Ke har sharf hai isi darj ka dar-e-maknoon*  
*Mukalmaat-e-Falaton na likh saki lekin*  
*Isi ke sholay se toota sharar-e-Falaton”*  
*The existence of a woman adds color to the canvas of the universe.*

*She is akin to a melody whose tunes infuse inner warmth into life.*

*Though made from dust, she surpasses the stars in honor,*

*For every grace and nobility lies hidden within her essence.*

*Though she did not write Plato's Dialogues,*

*It was her spark that kindled the genius of Plato.*

In these profound lines, Iqbal celebrates the indispensable role of women. He emphasizes that a woman is not only a source of life's inner energy but also a beacon of grace and honor. While she may not have written historical masterpieces, her influence resonates through her contribution to the greatness of others. A mother's nurturing care, a wife's unwavering support, and a daughter's joy bring balance and purpose to life.

Empowerment Through Faith: Iqbal's poetry calls upon women to recognize their potential while remaining rooted in faith. Women who adhere to the divine guidelines provided by Islam can excel in all spheres of life—be it education, family, or profession—

without compromising their dignity and values.

Islamic teachings are renowned for their profound wisdom, addressing not only spiritual needs but also biological, emotional, and social well-being. One such directive is the rule permitting a woman only one marital relationship at a time. While rooted in divine guidance, this principle has found fascinating support in modern science, proving the depth and foresight of Islamic commandments.

A Scientific Revelation Sparks Faith: A compelling case involves a Jewish embryologist and theologian who embraced Islam after discovering the profound wisdom behind the Islamic injunction of iddah (waiting period).

**The Qur'an instructs divorced women:**  
“And divorced women shall wait [as regards their marriage] for three menstrual cycles.”

(Al-Baqarah 2:228)

This seemingly simple command carries a wealth of biological significance. Intrigued by its implications, the scientist delved deeper, uncovering groundbreaking insights about DNA retention and its impact on women's health.

**The Wisdom of the Waiting Period:** When a woman is in a marital relationship, her body absorbs genetic material from her partner, including proteins and DNA found in seminal fluid. Research reveals that this genetic material can linger in the body for a considerable time. If a woman remarries or engages in relations with another man too soon after a divorce or her husband's death, the mixing of DNA from multiple partners can lead to:

- Biological conflicts in her reproductive system.

- Increased susceptibility to infections and illnesses.

- Complications in future pregnancies.

Studies show that the waiting period prescribed in Islam aligns perfectly with the natural cleansing process of the female body:

- After the first menstrual cycle, 32–35% of the previous partner's DNA is cleared.

- By the second cycle, 67–72% is elimi-



nated.  
● By the third cycle, 99.9% of the DNA is removed, leaving the body free from residual traces and ready for a new relationship.

This natural purification ensures that the woman's reproductive system is biologically prepared, safeguarding her health and well-being.

**A Comparative Study**

The biological impact of multiple relationships was further validated through an American study comparing two communities:

1. African Muslim women, who typically have one spouse, were found to have DNA in their offspring matching a single partner.

2. Non-Muslim women, who often engaged in multiple relationships, showed traces of DNA from several partners in their bodies.

This stark difference highlighted the health risks and societal challenges stemming from casual relationships or polyandry, further re-

inforcing the wisdom of Islamic teachings.  
**The Case of Widows: Healing Through Extended Patience**

In the case of widows, the Qur'an prescribes a slightly longer waiting period:

“And those of you who die and leave behind wives should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten days.” (Al-Baqarah 2:234)

This additional time accounts for emotional and psychological healing. Grief can slow down the body's natural cleansing process, necessitating a longer period for the widow to regain physical and emotional equilibrium.

The Impact of Multiple Relationships: One striking anecdote from the Jewish scientist's research involved testing the DNA profiles in his own family. Shockingly, his wife's blood revealed traces of DNA from three different men, indicating infidelity. This discovery shattered his trust and prompted him to explore Islamic teachings. He later embraced Islam,

recognizing its unmatched wisdom in safeguarding family sanctity, women's purity, and societal harmony.

A Divine Framework for Human Harmony: The prohibition of multiple simultaneous marriages for women isn't merely a restriction; it's a protection. It safeguards women from health risks, emotional turmoil, and social stigma while fostering trust, loyalty, and stability within families. By ensuring that women have exclusive marital bonds, Islam upholds the integrity of relationships and strengthens the moral fabric of society.

A Testament to Divine Wisdom: The alignment of scientific discoveries with Islamic teachings serves as a powerful reminder of the Creator's infinite knowledge. Commands that seemed purely spiritual centuries ago now reveal intricate layers of biological and social wisdom.

Islam's guidance is not just about rules—it's about harmony. It nurtures individuals, strengthens families, and builds societies on a foundation of respect, purity, and trust. The principle of one marriage for women is a shining example of this divine balance, where faith and science come together to affirm the perfection of Allah's plan.

By adhering to these timeless teachings, humanity finds not just guidance but also protection, peace, and a path toward holistic well-being.

Women are the vibrant hues of life's canvas, the melody that brings harmony to the universe. By embracing the values and guidance provided by Islam, women can continue to shape a world that reflects beauty, wisdom, and purpose. Let us celebrate the essence of womanhood and strive to create a society where women are empowered through faith, wisdom, and dignity. Their influence, as Iqbal beautifully conveys, is the spark that ignites the brilliance of civilizations. *(The author is a columnist, Motivational Speaker, and Associate Editor of Weekly 'Education Quill' Presently Working as Sr. EDP Head at SKIE Classes Khanyar. He can be reached at akhoun.aubaid@gmail.com)*

## Empowering women entrepreneurs: Assam's blueprint for inclusive growth

By: **Dipak Kurmi**

India's evolving entrepreneurial landscape reflects the aspirations of a dynamic and inclusive economy. At the forefront of this transformation is the growing contribution of women, whose increasing participation in entrepreneurial ventures signals both a societal and economic shift. During the Start-Up Mahakumbh held in New Delhi earlier this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted India's position as the third-largest startup ecosystem, boasting 1.25 lakh startups and engaging 12 lakh youth directly. Of particular note was the revelation that 45% of these startups are led by women, spanning diverse sectors such as education, agriculture, and health. Further reinforcing this narrative, PM Modi, at the G20 Ministerial Conference on Women Empowerment in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, emphasized that 15% of India's unicorn startups have at least one woman founder, with their combined valuation exceeding \$40 billion. These figures underscore the critical role of women in driving India's entrepreneurial success and highlight the need to remove systemic barriers restricting their access to opportunities and resources.

Entrepreneurship in India has gained unparalleled significance in recent years. However, amplifying the entrepreneurial drive among women necessitates focused interventions, particularly in terms of enhancing financial literacy, business acumen, and access to capital. Assam, under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, has emerged as a beacon of women's empowerment, implementing a host of initiatives aimed at nurturing an entrepreneurial ecosystem that actively includes women.

Through targeted policies such as relieving women from the burden of microfinance loans, introducing the Orunodoi scheme, and launching transformative programs like 'Lakhpati-Baidou' and 'Swa-NirbharNari,' the Assam government has taken significant strides in promoting women's economic independence. These measures, combined with efforts to eradicate practices like child marriage and safeguard the rights of girl children, have laid the groundwork for an equitable and progressive society.

The Role of Self-Help Groups: The contribution of women's self-help groups (SHGs) to Assam's economy has been remarkable, driving socio-economic empowerment and fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship in rural communities. With more than 3.62 lakh SHGs involving over 40 lakh women, these collectives engage in activities ranging from small-scale industries to agriculture and handicrafts. The state government's provision of Revolving Funds (RF) and Community Investment Funds (CIF) has further strengthened these groups, enabling them to scale their operations and improve their livelihoods.

Revolving Funds serve as a crucial corpus for SHGs, helping members meet production needs and instilling a culture of savings and credit management. Under the flagship Kankalta Mahila Sabalika Yojana,

the Assam government increased the RF allocation from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 per SHG in the 2023-24 financial year. Meanwhile, CIF allocations, which support cluster-level organizations in providing loans to SHGs, have been raised to ₹1.5 lakh per SHG from 2022-23. These funds are instrumental in creating sustainable livelihood opportunities and addressing the social and economic needs of SHG members.

The impact of these financial interventions is evident in the Livelihood Tracking System, which reveals a significant increase in the annual income of SHG members—from ₹57,960 to ₹70,503 over three years. Additionally, the number of 'LakhpatiBaidou,' or women with an annual household income exceeding ₹1 lakh, has surged from 241,983 to 872,559 during the same period.

This initiative, which aims to catalyze economic empowerment in rural areas, has transformed countless lives. Districts like Nagaon, Cachar, and Tinsukia have witnessed a remarkable rise in 'LakhpatiBaidou,' inspiring communities with stories of resilience and success rooted in sustainable livelihood practices.

Assam's Microfinance Relief Initiative: The Assam government's innovative Assam Microfinance Incentive and Relief Scheme has also played a pivotal role in women's financial empowerment. Designed to alleviate the burden of stressed microfinance loans, the scheme categorizes borrowers into three groups based on their repayment status and extends targeted assistance accordingly. Regular borrowers have received a one-time incentive of ₹25,000 or the outstanding balance, whichever is lower, while borrowers with overdue loans and non-performing accounts have been provided with tailored relief measures, including debt-free certifications. The scheme has benefited over 12 lakh borrowers, with financial assistance exceeding ₹2,000 crore.

This initiative not only provides immediate relief but also encourages borrowers to maintain credit discipline, paving the way for sustainable financial practices. Women entrepreneurs, in particular, stand to benefit from the scheme, as it enables them to access fresh capital for business ventures while fostering a culture of timely repayment and productive use of funds.

Preserving Heritage Through Entrepreneurship: Weaving, a cherished tradition in Assam, exemplifies the fusion of cultural heritage and economic empowerment. The state's flagship 'Swa-NirbharNari' initiative has revitalized the traditional textile industry by enabling direct procurement of handwoven garments like gamosas and aronai from indigenous weavers through a dedicated portal.

This digital platform eliminates intermediaries, ensuring fair remuneration and timely payments to artisans. Benefiting over 18,000 weavers across two phases, the initiative has disbursed more than ₹19 crore, preserving the state's rich textile legacy while empowering women artisans.

Tackling Societal Challenges: Economic empowerment initiatives in Assam are complemented by robust ef-

forts to address societal challenges. The state has made notable progress in reducing crimes against women, with reported cases dropping from 29,046 in 2021 to 12,034 in 2022. Additionally, a determined campaign against child marriage has led to the registration of 5,413 cases by mid-2023, addressing a longstanding issue that has impeded women's empowerment.

These measures are vital for creating an environment where women can thrive as entrepreneurs and community leaders. The government's focus on education, awareness, and enforcement has fostered a sense of security and opportunity for women across the state.

A Shared Responsibility: While the Assam government's initiatives have laid a strong foundation for women's empowerment, the success of these programs ultimately depends on the active participation and commitment of SHG members and women entrepreneurs. By adopting sound financial practices, acquiring business skills, and leveraging government grants effectively, women can ensure the sustainability of their ventures and contribute meaningfully to the state's economy.

As India charts its course toward becoming a global economic powerhouse, the stories emerging from Assam offer a blueprint for inclusive growth and empowerment. The transformative journey of women entrepreneurs in the state underscores the potential of targeted policies, community engagement, and cultural preservation in driving sustainable development. With continued efforts to remove barriers and amplify opportunities, Assam is poised to lead the way in shaping a more equitable and prosperous future for women across India. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)*

## Medi Facials for Inner Glow

By: **Shahnaz Husain**

Who doesn't like a facial? No matter what salon you visit, you will be offered multiple choices such as Fruit facial, Oxygen facial, Hydrating facial, Classic facial, Microdermabrasion etc.

Though all these facials give an instant glow to your skin, it doesn't last long as they don't reach much deeper in the skin. Facials only pamper the skin and don't improve it. The best way to improve your skin and have a smooth and glowing texture for a longer period is by opting for a MediFacial.

Medifacials or medical-grade facials is new-age skincare that use advanced technologies and techniques to treat a range of issues like dull, dry, and loose skin. Medifacial is gaining popularity because it is safe and effective and deeply cleanses, exfoliates, and nourishes the skin.

It slows down ageing, reduces pigmentation, rosacea, cleans out blackheads, whiteheads, clogged pores and more. If you are also planning to get a medifacial this wedding season, here's all you need to know.

The standard duration of a Medifacial procedure is 45 to 90 minutes. It takes around two to three days for the skin to hydrate and appear supple and nearly 30 to 45 days for the cells to completely regenerate.

1. Reduces Acne Scarring: Medifacials promote skin regeneration and healing, helping to smooth out uneven textures and fade stubborn scars, resulting in a more even and refined skin surface. It instantly rejuvenates the skin apart from lightening the dark spots caused by hyperpigmentation. It stimulates collagen synthesis under the skin's surface and reduces the size of pores. It opens clogged pores and clears out the toxins, dirt and grime trapped resulting in a healthier and more youthful appearance. Medifacials can effectively regulate sebum production.

2. Skin Rejuvenations: Medifacials involve the use of micro dermabrasion and mild food based peels to remove the dead pigmented dead cells, unlike the salon facials, where physical exfoliators or scrubs are used to remove the dead cells. The exfoliation process involved in medi-facials removes dead skin cells and encourages new, healthy cells to regenerate. This leads to smoother skin, reduced fine lines, and an even complexion.

Medi Facials stimulate collagen production, which is essential for maintaining skin elasticity and reducing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. The result is smoother, firmer skin with a youthful radiance.

3. Deep Cleansing: Medifacials use advanced tech-

niques to remove dirt, impurities, excess oil, unclogs pores, dead skin cells, and other impurities.

Firstly, Cleansing of the skin is done gently with a mild PH balanced cleanser. Special care is taken so that the natural barrier of the skin that contains essential oil, lipids, and pH level is not disrupted, for maintaining natural skin health.

A thoroughly cleansed skin is less likely to break out and less likely to get fine lines. This deep cleansing facial also helps prevent further build-ups under the skin. This is a great facial for people bothered by oily and congested skin.

4. Hydration: MediFacials are specifically designed to counter dehydration effects by infusing the skin with essential moisture and nutrients. These facials often include intense hydration through serums and masks. By replenishing the skin's moisture levels, MediFacials enhance its natural radiance and restore a youthful glow. Moreover, treatments such as microdermabrasion or derma planing can exfoliate dead skin cells, allowing for better absorption of hydrating products and revealing a fresher, healthier complexion.

Regular Medi-facials can have a huge impact on slowing down the ageing process. Fine lines and wrinkles significantly reduce due to the intense hydration. Facials can stimulate collagen production and strengthen the muscles in your face that give you wrinkle-free, smooth skin.

Every skin is different and responds to certain medifacial differently, so the composition of the process is also tailored according to skin concerns, needs, and goals of an individual. People with dull, acne-prone, oily, uneven, rough and sensitive skin can also avail of the benefits of medifacial treatment.

After receiving a facial, keep your skin and body moisturized by drinking lots of water, juice, and other fluids.

Your pores are now open due to the steam. Over-touching your skin can cause dirt and bacteria to gather in the skin's deeper layers.

Use cleansers that won't alter the pH levels of your skin. Alkaline cleansers harm the protective layer of your skin, eventually causing moisture and essential oils to escape from your skin. Avoid exfoliation after the Medifacial. Deep cleaning and scrubbing techniques used in facials will keep your skin supple and free of dead skin cells for several days.

Skip the make up after the Medifacial to allow the deep cleaning to penetrate, within the deeper layers of your skin, give it time to breathe and space to allow your pores to close. *(The author is international fame beauty expert and is called herbal queen of India)*

## Will banning men from tailoring shops and salons make women safe?

By: **Priyanka Saurabh**

Social beliefs often portray women as weak and men as aggressive, promoting unequal gender dynamics that perpetuate harassment. Studies conducted by the National Institutes of Health show that workplace harassment disproportionately affects women because patriarchal attitudes are ingrained. Many people, including employers and employees, are unaware of workplace harassment laws, leading to unchecked misconduct. Only 35% of Indian women employees are aware of the Sexual Harassment Prevention Act, 2013. Inefficient implementation of laws and lack of accountability embolden harassers. The Nirbhaya Fund (2013) allocated for women's safety remains underutilized due to poor governance. The low representation of women in certain occupations creates a male-dominated environment, prone to abuse of power. According to the Economic Survey 2023-2024, the female labor force participation rate has increased, but it remains at around 37%. Fear of justice, victim blaming, or retribution discourages victims from reporting harassment, perpetuating a culture of silence. According to National Crime Records Bureau data, crimes against women, including sexual harassment, are grossly underreported due to fear of repercussions, inadequate awareness, and social prejudices.

Gender segregation implies that women re-

quire constant protection, thereby undermining their agency and professionalism. Preventing male tailors from taking women's measurements reinforces the notion of women's dependency for protection. Such policies generalize men as a potential threat, creating distrust and harming workplace dynamics. Studies show that inclusive work environments foster greater respect and cooperation between the sexes. Segregation maintains unequal opportunities, restricting participation in occupations dominated by one gender. India's armed forces have historically barred women from combat roles, reflecting the impact of segregation on professional opportunities. Reforms such as NDA induction represent progress, but prejudices persist. Rather than addressing social attitudes, segregation targets symptoms while leaving root causes such as power imbalances and poor education untouched. The National Crime Bureau Report (2023) highlighted that a significant proportion of crimes against women under the IPC were linked to 'cruelty by husband or his relatives'. Segregation reduces the client base for male professionals, which disproportionately affects people from lower-income groups. In smaller towns or villages where unisex salons may not be available, such practices may reduce job opportunities for male barbers. Launch comprehensive awareness campaigns focusing on respect, consent, and workplace ethics to tackle the root of harassment. The POSH Act, 2013 mandates training sessions,

which should be extended to informal sectors such as tailoring and salons. Promote mixed-gender staffing in businesses to develop mutual understanding and reduce stereotyping. Initiatives such as UN Women's He for She campaign encourage men and women to collaborate equally in diverse settings. Ensure strict implementation of anti-harassment laws and create robust mechanisms for grievance redressal. Expanding internal complaint committees in informal sectors can protect vulnerable workers. Instead of surveillance, prioritize safe infrastructure such as private fitting rooms and customer-friendly layouts. Provide financial and training support to professionals affected by restrictive regulations, thereby securing their livelihoods. Government-funded skill enhancement programs under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM, 2013) can help barbers and tailors diversify their clientele. Segregating occupations by gender is a superficial response that reinforces stereotypes while failing to address systemic issues of oppression. By promoting inclusive workplaces, strengthening legal protections, and promoting behavioral change, India can build a society rooted in equality and respect. Taking inspiration from global best practices like the He for She campaign, India must strive for a future where safety and respect are inherent, not imposed. *(The author is a Research Scholar in Political Science, Poet, freelance journalist, and columnist)*

# UK Parliament raises concerns over attacks on Hindu minority in Bangladesh

*'The UK govt will continue to monitor the situation, including making representations from this House'*

**LONDON, Dec 3:** The British government continues to monitor the situation in Bangladesh as members of Parliament raised concerns over recent attacks on the minority Hindu community there and arrest of religious leaders, a senior minister said here.

During an urgent question tabled in the House of Commons by Labour MP Barry Gardiner on Monday, the Foreign Office Minister in charge of the Indo-Pacific, Catherine West said that she had been given assurances by the interim government in Bangladesh that support was available for minority communities during her visit to Bangladesh last month.

She stressed that the UK was one of the first countries with ministerial support to arrive in Dhaka to speak with Chief Adviser Professor Yunus and be "vocal" in support of minorities.

"We are aware of the statement of concern from the Indian government following the arrest of Chinmoy Krishna Das, a well-known Hindu leader, on sedition charges. The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) desk is closely monitoring those developments," said West.

"The UK government will continue to monitor the situation, including making representations from this House, and will engage with the interim government in Bangladesh on the importance of freedom of religion or belief specifically as it affects the Hindu community," she said.

Tension between India and Bangladesh has been simmering since August 5, when deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled



to India. The situation aggravated further with Das' arrest last week. The Hindu community in Bangladesh has regularly faced attacks on its members and places of worship during the widespread protests against Hasina's Awami League-led government over a controversial job quota system.

The attacks have continued even after Muhammad Yunus, a Nobel laureate, took over as the Chief Adviser of the interim government on August 8.

Gardiner, MP for Brent West in London with a large British Hindu population, described the situation as being "clearly on a knife edge" and raised concerns on behalf of the "large diaspora populations in the UK

and large Hindu communities with strong links to the community in Bangladesh".

The shadow foreign secretary, Conservative MP Priti Patel, noted that the degree of escalation in the violence is "deeply, deeply concerning".

"What we are witnessing now is uncontrolled violence in many quarters. We are watching with horror and shock as further violence spreads in Bangladesh. The thoughts of all of us in the House are with the diaspora community here and those affected in Bangladesh. These are deeply disturbing reports," she said.

Her party colleague and chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for

British Hindus, Bob Blackman, echoed the concerns to highlight that "Hindus are suffering with their houses being burned and their businesses ransacked".

"Priests have been arrested, and I understand that two more were arrested over the weekend, and 63 monks have been denied access to the country. The clear issue is an attempt at the ethnic cleansing of Hindus from Bangladesh... We want to hear not just words of piety, but absolute condemnation of what is going on.

Religious minorities are being deliberately persecuted because of their religion," said Blackman, MP for Harrow East in London — another constituency with a large British Hindu population.

Several other MPs raised concerns on behalf of their constituents with family in Bangladesh. British Sikh Labour MP Gurinder Singh Josan asserted that all communities were "appalled" at the situation and asked Minister Catherine West about the "engagement she has had with the UK's Hindu and Bangladeshi communities on this issue".

"Let me respond on how I have been learning in my role. I was delighted to go to the London borough of Brent to visit the Neasden Temple and learn about Diwali; I had an exceptional visit with the British Asian Trust and learned so much.

That was a prelude to Diwali. After going to Bangladesh, I went to India. I am on a wonderful journey — I am falling in love," responded the Minister, who was in New Delhi for talks last month. (PTI)

## No relief for arrested Hindu leader in Bangladesh; bail hearing set for January 2



**DHAKA, Dec 3:** A Bangladesh court on Tuesday deferred to January 2 hearing on the bail petition of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachary on a government plea as no lawyer appeared on his behalf.

Das, a spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested from Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on November 25 for alleged sedition. He was denied bail and sent to jail by a Chattogram court on November 26, triggering protests by his supporters.

"The bail petition hearing (of Brahmachary) was scheduled for today (Tuesday)... the court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge Mohammad Saiful Islam rescheduled the date as the prosecution side submitted a time petition as no lawyer appeared as defence counsel," a government prosecutor told reporters.

An associate of Das in his Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, Sawtantra Gauranga Das, on the other hand said no lawyer stood for the Hindu leader fearing threats and pressure from a "politically moti-

vated lawyers' group".

Lawyer Subhashi Sharma, who submitted an affidavit on Das' behalf was not available for comments after violence over his arrest on a sedition charge for defaming the Bangladesh flag resulting in the killing of a government prosecutor in the port city.

There was heavy security in the Chattogram court area for the bail hearing. Large deployments of security officials from different forces took up positions nearby.

Das was not brought to court for the hearing. A leader from the Chattogram Bar Association and other lawyers were seen holding a protest march on the court premises.

Das' arrest sparked protests with his followers demonstrating in Dhaka and other places while in the port city of Chattogram, the protest turned violent when assistant government prosecutor Saiful Islam Alif was hacked to death hours after Das was sent to jail.

The relations between India and Bangladesh came under strain after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus came to power following the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August.

India has been expressing concerns over attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in that country.

There has been a rise in violent attacks against Hindus in Bangladesh. Hindu minority groups have been frequently reporting atrocities against their community members in different parts of Bangladesh, even after Yunus took charge. (PTI)

## Hezbollah attack draws Israeli strikes on Lebanon, killing 11 people and testing ceasefire's limits



**JERUSALEM, Dec 3:** Israel unleashed its largest wave of airstrikes across Lebanon since agreeing to a ceasefire with Hezbollah last week, killing at least 11 people on Monday after the Lebanese militant group fired a volley of projectiles as a warning over what it said were Israeli truce violations.

The projectiles were apparently the first time that Hezbollah took aim at Israeli forces after the 60-day ceasefire went into effect last Wednesday. The increasingly fragile truce aimed to end more than a year of war between Hezbollah and Israel — part of a wider regional conflict sparked by the devastating Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

In the United States, President-elect Donald Trump demanded the immediate release of Israeli hostages held by the Palestinian militant Hamas group in Gaza, saying on social media that if they are not freed before he takes office in January there would be "HELL TO PAY."

It was not immediately clear whether Trump was threatening to directly involve the U.S. military in Israel's ongoing war in Gaza. The US has given Israel crucial military and diplomatic support throughout the nearly 15-month conflict.

A new exchange of fire threatens Lebanon ceasefire

Lebanon's Health Ministry said an Israeli airstrike on the southern village of Haris killed five people and wounded two while another airstrike on the village of Tallousa killed four and also wounded two.

Israel's military carried out a string of airstrikes late Monday against what it said were Hezbollah fighters, infrastructure and rocket launchers across Lebanon, in response to Hezbollah firing two projectiles toward Mount Dov — a disputed Israeli-held territory known as Shebaa Farms in Lebanon where the borders of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel meet. Israel said the projectiles fell in open areas and no injuries were reported.

Hezbollah said in a statement that it fired on an Israeli military position in the area as a "defensive and warning response" after what it called "repeated violations" of the ceasefire deal by Israel. It said complaints to mediators tasked with monitoring the ceasefire "were futile in stopping these violations."

Before the Hezbollah projectiles, Israeli carried out at least four airstrikes and an artillery barrage in southern Lebanon, including a drone strike that killed a person on a motorcycle, according to Lebanese state media. Another strike killed a corporal in the

Lebanese security services. Israel has said its strikes are in response to unspecified Hezbollah violations, and that under the ceasefire deal it reserves the right to retaliate. Lebanon's parliament speaker, Nabih Berri, accused Israel of violating the truce more than 50 times in recent days by launching airstrikes, demolishing homes near the border and violating Lebanon's airspace.

Officials in the US — which along with France helped broker the truce and heads a commission meant to monitor adherence to the deal — played down the significance of Israeli strikes. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said, "Largely speaking, the ceasefire is holding."

"We've gone from dozens of strikes down to one a day maybe two a day," Kirby told reporters, referring to Israeli strikes. "We're going to keep trying and see what we can do to get it down to zero."

Under the deal, Iran-backed Hezbollah has 60 days to withdraw its fighters and infrastructure from southern Lebanon. During that time, Israeli troops are also to withdraw to their side of the border.

**RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW!"**

In a post on his Truth Social site, Trump called for Palestinian militants to free all of the roughly 100 Israeli hostages still held inside Gaza, around two-thirds of whom are believed to be alive.

If not, Trump said, "Those responsible will be hit harder than anybody has been hit in the long and storied History of the United States of America."

**RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW!"**

Hours earlier, the Israeli government confirmed the death of Omer Neutra, a dual US-Israeli citizen, whose body is still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza, according to the Israeli government. The Biden administration is mounting a last-ditch effort to try to restart talks between Israel and Hamas. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office declined to comment on Trump's post though President Isaac Herzog welcomed it.

Fears of hunger mount in Gaza

In Gaza, meanwhile, alarm is mounting over increasing hunger. The amount of food allowed in by Israel has plunged over the past two months, compounded by a decision Sunday by the United Nations to halt aid deliveries from the main crossing into the territory because of the threat of armed gangs looting convoys. (AP)

## Floods wreak havoc in Malaysia, southern Thailand with over 30 killed, tens of thousands displaced

**KOTA BHARU (MALAYSIA), Dec 3:** Severe floods caused by monsoon rains killed more than 30 people and displaced tens of thousands in Malaysia and southern Thailand, officials said Tuesday, with both countries preparing shelters and evacuation plans in anticipation of more heavy rain.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said five days of heavier-than-expected rain that battered the country's east coast last week was equal to the rainfall over the past six months, wreaking havoc in the northeastern state of Kelantan and neighbouring Terengganu.

The heavy downpours damaged roads and houses in Kelantan and other parts of Malaysia. Rescue workers used boats to distribute food to victims trapped in their homes. Anwar said it would cost the government an estimated 1 billion ringgit (USD 224 million) to repair infrastructure damaged by the floods.

The rain eased over the weekend, but the Meteorological Department forecast heavy rains later Tuesday. Anwar said the govern-



ment is bracing for another monsoon surge that is expected to hit on Sunday.

According to the National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said Tuesday that 25 people perished in floods in the southernmost part of the country in the past week. More than 300,000 households have been affected, with many schools and 98 health facilities forced to close. The health ministry said 34,354 evacuees remained at 491 government shelters on Monday. (AP)

At least six people died in Malaysia, while the death toll was higher in southern Thailand.

Thailand's Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said Tuesday that 25 people perished in floods in the southernmost part of the country in the past week. More than 300,000 households have been affected, with many schools and 98 health facilities forced to close. The health ministry said 34,354 evacuees remained at 491 government shelters on Monday. (AP)

## Zimbabwe court rules against law that denies abortion to marital rape victims, girls below 18

**HARARE, Dec 3:** A law prohibiting abortion services for women raped by their husbands and girls under the age of 18 is unconstitutional, Zimbabwe's High Court has ruled.

In his ruling handed down on November 22 and made public this week, Judge Maxwell Takuva said since Zimbabwe's laws already criminalise marital rape and sex with a minor, victims should be allowed to abort if they become pregnant.

The ruling is significant, given Zimbabwe's restrictive abortion laws that often lead women and girls into illegal and unsafe backstreet abortions that in many cases turn fatal.

Abortion is allowed in very few circumstances in Zimbabwe, including such as if the pregnancy endangers the life of a woman, or if there is a risk of a physical or mental defect "of such a nature that (the child) will permanently be seriously handicapped." Women can also access legal abortion services in cases of unlawful sex such as incest. (AP)

## They fled war in Sudan but haven't been able to flee hunger

*People are starving to death at the moment ... It's man-made*

**ADRE, Dec 3:** For months, Aziza Abraham fled from one village in Sudan to the next as people were slaughtered. Yet the killing of relatives and her husband's disappearance aren't what forced the 23-year-old to leave the country for good. It was hunger, she said.

"We don't have anything to eat because of the war," Abraham said, cradling her 1-year-old daughter under the sheet where she now shelters, days after crossing into Chad.

The war in Sudan has created vast hunger, including famine. It has pushed people off their farms. Food in the markets is sparse, prices have spiked and aid groups say they're struggling to reach the most vulnerable as warring parties limit access.

Some 24,000 people have been killed and millions displaced during the war that erupted in April 2023, sparked by tensions between the military and a powerful paramilitary group, the Rapid

Support Forces.

Global experts confirmed famine in the Zamzam displacement camp in July. They warn that some 25 million people — more than half of Sudan's population — are expected to face acute hunger this year.

"People are starving to death at the moment ... It's man-made. It's these men with guns and power who deny women and children food," Jan Egeland, head of the Norwegian Refugee Council, told The Associated Press. Warring parties on both sides are blocking assistance and delaying authorisation for aid groups, he said.

Between May and September, there were seven malnutrition-related deaths among children in a hospital at a displacement site in Chad run by Doctors Without Borders, known by its French acronym MSF. Such deaths can be from disease in hunger-weakened bodies.

In September, MSF was forced



to stop caring for 5,000 malnourished children in North Darfur for several weeks, citing repeated, deliberate obstructions and blockades. US President Joe Biden has called on both sides to allow unhindered access and stop killing civilians.

But the fighting shows no signs of slowing. More than 2,600 people were killed across the country in October, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event

## 5 Australians serving life sentences for drugs in Indonesia could soon return home

**JAKARTA, Dec 3:** The remaining five Australians from the Bali Nine group who are serving life sentences for drug smuggling in Indonesia could be repatriated home this month as Indonesia and Australia put finishing touches on a draft proposal for their transfer, Indonesia's senior law minister said Tuesday. The Indonesian government is awaiting Australia's response to key points related to the transfer arrangements, including provisions requiring Australia to acknowledge Indonesia's sovereignty, respect the rulings of Indonesian courts and ensure that the five maintain their prisoner status after returning home, Yusril Iha Mahendra told reporters.

"I hope that we can find an understanding on that, agreed on the draft. And we hope that we can finalise

these matters in December," Mahendra said after meeting Australian Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke in Jakarta. Burke said the proposal "is a significant step forward and shows significant goodwill. We now need to work through the issues within each country and we'll be doing that without delay."

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese last month appealed to Indonesia's new President Prabowo Subianto to allow their repatriation.

Two convicted ringleaders of the Bali Nine, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, were executed by a firing squad in 2015, causing a diplomatic furore between neighbours Indonesia and Australia. Tan Duc Thanh Nguyen died from cancer in prison in May. (AP)

Data Project, which called it the bloodiest month of the war.

Violence is intensifying around North Darfur's capital, El Fasher, the only capital in the vast western Darfur region that the RSF doesn't hold. Darfur has experienced some of the war's worst atrocities, and the International Criminal Court prosecutor has said there are grounds to believe both sides may be committing war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

### Centre urged to dismantle militant camps in Manipur

**IMPHAL, Dec 3:** Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), an umbrella body of Meitei civil society organisations, on Tuesday asked the central government to secure the Indo-Myanmar border and dismantle the infrastructure of armed militant groups.

COCOMI also called for transparent investigations into allegations of collusion between security forces and Kuki armed groups.

The Centre needs to take "decisive action to secure the Indo-Myanmar border and to dismantle the infrastructure of armed militant groups within the state in a stipulated time," COCOMI said in a statement.

A comprehensive strategy is required to address infiltration, illegal poppy cultivation, illegal arms smuggling and trafficking of drugs and also to restore the demographic balance in Manipur, it said.

COCOMI also alleged that the crisis in the northeastern state resulted from "Kuki aggression" and that the India-Myanmar border has been "mismanaged deliberately".

Both the central and state governments have repeatedly claimed that infiltration from Myanmar is the root cause behind the violence between Imphal valley-based Meiteis and Kukis based in hill districts.

Manipur has remained gripped by recurring bouts of violence since ethnic clashes between the two communities first erupted in May last year. At least 258 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless since then. (PTI)

### 3 arrested with arms in Manipur's Imphal

**IMPHAL, Dec 3:** Three persons were arrested with arms and ammunition in Manipur's Imphal East district, police said on Tuesday.

They were arrested from Kshetrigao Sabal Leika when they were loitering in the area to "commit prejudicial activities" like extorting money from the people, police said in a statement.

"They were later found to be members of Arambai Tengol," it said.

Those arrested were identified as Ningombam Lemba Singh (25), Mangshatabam Poirreingamba Meitei (21) and Laishram Bidyas Singh (21). A minor was also held along with them, police said.

Among the items seized from them were a Ghatak rifle along with a magazine and five live rounds, a 32 pistol with magazine, three mobile phones, and a four-wheeler, the statement said.

In Churachandpur district, a raid in Phaikhothang village led to the recovery of an SLR rifle with a magazine, a 9 mm pistol, a 12 bore single barrel gun and 15 live rounds.

Searches at Loibol Khunou in Kangpokpi district led to the seizure of a sniper, one modified M79 grenade launcher which is locally known as 'lathode gun, two 9 mm pistols with magazines, an SBBL shotgun and seven live rounds of ammunition, police said. (PTI)

## Over 2,000 Army personnel searching for missing man in Manipur

### Tracker dogs, drones leaving no stone unturned

**IMPHAL, Dec 3:** The Indian Army has deployed over 2,000 personnel for the search of the Meitei man who has been missing for over a week, police said.

Laishram Kamalbabu Singh, a native of Assam's Cachar district who lived in Khukrul in Imphal West, was a works supervisor for a contractor working with the Military Engineering Services (MES) in Leimakhong Military Station of the 57th Mountain Division, according to the Army. Chief minister N Biren Singh had said he went missing from the military station, asking its authorities to take responsibility for finding him.

"Massive joint search operations by Manipur Police assisted by Indian Army is being undertaken with effect from 25.11.2024 to trace Laishram Kamalbabu Singh (56 yrs) who has been missing since 25.11.2024," the Manipur Police said in a Facebook post on Monday night. "Indian Army has extended all support and resources to trace him utilising 2000 plus troops, hel-



icopters, drones and Army tracker dogs. Further investigation using technical intelligence is being undertaken," it added.

Meanwhile, the Joint Action Committee (JAC), formed in response to the disappearance of Singh, continued its sit-in protest at Kanto Sabal, some 2.5 km from the military station, where the road has been barricaded. Singh's wife Akojam Belarani also joined the

protests. The military camp, located in Kangpokpi district, is some 16 km away from the state capital Imphal and is surrounded by the hills where the Kuki people live.

Meiteis who lived near Leimakhong fled after the ethnic violence began in May last year, claiming over 250 lives so far. The protesters claimed it was likely that Singh was kidnapped by militants. (PTI)

### Hornbill biggest tribal festival in world: Union Minister

**KOHIMA, Dec 3:** Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Tuesday hailed the Hornbill Festival of Nagaland as the largest tribal festival in the world, emphasising its potential to boost tourism in the state and the Northeast region in coming years.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the 25th edition of the festival at Naga Heritage Village in Kisama, the Union tourism minister remarked, "This is a remarkable year as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Hornbill Festival, which has truly become the 'festival of festivals.'" Shekhawat noted that all 18 tribes of Nagaland come together to showcase their rich cultures through vibrant performances, making the festival not only a national but also an international event.

Over its 25-year journey, the festival has evolved into a global celebration of diverse music and cultural expressions from around the world. "People who have come from all around the world are witnessing this festival and I am sure that they are going to endorse that this is truly the largest tribal festival being celebrated all across the world," Shekhawat said.

Expressing optimism about the growing tourism potential of Nagaland and the Northeastern states, Shekhawat expressed confidence that the festival would help amplify the region's tourism in the coming years. He wished for the



continued success of the grand event.

The minister attended the afternoon session of the cultural performances, where the 18 tribes of Nagaland showcased their traditions. He was joined by artists from Japan, the festival's partner country, who performed the renowned Drum Tao.

Shekhawat, along with Minister Along, also participated in the traditional log drum-pulling ceremony of the Tikhri tribe, the youngest officially recognized major tribe among the Nagas. This ceremony was one of the main attractions of the day. Another highlight was the traditional stilt bamboo race, organised by the department of youth resources and sports, which saw 18 male and 14 female competitors from the tribes, alongside five male and four female tourists, engaging in this popular and exciting event. (PTI)

### Army recruitment scheduled in Kohima from December 16-19

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Dec 3:** Indian Army is going to hold the Agniveer Recruitment Rally in Nagaland from December 16-19 at Indira Gandhi Stadium in Kohima.

"Earlier, the 2nd phase of the Agniveer recruitment process has commenced from June in several parts of the country. The phase marked a significant milestone in the effort of Army to transform its recruitment procedure and ensure a seamless and efficient selection process.

The result of successful candidates of the online Common Entrance Examination (CEE), held from April 22 to May 3 2024, can be accessed on 'Join Indian Army' website. All candidates have also been informed by the

Army Recruiting Office (ARO), Rangapahar through their registered email IDs as well.

The candidates will be tested on 1.6km run, basic physical fitness tests and physical measurements followed by a medical examination in addition to the screening at the rally site. Indian Army has advised the shortlisted candidates to approach Army Recruiting Office, Rangapahar using email ID - arorangapahar77@gmail.com and mobile number - 7628023484 for the admit cards if not received.

The Recruitment Rally reflects the commitment of Indian Army to providing employment opportunities to the youth of Nagaland to serve the nation with honor and pride," a press release stated.

## Protest against scrapping FMR, fencing India-Myanmar border fencing in Churachandpur

**CHURACHANDPUR, Dec 3:** A demonstration was held in Manipur's Churachandpur district on Tuesday to protest the government's decision to scrap the India-Myanmar Free Movement Regime (FMR).

The demonstration, led by the United Zou Organisation (UZO), started at the 'Wall of Remembrance' around 11.30 am.

Carrying posters and placards, the demonstrators raised slogans against the government's decision to scrap FMR and fence the international border. "No border fencing can our cultural ties," said a demonstrator.

The demonstration was attended by Saikot MLA Paolienlal Haokip, Henglep MLA Letzang Haokip and Singngat MLA Chinlungang, besides leaders of various Kuki-Zo tribes.

A one-minute silence was also observed in remembrance of those killed in the ongoing ethnic violence in the state that has claimed over 250 lives since May last year.

Leaders of the Kuki Zo Council, Zomi Council, Kuki Inpi Manipur and Hmar Inpi addressed the gathering.



At the end of the programme, a memorandum addressed to Union Home Minister Amit Shah was submitted to deputy commissioner Dharun Kumar by UZO leaders.

The FMR allowed people residing close to the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without any documents.

The announcement to scrap it was made in February after Shah said India decided to fence the entire 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border, which passes through

Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

The FMR was implemented in 2018 as part of India's Act East policy.

Fencing along the border has been a persistent demand of the Imphal Valley-based Meitei groups which have been alleging that militants often enter India through it.

The Meitei groups also allege that narcotics are being smuggled into India, taking advantage of the unfenced international border. (PTI)

### 7 arrested for attack on Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala

**HT Correspondent**  
**AGARTALA, Dec 3:** Seven individuals have been arrested, and disciplinary action has been taken against four police officers following an attack on the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala on Monday.

The incident involved right-wing activists who stormed the diplomatic premises and desecrated Bangladesh's national flag, leading to widespread condemnation.

The attack occurred during a protest organized by the 'Hindu Sangharsh Samity,' a right-wing group voicing concerns over alleged atrocities against Hindu minorities in Bangladesh. The demonstration, which included a sit-in near the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission, also demanded the release of ISKCON member Chinmoy Krishna Das Prabhu.

Although the protest was largely peaceful, tensions escalated when a group of agitators breached security to submit a memorandum. Some individuals forced their way into the high commission's premises, disrupting order and desecrating the neighboring country's flag.

Reacting to the breach, West Tripura Superintendent of Police (SP) Kiran Kumar confirmed that security had been tightened around the diplomatic office. "We have taken swift action, suspending two sub-inspectors and transferring a deputy superintendent of police to headquarters for negligence of duty. A suo motu case has been registered, and seven individuals have been taken into custody. Investigations are ongoing," he said.

The incident drew sharp criticism from Tripura chief minister Manik Saha, who condemned the actions of the miscreants. "While peaceful protests are a democratic right, forcibly entering a diplomatic premises and desecrating another nation's flag is unacceptable. Such behavior cannot be tolerated," he stated.

The chief minister assured that law enforcement would take all necessary measures to prevent a recurrence of such incidents. Meanwhile, the West Tripura police have heightened security around the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission to safeguard diplomatic integrity and maintain public order.

### Rally in Tripura demanding release of Hindu monk in Bangladesh

**AGARTALA, Dec 3:** Thousands of people on Tuesday gathered in Tripura capital Agartala under the banner of 'Sanatani Yuva' and staged a rally demanding immediate release of prominent Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das in neighbouring Bangladesh and protesting against the alleged oppression of minorities in that country.

The protesters were, however, not allowed to move towards the Akhaura Integrated Check Post (ICP) on the international border as the police denied them permission to hold the 'March to Bangladesh' programme.

While speaking to the reporters, BJP leader and former union minister Pratima Bhoumik expressed concern over the arrest of spiritual leader Chinmoy Krishna Das and "extreme oppression" of minorities in the neighbouring country after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government.

"A total unrest is prevailing in Bangladesh with minorities facing extreme oppression in their own country. Altogether 17,000 properties were attacked since the new government came to power. The whole world is worried about what is happening in Bangladesh. We strongly demand immediate release of Chinmoy Prabhu who had been speaking for the minorities," she said.

Urging the people to stand by the minorities in Bangladesh, Bhoumik also demanded that the administration in Bangladesh stop attacks on minorities and provide them with proper security.

Tuesday's protest programme was organised a day after the premises of the Bangladesh mission here was breached by a group of people protesting against the arrest of Chinmoy Krishna Das and attack religious minorities. (PTI)

### United effort needed to make Nagaland TB-free: Governor

**KOHIMA, Dec 3:** Nagaland Governor La Ganesan on Tuesday called upon political leaders, government officials and civil societies in the state to commit to 'Nikshay Mitras' (supporters) to assist TB patients to make a TB-free Nagaland and India.

Under a Central scheme, people are encouraged to adopt tuberculosis patients and become 'Nikshay Mitras'.

"Let us commit to adopting TB patients from our respective localities, and disseminate the message of this noble cause far and wide. Our collaborative efforts will significantly complement the government's strategy, accelerating a robust response against TB," said Ganesan while addressing a programme on the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan at Raj Bhavan here.

Legislators, bureaucrats and officials of various departments present at the programme also signed a pledge to be Nikshay Mitras to support at least one TB patient.

In 2023, India is estimated to have had 27 lakh TB cases, of which 25.1 lakh were diagnosed and put on treatment, according to central government data released last month.

La Ganesan emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts and nutrition in combating TB, he encouraged society to adopt a collective approach and become Nikshay Mitras to assist TB patients.

Currently, 410 Nikshay Mitras in Nagaland are supporting 1,000 TB patients, and their unwavering commitment would lead towards a TB-free Nagaland, and ultimately, a TB-free India, he said.

Tourism and higher education minister Temjen Imna Along praised the progress of the Nikshay Mitra Campaign and highlighted the governor's

personal commitment, supporting 36 TB patients.

Commissioner and secretary of health and family welfare, Anoop Khinchi said the voluntary involvement of the community will not only help in spreading awareness but accelerate society fighting with stigma and discrimination.

With Nagaland having 3018 TB cases till September, Khinchi said concerted efforts by all sectors along with a strong political commitment and support by civil societies will go a long way in achieving desired goals.

Mission director of Nagaland Health Mission, Dr Akuo Sorhie, shared updates on the state's TB elimination efforts, noting significant improvements in case detection and treatment outcomes.

In Nagaland, TB case detection has increased, and the state has shown notable progress, with Dimapur having the highest burden of TB cases, she said.

Sorhie highlighted the importance of screening, contact tracing, and providing nutritional support through the Nikshay Poshan Yojana, which has increased financial assistance to TB patients.

The government also introduced a TB Mukh Panchayat Initiative to empower villages in addressing TB-related challenges, with 78 villages in Nagaland achieving TB-free status in 2023, she said.

She also announced a 100-day intensified TB elimination campaign starting December 7, as part of a nationwide push to reach the 2025 goal.

Sorhie urged political leaders to take a more active role in the fight against TB, underscoring the need for strong political will and leadership to address the ongoing threat of the disease. (PTI)

## Cultural, biz exchange in focus through Wales-Hornbill fest partnership

### 10-day event, showcases a melange of cultural displays under one roof

**KOHIMA, Dec 3:** Wales, which is part of the United Kingdom, has taken part in Nagaland's Hornbill Festival this year with a focus on cultural and business exchanges, according to a senior diplomat of that country.

Mitchell Theaker, India head of the Wales government, said his country's delegation engaged was in discussions with state officers on sectors such as education, skill exchanges, and trade.

Interacting with PTI on the sidelines of ongoing festival, Theaker said, "We were overjoyed when Wales had the offer to be a partner country for the Hornbill Festival". To encourage inter-tribal interaction and to promote cultural heritage of Nagaland, the Nagaland government organises the Hornbill Festival every year in the first week of December. The 10-day event, showcasing a melange of cultural displays under one roof, is a major event in this northeastern state.

The diplomat credited the British Council, the British High Commission, and the Deputy High Commission in Kolkata for their pivotal role in facilitating the partnership, which followed a successful visit by Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio to Wales.

"This is not only a fantastic cultural exchange but also a springboard for building a deeper relationship with Nagaland and the wider region," Theaker said.

He said the Wales delegation was engaged in fruitful discussions on various sectors, including education, skills exchanges, and trade.

He highlighted the growing interest in



innovative start-ups in Nagaland, which aligns with Wales's own focus on technology and entrepreneurship, particularly in areas like cyber security, life sciences, and compound semiconductor.

Expressing interest in strengthening ties with Nagaland's start-up ecosystem, he said, it has been amazing to meet businesses in sectors ranging from textiles to education technology.

"There are so many opportunities for us to explore together, especially in tech and innovation. Wales is a centre of excellence in these fields, and we're excited about the potential for collaboration," he said.

Regarding the implementation of initiatives, Theaker said that the government would begin reaching out to educational and skills organisations immediately after the festival. "Our first step is to speak

with our partners back in Wales and continue conversations with Nagaland's leadership at the Chief Minister's Office to identify areas where we can offer expertise and support," he said.

Alison Barrett MBE, division director of the British Council, emphasized the importance of the cultural connection between Wales and Nagaland, noting the shared geographical features and commitment to preserving cultural heritage.

Asserting that the rich musical traditions of both regions made the collaboration particularly meaningful, she said, "Wales and Nagaland have much in common, from their mountainous landscapes to their rich cultural heritage."

The British Council has been proud to support this cultural exchange, bringing Welsh artists to Nagaland as part of this special partnership, Barrett added. (PTI)

No.E-533783/25

**CORRIGENDUM**

Please read as "filling up of 4669 (Four Thousand Six Hundred Sixty Nine) post of Regular Graduate Teacher and these posts shall be personal to the incumbents" instead of "filling up of 4669 (Four thousand Six hundred Sixty Nine)" which was published in the Advertisement dated 02/12/2024 vide No.E-533783/22 (Janasanyog/D/9659/24/2-Dec-24) in connection with invitation of online applications from willing and eligible candidates who are working as Additional (Contractual) Teacher under Secondary Education, Assam through the official website of DSE, Assam i.e. - <https://madhyamik.assam.gov.in>.

Other terms & conditions mentioned in the Advertisement shall remain the same.

Sd/-  
Director of Secondary Education, Assam  
Kahilipara, Guwahati — 781019

**Janasanyog/D/9729/24/4-Dec-24**

No.KDB-414/2023-2024/10645

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

Sealed tender affixing a non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs.8.25 (Rupees Eight and twenty five rupees) only with a validity period of 180 days, which will subsequently to be covered and drawn up in the printed of F-2 form are invited from the registered contractor Class-I (A, B, C) & Class-II Categories Assam P&RD and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the works under 15<sup>th</sup> FC fund for the year 2024-25 as stated below. The tender will be received by the undersigned upto 2.00 PM of 23/12/2024 and will be opened on the next day at 3.PM.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Location	A.A. Amount (Rs. In lakh)	Cost of bid document	Amount of bid security	Time of completion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Const. of Community Toilet at Mojati CNI Church	Mojati	Rs. 10,47,960.00.00 L	0.03%	SC/ST= 1% OTH = 2%	3 months

Details N.I.T may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned tender will be issued to the contractors of their authorized agent from 03/12/2024 to 23/12/2024 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of demand draft/banker's cheque from any Nationalized bank, duly pledged in favour of the BDO, Kachugaon Dev. Block, Gurufela.

Sd/-  
Block Development Officer,  
Kachugaon Dev. Block, Gurufela

**IPR(BTC)-2023-24/995**





# Chandigarh first to fully implement new criminal laws

## PM says these are protector of citizen's rights, basis of ease of justice

**CHANDIGARH, Dec 3:** Chandigarh has become the country's first administrative unit where 100 per cent implementation of the three criminal laws has been done with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday saying these new legislations are becoming protector of citizen's rights and the basis of ease of justice.

The laws -- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam -- came into effect on July 1, replacing the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively.

Chandigarh has become the country's first administrative unit where 100 per cent implementation of the three laws has been done.

Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister said the new criminal laws represent a concrete step towards realising the ideals enshrined in the Constitution for the benefit of all citizens.

He said the new laws came into effect at a time when country is moving ahead with the pledge of "Viksit Bharat" and 75 years of adoption of Constitution have been completed, thus the launch of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, rooted in constitutional values, is a significant occasion.

He said these laws signify the end of colonial-era laws.



The colonial-era laws were the medium of atrocities and exploitation committed by the British when they ruled over India, Modi added.

"The 1857 revolution shook the roots of the British rule and in 1860, they brought the IPC and later, the Indian Evidence Act and the CrPC framework came into being. The purpose of those laws was to punish Indians and keep them enslaved," he said.

In 1947, when our country became independent after centuries of slavery, after the wait of generations, after countless sacrifices, when the dawn of independence came, what kind of dreams there were, what kind of enthusiasm there was in the country, he said.

Modi said the countrymen thought that since the British had left, they would also be freed from the British laws.

These laws were medium of atrocities and exploitation commit-

tee for victims of various offences.

Modi said despite gaining freedom, the colonial-era laws which were made to treat citizens as slaves, we never asked this question to ourselves neither those who ruled felt a need to do so.

This slavery mindset greatly affected country's progress, he said.

But the country should break free from its colonial past and utilising its strengths for nation-building, a process that required intense self-reflection, Modi said, while pointing that on August 15, he kept the pledge before the nation from the Red Fort to shed our slave mentality.

Today, with the introduction of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, India has taken a significant move forward in that direction, he said.

Our steps are in line with the democratic spirit of "of the people, by the people, for the people," a fundamental principle of our democracy, he said.

Nyaya Sanhita is woven with the ideals of equality, harmony and social justice, Modi further said.

Referring to provisions under the new laws, he said in heinous crimes like rape, from first hearing and a total within 60 days charges will have to be framed. Within 45 days of hearing, pronouncement of verdict has to be made.

The mantra of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita is - citizen first, he said.

"These laws are becoming protector of citizen's rights. They are becoming basis of ease of justice," Modi said.

At the beginning of his speech, the prime minister said Chandigarh's identity is connected with Goddess Chandī, a form of Shakti, which establishes truth and justice. This is the spirit of entire structure of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, he said.

How these laws will be implemented, I was witnessing a live demo here and urge everyone else to also see it, said Modi.

He explained the exhaustive process behind framing the new laws which included hardwork constitutional and legal experts as well.

He also extended his special gratitude to the Supreme Court, the judges, and all the high courts in the country for this achievement.

Over the past seven decades since independence, the Indian justice system has faced numerous challenges, Modi said.

After careful consideration and deliberation, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has been formulated. Every law has been examined from a practical perspective and refined based on futuristic parameters, he said. (PTI)

## SC stays death penalty of man convicted of rape, murder of teen student in Jharkhand



**NEW DELHI, Dec 3:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the death sentence of a 30-year-old man convicted of the rape and murder of a 19-year-old engineering student in Jharkhand's capital Ranchi.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Pankaj Mishra and Ujjal Bhuyan summoned the translated copy of the trial court and the high court records convicting and awarding death sentence to Rahul Kumar.

"Death sentence awarded shall remain stayed. The registry to acquisition records from the trial court and the high court along with the soft copy," directed the bench.

On September 9, the Jharkhand High Court confirmed the trial court's death sentence to Kumar alias Rahul Raj, who hails from Nawada district in Bihar.

Aggrieved by the high court order, Kumar moved the top court, which as a matter of practice on the first day of a death sentence petition hearing, stayed the execution of the capital punishment and summoned the records from the subordinate courts.

The killing of the young woman, who was raped, strangled and then set on fire, took place on December 15, 2016. A trial court awarded death penalty to Kumar in Decem-

ber, 2019.

The high court in its order said, "Life of a bright young girl aged 19 years who was studying in an engineering college, was snuffed out in a most barbaric manner... is established by the post mortem examination report duly proved by the doctors who formed the medical board to conduct the autopsy over the dead body of the victim."

Terming the crime as a "horrendous act" by the appellant the high court confirmed the capital punishment awarded by the trial court under Section 302 of the IPC.

The high court further said Kumar had come prepared with a cable cord and an electric wire to strangle the victim besides lubricant oil to set her on fire after the incident.

"Strangulation was so intense that cable cord and electric wire got embedded in the neck of the victim. Thereafter, he poured lubricant oil over the body and set her on fire. All this was done on a helpless victim, by this appellant with whom the victim had no past enmity, and after the act, he simply slipped out and absconded," it said.

The post mortem report established "violent rape with the victim" and throttling her to death, the high court said. (PTI)

## Rajya Sabha passes bill to boost investment in oil and gas exploration

**NEW DELHI, Dec 3:** The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed a bill that seeks to amend existing law governing exploration and production of oil and gas, and delink petroleum operations from mining operations to boost investment in the sector.

The Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024, introduced in the Rajya Sabha in August this year, was passed by a voice vote.

Replying to the debate on the bill, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said that the oil and gas sector in-

volves high investment and long gestation period. "We need oil and gas sector 20 more years. We need to bring this legislation here to provide a win-win confidence not only to our own operators but also to foreign investors so that they can come and do business here with view to benefit everyone," Puri said.

He said policy stability, dispute resolution and sharing of infrastructure, especially for small players are new provisions in the bill.

He also explained the point of helium raised by members, saying that

mineral oils are naturally occurring hydrocarbons and thus helium is not a hydrocarbon.

Several opposition members also suggested that the bill be sent to a standing committee for further scrutiny.

Puri further said: "We want to ensure that investors will have more confidence to come here unlike the dull period between 2006 and 2014. There will be one lease, one licence. If there is dispute then by dispute management there will be predictability and stability." (PTI)

## Urged Bangladesh monks, devotees to practice faith discreetly: ISKCON Kolkata spokesperson

**KOLKATA, Dec 3:** ISKCON Kolkata spokesperson Radharan Das on Tuesday said he has urged its monks and followers from Bangladesh to avoid wearing saffron robes and 'tilak' in public, advising them to practice their faith discreetly amid safety concerns following targeted attacks against Hindu minorities in the neighbouring country.

This suggestion comes in the wake of escalating violence against the Hindu community in Bangladesh after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government earlier this year, which has heightened anxieties among devotees and their families.

"The situation in Bangladesh is alarming. The monks and devotees, who have been calling us, we have told them to hide their identity as ISKCON followers or monks publicly. We have asked them to practice their faith discreetly inside homes or inside the temples. We have advised them to dress in a manner that does not draw attention," Das, who is also ISKCON Kolkata vice-president, told PTI.

He emphasised that the measure was temporary and aimed solely at

ensuring their safety.

"This is not any advisory or generic guideline but my personal suggestion to monks and devotees who have been calling us frantically over the last few days," he said.

"Many of our devotees and their families are facing threats and intimidation," Das added, referring to incidents of vandalism of temples and attacks on religious gatherings.

Chinmay Krishna, who served as a spokesperson for Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Monday while en route to Chattogram to attend a rally. He was denied bail and sent to jail on Tuesday by a court in the neighbouring country.

Historically, Hindus made up approximately 22 per cent of Bangladesh's population during the 1971 Liberation War.

The Hindu population, once a substantial demographic in Bangladesh, has experienced a significant decline in recent decades, with the minority community now comprising only around 8 per cent of the country's total population. (PTI)

## Gujarat Governor Devvrat bats for natural farming to save environment, boost farm income

**GANDHINAGAR, Dec 3:** Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat appealed to farmers to take up "natural farming", which reduces the cost of production without compromising on the output and can be a way forward towards a better environment and prosperity.

Behind the Centre's recently-launched National Mission for Natural Farming (NMNF) is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to save the environment, keep people healthy and ensure prosperity for farmers, Devvrat told PTI.

The cultivators who want to turn their land fertile for the coming generations and save underground water should practise this method of farming, he said.

"(Prime Minister Narendra Modi) has a very clear idea about natural farming that we have to save Mother Earth, save the environment, keep people healthy and keep the path of prosperity open for farmers. He is clear about this and worries about farmers all the time," Devvrat said when asked about the launch of the NMNF.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by PM Modi, on November 25 approved the launch of the NMNF as a standalone centrally sponsored scheme under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare with a total outlay of ₹ 2,481 crore.

"The organic farming and natural farming are completely different. In natural farming, there is no need to bring inputs from outside, the cost is almost negligible, the production will not be less. In organic farming, if inputs are brought from outside, then the production is not complete, the cost is also not less, the hard work also does not reduce," he said.

"Therefore, I would request the farmers of India to return to natural farming and join the PM's mission so that you can contribute to the development and progress of this nation and society and you yourself also get benefited," he said.

In his message to farmers, Devvrat said they can give fertile land to the coming generations, save underground water for them, and the air can become pure and people can have good health if they adopt natural farming, which is done only with cow dung and urine.

For such a practice, no external input is required, and the cost is almost negligible, he said. If done properly, the production will also

## MCD spent nearly 100 cr on dengue control measures in 2024, reveals RTI response



**NEW DELHI, Dec 3:** The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has spent nearly ₹ 100 crore on dengue control operations in the financial year 2024-25 so far, up from ₹ 87.99 crore in the previous fiscal year, according to an RTI response.

This increase reflects the MCD's intensified efforts to combat mosquito-borne diseases, which have seen a rise in the number of cases this year.

A detailed breakdown of the 2024 expenditure shows that ₹ 96.79 crore was spent, including ₹ 4.8 crore on fogging, ₹ 83.25 lakh on anti-larval measures, ₹ 42.02 lakh on medicines and equipment, ₹ 1.2 lakh on special drives, ₹ 17.05 lakh on worker training and ₹ 2.20 lakh on advertisements.

The Right to Information (RTI) response also revealed that 2.89 crore houses were inspected for mosquito breeding in 2024, in comparison to 4.14 crore in 2023.

The expenditures last year included ₹ 4.18 crore on fogging, ₹ 9.56 crore on anti-larval measures, ₹ 90 lakh on medicines and equipment, ₹ 2.09 lakh on advertisements and ₹ 2 lakh spent on training.

The RTI response did not provide any information or assessments regarding the effectiveness of these measures or the overall dengue management strategy for 2023 and 2024.

Notably, the MCD spent ₹ 12.50 lakh on special drives last year.

As of November 30, Delhi had

reported over 5,700 dengue cases, along with three dengue-related deaths, according to the MCD data. In October alone, over 2,400 cases of dengue were reported, the highest in four years.

Although dengue cases have decreased compared to last year's 9,266, other mosquito-borne diseases, such as malaria and chikungunya, have seen a significant rise.

By November 30, Delhi had recorded 766 malaria cases, a 99 per cent increase from 384 cases in 2023 and the highest in four years. Similarly, chikungunya cases surged to 266 this year, up from just 44 in 2023, also the highest in four years.

The spike in mosquito-borne diseases was most noticeable between September and October, likely due to changing weather conditions in Delhi, the data showed. However, there has been a decline in the number of such cases with the onset of winter.

In contrast, last year, the spike occurred between August and November.

Mosquitoes in India typically breed during the monsoon season, which runs from June to September. This year, however, a delayed monsoon in Delhi led to a late rise in cases, followed by an early decline as winter approached.

The civic body has also been combating the Japanese encephalitis virus, another mosquito-borne disease. A case of Japanese encephalitis was reported in Delhi earlier this month, prompting the MCD to intensify anti-mosquito measures. (PTI)

## Empathy, not sympathy: Prez stresses equal opportunities for persons with disabilities

### Special training, counselling and facilities must be provided for their needs

**NEW DELHI, Dec 3:** President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday emphasized the need for empathy, inclusivity and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities (Divyangjan), and asserted that their empowerment is a collective responsibility of society and the government.

Speaking at the National Awards ceremony for individuals and organisations working for the welfare of Divyangjan, Murmu called for a shift in societal attitudes. "They need empathy, not sympathy. They deserve natural affection, not special attention. Above all, they should experience respect," President Murmu said, urging people to foster a society that treats Divyangjan with dignity and equality.

The President highlighted that being differently abled is not a limitation but a "special condition" that demands tailored support.

"Special training, counselling and facilities must be provided for



their needs. While the government is giving priority to their welfare, society must also step forward to prioritise their inclusion," she said.

The President pointed to the remarkable achievements of Divyangjan in various fields, particularly sports.

"In the 2012 Paralympics, India secured just one medal. However, in 2024, awareness and support for Divyangjan have resulted in our athletes winning 29 medals. This progress reflects our growing sen-

sitivity and commitment to their empowerment," she said.

President Murmu also stressed the importance of creating an inclusive environment.

She underscored that true accessibility is achieved when facilities are designed to be effortlessly usable by Divyangjan.

"Ease of living for Divyangjan is a crucial metric of societal progress. A truly sensitive society ensures equal opportunities and seamless access for everyone," she

said. The Sugama Bharat Abhiyan (Accessible India Campaign), she noted, exemplifies the government's commitment to improving the ease of living for Divyangjan.

"Various ministries and departments are collaborating under a whole-of-government approach to enhance accessibility. I urge them to work together more cohesively, especially in advancing the social and economic empowerment of Divyangjan," she added.

The President called for special efforts to reach Divyangjan in rural and remote areas.

"Earlier, only three types of disabilities were recognised. Today, this has expanded to 21, marking a transformative change in the development and welfare of Divyangjan," she said.

Thirty-three individuals, institutions and organisations that have made significant contributions to the empowerment of persons with disabilities were awarded at the ceremony. (PTI)

**CONSTRUCTION OF ETP WASTE WATER RECYCLING PLANT**

**E-TENDER NOTICE NO. KYQ-CCO-ETP-02-24-25; dated: 30-11-2024.** E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work:  
**Tender No. KYQ-CCO-ETP-02-24-25**  
**Name of work:** Construction of ETP waste water recycling plant for reuse of discharge water of mechanized laundry/Kamakhyia at Coach Maintenance Depot Kamakhyia.  
**Advertised Value:** ₹ 37,85,800/-  
**Earnest Money:** ₹ 68,800/-  
**Bidding Start Date:** 07-12-2024; E-tender will be closed at 12:00 hrs. on 21-12-2024. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in website [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in)

Sr. CDO, Guwahati  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
 "Serving Customers with a smile"

## My personality is that of a rebel, I like challenging norms: 'Mirzapur' star Shweta Tripathi

**NEW DELHI, Dec 3:** Like many others, she once dreamt of being the heroine in wispy chiffons running through mustard fields. But Shweta Tripathi's career arc turned out radically different and the "Mirzapur" actor, who says she likes challenging norms, will have it no other way.

"My personality type is of a rebel. I am all of 5ft, I don't fit your archetype of a heroine, I like challenging those norms," the actor, known for her roles with a difference in "Masaan" and OTT shows including "Yeh Kaali Kaali Aankhein", told PTI. The actor, who is in her 30s, can pinpoint just when it

all changed, when her thoughts crystallised. It was in 2009 when she was working on her debut show "Kya Mast Hai Life". "I would travel to Malad from Bandra every day and I had a cab driver, a very nice guy. One day, when the car stopped at the red light, he looked outside and his gaze lingered there for more than usual. I turned to see what was happening -- there was a movie poster with three women in bikinis. "... I promised myself there and then that I never want to be this," Shweta said.

The actor, whose portrayal as the spunky Golu from "Mirzapur" has won her accolades, clarified that she doesn't have a problem with wearing a bikini or a swimsuit.

"But being displayed like that is something I wouldn't like," she said.

Equally, Shweta is happy that films and shows are now exploring the sexuality of women. These are the roles she

has no qualms in choosing -- be it the student infatuated with her teacher in "Haraamkhor", the acid attack survivor in "Kaalkoot" or the brilliant student-turned gang woman in "Mirzapur", the show that made her a household name.

"I love the fact there are films like 'Masaan' and 'Mirzapur', where it is about female desire... It is important to have characters like Beena Tripathi (Rasika Dugal in 'Mirzapur') or Devi (Richa Chadha in 'Masaan') because we belong to a very progressive land and culture. And, if we keep clipping our wings, then it will be in every aspect and every sector." Her father was a bureaucrat and her mother a teacher. Growing up in the Andamans and Delhi, she said she dreamt of being the quintessential heroine made popular by Yash Raj Films romances.

"But fortunately, unfortunately, I have not done any of that. What I have done are



films like 'Masaan' and 'Gone Kesh', which is about a girl who has alopecia... Everyone has a different purpose and you can get inspired by others but you have to find your own purpose. "I think I am chasing the joy of storytelling, stories that raise the bar of emotion. So that when people see my story, or my character, they feel

something. Because of dad and mom, I want to be part of stories that move people or make them uncomfortable."

A mainstream romance is not out of the picture but it will depend on the character, the story and how much leverage it gives her to drive her independent cinema choices. (PTI)

## Anil Kapoor wraps schedule of 'Subedaar': The magic is just beginning



**NEW DELHI, Dec 3:** Actor Anil Kapoor says he has completed filming for a key schedule of his upcoming film "Subedaar".

"Subedaar", being directed by Suresh Triveni of "Tumhari Sulu" and "Jalsa" fame, was announced by Prime Video in March.

The actor drama follows the story of subedaar Arjun Singh who grapples with civilian life, navigating a strained relationship with his daughter and societal dysfunction. It also stars Radhika Madan.

Kapoor, who plays the titular role in the film, shared a series of BTS pictures from the shooting of "Subedaar" on Instagram on Monday night.

"From dreams to reality, from vision to creation-Subedaar takes shape with dedication and heart! Schedule wrapped, but the magic is just beginning. Grateful for the team, the passion, and the journey," the actor wrote in the post.

"Subedaar" is produced by Abundantia Entertainment, Opening Image, Anil Kapoor Film & Communication Network Pvt. Ltd.

Triveni and Prajwal Chandrashekar are credited as co-writers on the movie.

Kapoor, whose last film release was "Fighter", recently hosted the third season of reality series "Bigg Boss OTT". (PTI)

## 'All We Imagine As Light' named best international feature at Gotham Awards



**NEW DELHI, Dec 3:** Payal Kapadia's Cannes Grand Prix winning title "All We Imagine As Light" has won the best international feature award at the 2024 Gotham Awards.

The annual awards, which honours independent films across the world,

was held in New York on Monday, reported Deadline. The announcement comes days after the movie received the Jury Grand Prize at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA) 2024.

Other nominees in the category were "Green Border", "Hard Truths", "Inside The Yellow Cocoon Shell", and "Vermiglio".

Kapadia was also nominated in the best director category but was bested by RaMell Ross of "Nickel Boys".

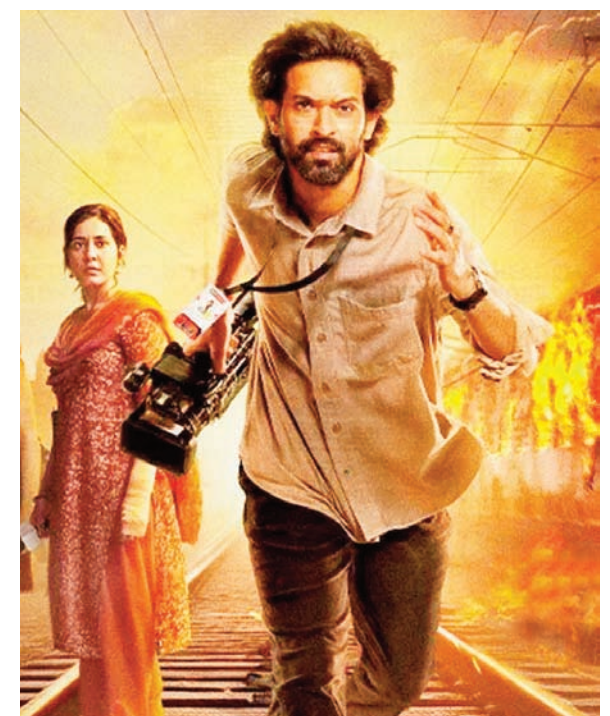
"All We Imagine As Light", starring Kani Kusruti and Divya Prabha, follows the story of two Kerala nurses who navigate their lives in Mumbai. It released in theatres across India on December 22. First-time filmmaker Shuchi Talati was nominated in the breakthrough director category for "Girls Will Be Girls". Vera Drew emerged the winner in the segment for the superhero parody "The People's Joker".

The film, which marks the production debut of actor couple Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal, revolves around Mira, a 16-year-old girl whose rebellious awakening is intertwined with her mother's unfulfilled coming-of-age experiences. It stars Preeti Panigrahi, Kusruti, and Kesav Binoy Kiron. (PTI)

## Vikrant Massey says his social media post misinterpreted: Not quitting acting

**NEW DELHI, Dec 3:** "12th Fail" star Vikrant Massey on Tuesday said his social media post about going on a hiatus from movies is only a temporary break to focus on family and health and it should not be misinterpreted as his retirement. Many publications ran stories around the actor's Instagram post stating Massey had hung his boots much to the shock of fans and the film industry. Now Massey has issued a clarification, saying he owes everything to acting but needs some time away from the spotlight. "My post has been misinterpreted. That I am quitting or retiring from acting. I want to take some time off to focus on my family and health. I would be back when the time feels right," the 37-year-old said in the statement. "Acting is all I can do. And it has given me everything I have. My physical and mental health have taken a hit. I just want to take some time off, want to better my craft. I feel a sense of monotony at the moment," he added. His announcement came weeks after the release of his latest movie "The Sabarmati Report". It has earned Rs 36.64 crore (gross) at the box office since its release on November 15.

His Instagram post read: "The last few years and beyond have been phenomenal. I thank each and every one of you for your indelible support. But as I move forward, I realise it's time to recalibrate and go back home. "As a Husband, Father & a Son. And also as an Actor. So, coming 2025, we would meet each other for one last time. Until time deems right. Last 2 movies and many a years of memories. Thank you again. For everything and everything in between. Forever indebted (sic)" The same day Massey attended a special screening of the film in New Delhi with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other ministers at the Balyogi Auditorium in the Parliament Library Building. (PTI)



## 'Pushpa 2: The Rule' to cut across masses and classes, set for record opening: trade experts



**MUMBAI, Dec 3:** Allu Arjun-starrer "Pushpa 2: The Rule" is expected to break all box office records on its opening day as trade experts and exhibitors believe the sequel will attract a footfall of over 50 to 60 lakh and a weekend number that may go beyond ₹ 150 crore.

According to online ticketing website BookMyShow, the movie has become the fastest movie to surpass the one million tickets sold on the platform, crossing previous records set by "Kalki 2898 AD", "Bahubali 2" and "KGF 2".

Gautam Dutta, CEO, Revenue & Operations, PVR INOX, said the sequel is already on its way to becoming a cult hit.

"We are talking about weekend footfall in the range of about 50-60 lakh. We are looking at 'Pushpa' doing about ₹ 800-1000 crore (over-

all)... On the first day itself we should get around one million people coming. It is going to be like 10 Eden Gardens (Kolkata's iconic stadium) full at PVR," Dutta told PTI in an interview.

The film, like many hits from the south in recent years which have broken new grounds in Hindi speaking belt, is likely to cross over ₹ 60 crore on day one in the north and the crowd frenzy that its trailer launch attracted in Patna was only a glimpse of the buzz surrounding the release.

"Everybody has given a red carpet welcome to the films. Look at the marketing done by Allu Arjun, he didn't go to metro cities, he went to Patna, to the east and smaller towns. So the maximum advance bookings have come from the eastern regions. These are all super trends. I just

hope that it cuts through masses and classes. That's the whole promise of the film," Dutta added.

Starring Allu Arjun, the sequel follows the highly successful first part, "Pushpa: The Rise," which released in 2021. The movie will be released across the globe on December 5 with dubbed versions in Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Bengali, and Malayalam.

The original film, directed by Sukumar and produced by Mythri Movie Makers, was not only a commercial success, amassing over ₹ 300 crores in India, but also established a strong fan base that has only grown over the years.

According to Ashish Saksena, COO - Cinemas, BookMyShow, metros like Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi-NCR and Pune are leading in advance bookings.

"Anticipation for Pushpa 2: The Rule is at an all time high across both northern and southern markets, with distinct factors fuelling this excitement," Saksena said.

Trade expert Taran Adarsh told PTI that despite the release day on December 5 being a working one, the audience response to the film is at its peak and many will catch the movie on the first day, first show.

"The advance sales are terrific. The box office collection will be historic; it will take a fabulous earth-shattering start all over India. If all goes well, it will be the biggest opening of Hindi cinema... It's a working day, all fingers crossed. 'Pushpa 1' has created a ground for 'Pushpa 2', the love and adulation that the film has got over the years, on OTT and TV, is immense," Adarsh said. (PTI)

# FC GOA LOOK TO MAINTAIN FORM AGAINST HYDERABAD FC

**HYDERABAD, Dec 3:** Manolo Marquez's FC Goa will look to maintain their form with another three points against Hyderabad FC, who are seeking to break their two-game losing streak, in the Indian Super League here on Wednesday.

Marquez had guided Hyderabad FC to the ISL Cup win in 2021-22, and has since then moved on to bring the glory days back at FC Goa.

The Gaurs have had an invigorating campaign thus far, recording four victories and three draws in their nine matches to garner 15 points and sit at the sixth spot in the standings.

Hyderabad FC, on the other hand, are positioned 11th with seven points collected through two victories and a solitary draw after nine encounters.

FC Goa come into this game after a hard-fought 1-0 victory at the home of Kerala Blasters FC, whereas Hyderabad FC were at the receiving end of a loss by a similar margin away against Mumbai City FC.

Both these sides will look for win, having a determination to lay their hands on three points, with significant focus being on Marquez, given his past association with Hyderabad FC.



This season, Hyderabad FC are yet to clinch a victory in their home stadium, having dealt with losses in all three

matches they have played there thus far.

However, the team has taken positive strides ahead off late

and they will be eager to put up a performance that could delight the supporters in their backyard, encouraging them to offer their

support for the remaining portion of the season.

Until now, Hyderabad FC have conceded three goals from set pieces. This is the joint-most among all teams, along with Odisha FC and NorthEast United FC.

Contrastingly, FC Goa have not given away a strike from a corner so far. FC Goa have embraced a positive playing approach in this campaign, evident by them making 161.1 forward passes per match – almost 19 more than Hyderabad FC's tally of 141.9.

It shows that the Gaurs look to find answers past the opposition's defence whenever they get possession and the 17 goals they have struck thus far explains that they have been successful in doing so too.

FC Goa have emerged victorious in both of their last two matches against Hyderabad FC. They have also kept clean sheets in these clashes. If they win on Wednesday, it will equal their longest winning streak against them in the competition.

Further, the Gaurs also have a chance to keep consecutive clean sheets in away matches for the first time since October-November 2023 (two games). (PTI)

# Rana 5-for and Mehidy blitz lead Bangladesh to 211-run lead over West Indies on Day 3

**KINGSTON (JAMAICA), Dec 3:** Bangladesh turned an 18-run first-innings lead against the West Indies into a competitive 211-run advantage on day three Monday of the second test at Sabina Park.

Bangladesh defended its first-innings 164 by bowling out the host for 146 just after lunch.

Fast bowler Nahid Rana took his maiden test five-for.

As the pitch started to ease up in the sun, the Bangladeshis batted with unexpected boldness, especially Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Shadman Islam, and grabbed a handy lead at 193-5 when bad light ended play.

Captain Mehidy's counterattacking 42 off 39 balls consolidated Bangladesh's renewed confidence of tying the two-test series. First, Bangladesh had to overcome losing Mahmudul Hasan Joy in the first over after he edged Jayden Seales to the slips.

Shahadat Hossain was dropped on 18 but the damage was limited. He scored only 10 more runs, 28 off 26 balls. That brought in Mehidy, who promoted himself from No. 7 in the order to No. 4, in part to protect No. 3 batter Mominul Haque, who stayed off the field because of an unspecified illness. Mehidy got off the mark first ball, fended off the second he faced, then smashed four consecutive boundaries; two drives, and two through the slip cordon.

Shadman added two boundaries, Mehidy pulled one to the fence, and they had hit seven boundaries in nine balls.

They combined for 50 in 29 balls, and had the run rate at nearly seven an over. But then they eased just before tea, when Bangladesh was 110-2 and leading by 128.

Kemar Roach returns-Bangladesh also exploited the absence of West Indies' most experienced fast bowler Kemar Roach, who was hit in the shoulder while batting. He didn't reappear until 30 overs into Bangladesh's second innings. He bowled five overs and conceded

12 runs.

That last session looked more like test cricket.

Shadman edged behind off Shamar Joseph for 46, ending the stand with Mehidy of 70 in 74 balls. Mehidy followed him soon after on 42, out on review to a leg-side flick.

Litton Das was dropped on 12, and fast bowler Shamar Joseph dropped to his knees. It was the sixth drop off his bowling in the series. Litton was out for 25, bowled through the gate by Justin Greaves. At stumps, Jaker Ali was 29 not out, and Bangladesh had five wickets in hand, including Mominul's.

West Indies collapse in the morning, the West Indies collapsed and lost the advantage from a slow but solid 85-1 start. The home side was all out for 146, losing the last nine wickets for 61 runs. It was only the second time Bangladesh got a first innings lead after scoring less than 200. Previously, it scored 192 against South Africa in 2008 for a lead of 22 runs. West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite, on 33, and Keacy Carty, on 19, started the day in the middle at 70-1 and remained the only batsmen to get into double figures. Brathwaite triggered the collapse when he was out for 39 off 129 balls, trying to defend Rana only to see the ball pop off his bat shoulder to gully, where substitute Zakir Hasan made a diving catch.

Carty was the seventh man out trying to flick Hasan Mahmud and edging behind, ending his team-best innings of 40 off 115 balls. Rana tried bouncing out West Indies before lunch and hit Shamar Joseph on the grill and Roach on the shoulder. They lasted three more overs after lunch. Roach was the last man out, trapped by Rana, who bagged his first five-for in his sixth test. He made his test debut in March. Rana took 5-61 in the innings, but on Monday he claimed 4-26 from his last seven overs. (AP)

# Al-Sadd clinches Asian Champions League playoffs spot after beating Ronaldo-less Al-Nassr

**RIYADH (SAUDI ARABIA), Dec 3:** Cristiano Ronaldo was absent when Al-Nassr lost for the first time in the AFC Champions League Elite, to Al-Sadd of Qatar 2-1 on Monday.

Al-Nassr was already guaranteed a place in the round of 16 so Ronaldo, who has five goals in his last three matches, was rested. He watched from the sidelines.

Al-Sadd took the lead through Akram Afif, named the Asian player of the year in November, eight minutes after the break.

While Sadio Mane and Anderson Talisca went close for Al-Nassr, an own goal from close range by Romain Saiss made it 1-1 with 10 minutes remaining.

However, Afif was brought down in the area and, in the ninth minute of added time, Algeria's Adam Ounas converted the penalty. The win ensured 2011 champion Al-Sadd booked a place in the round of 16, moving into fourth in the 12-team group, a point behind Al-Nassr in third.

The top eight from each of the two groups progress to the knockout stage. "It was a tough and close game," Al-Sadd coach Felix Sanchez said. "We worked hard to stop Al-Nassr having the ball, and to win at their home stadium. The players showed their character." Al-Ahli was first in the group after the Saudi Arabian side was held by Esteghlal of Iran to 2-2. Ivan Toney scored both goals for the host in Jeddah. Raphael Silva opened the scoring for the Tehran team after 42 minutes but Toney made it 1-1 just before the break from the spot.

Mohammad Hossein Eslami restored Esteghlal's lead six minutes after the restart but Toney scored his second penalty four minutes from the end, a fourth goal in Asia for the England striker in the space of a week.

Elsewhere, Persepolis of Iran beat Al-Shorta of Iraq 2-1, while Al-Wasl of the United Arab Emirates drew with Al-Rayyan of Qatar 1-1. (AP)

# Babović strikes again as Dempo continue fine away run

**LUDHIANA, Dec 3:** Dempo SC rode on Matija Babović's early strike in the second half to beat Namdhari FC 1-0 in the third round of I-League at the Namdhari Stadium here on Tuesday.

It was Dempo's third clean sheet and second win in a row that takes them to the top of the table for the time being with seven points. Last week, they had beaten Shillong Lajong 2-0, with Serbian Babović scoring the second.

Namdhari, on the other hand, remain winless and down in 10th spot with a solitary point.

The meeting between record champions Dempo SC and relative newcomers Namdhari FC began with a flurry of chances for the former.

Dempo got their first big chance in just the fourth minute as an unmarked Seigoumang Doungel miscued an accurately-delivered Damiani Pérez free-kick. Minutes later, the Argentinian saw two long-range attempts flash wide.

After withstanding the early pressure from the visitors, it was Namdhari's turn to test Dempo's line of defence.

Fernando Capobianco's side were particularly threatening from set-pieces. Ghanaian midfielder Joseph Gordon nearly caught Ashish Sibi wrongfooted from his curling free-kick but the Dempo goalkeeper recovered in time to push it out.

Francis Addo, returning after serving a one-game suspension due to his red card against Delhi FC, was denied the opening goal by a crucial deflection from Mohamed Ali. The Dempo captain stuck his leg out to divert the Ghanaian's powerful strike off tar-

get. In the 38th minute, Addo went for an acrobatic volley from a Bhupinder Singh corner that would've surely been a goal of the season contender had Sibi not been alert to make the save.

Dempo were once again quicker off the blocks at the start of the second half, and this time Namdhari were caught napping.

The Golden Eagles got the breakthrough in the 47th minute when Knerkitalang Buam's long ball unlocked the hosts' high backline, allowing Babović to run behind and poke the ball past a hapless Nishan Singh.

Babović almost got another one six minutes later as he glanced a header from a Mohamed Ali cross over the bar. Then came Namdhari's best chance of getting an equaliser as Cledson Carvalho da Silva, who had a dormant first half, stole the ball from Ali in the final third, raced into the box and drilled a low strike centimetres wide of the far post.

From then on, the game became just about Dempo trying to fend off Namdhari's Brazilian duo of Cledson and Vicente de Paula Mercedes, who came off the bench. But that Cledson chance turned out to be the closest the hosts would come to getting a goal in the match.

Dempo remained solid defensively and Samir Najk's impactful substitutions helped them see off the game and come out with all three points.

Next, the Golden Eagles will play fellow promoted side SC Bengaluru in Bengaluru on December 7. Namdhari will host Aizawl FC on December 8. (PTI)

# Messi, Ronaldo only World XI nominees from clubs outside Europe as voted by players

**HOOFDDORP (NETHERLANDS), Dec 3:** Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo are still popular and respected by their fellow players even though they no longer play for European clubs.

The 37-year-old Messi and 39-year-old Ronaldo were the only players not with clubs in Europe to be voted on a 26-man shortlist for the world team of the year organized by global players' union FIFPRO on Monday.

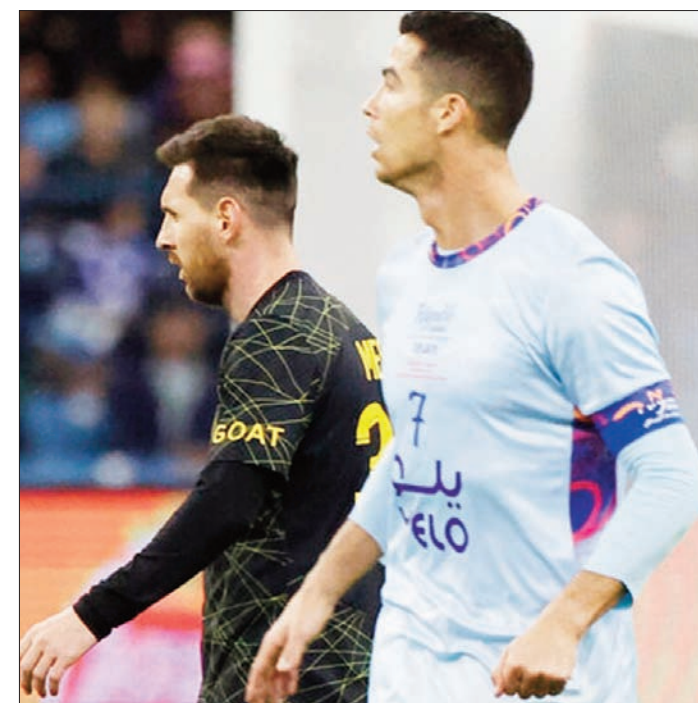
The other 24 nominees played in the past year with clubs in England, Germany, Spain and France, though Kylian Mbappé was the only French connection after spending last season at Paris Saint-Germain.

No player from any Italian club was selected, nor from any club in South America or Africa. Eight players from Real Madrid, including Mbappé, Vinicius Júnior and Jude Bellingham were on the shortlist, plus seven from Manchester City including Ballon d'Or winner Rodri, Kevin De Bruyne and Erling Haaland.

Lamine Yamal, the 17-year-old from Barcelona who was the breakout star of Spain's European Championship title, also made it in polling by union members worldwide.

Messi, in Major League Soccer with Inter Miami, and Ronaldo, in Saudi Arabia with Al-Nassr, will find out on Dec. 9 if they are in the World XI lineup.

FIFPRO said the final team will include the highest-polling goalkeeper, plus each of the top three vote-getters among defenders, midfielders and forwards. The final place goes to



the outfield player with the next highest votes total.

The Netherlands-based union said 28,000 players from 70 countries sent votes.

Goalkeepers: Ederson (Manchester City, Brazil), Emiliano Martínez (Aston Villa, Argentina), Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich, Germany).

Defenders: Dani Carvajal (Real Madrid, Spain), Rúben Dias (Manchester City, Portugal), Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool, Netherlands), Jeremie Frimpong (Bayer Leverkusen, Netherlands), Antonio Rudiger (Real Madrid, Germany), William Saliba (Arsenal, France), Kyle Walker (Manchester City, England).

Midfielders: Jude Bellingham (Real Madrid, England), Kevin

De Bruyne (Manchester City, Belgium), Phil Foden (Manchester City, England), Toni Kroos (Real Madrid, Germany), Luka Modric (Real Madrid, Croatia), Jamal Musiala (Bayern Munich, Germany), Rodri (Manchester City, Spain), Federico Valverde (Real Madrid, Uruguay).

Forwards: Erling Haaland (Manchester City, Norway), Harry Kane (Bayern Munich, England), Kylian Mbappé (Paris Saint-Germain/Real Madrid, France), Lionel Messi (Inter Miami, Argentina), Cole Palmer (Manchester City/Chelsea, England), Cristiano Ronaldo (Al-Nassr, Portugal), Vinicius Júnior (Real Madrid, Brazil), Lamine Yamal (Barcelona, Spain). (AP)

# Saudi Arabia's network of spending and influence detailed before getting 2034 World Cup from FIFA

**GENEVA, Dec 3:** Saudi Arabia's growing influence and massive spending in global sports ahead of being confirmed by FIFA as the 2034 World Cup host was detailed on Monday in a report that cited risks to good governance off the field.

More than 900 sponsor deals — more than one-third traced to the \$925 billion Saudi sovereign wealth fund — and a network of officials with overlapping state, business and sports roles were cited by Play The Game, a publicly funded sports ethics institute in Denmark. The oil-rich kingdom's investment of tens of billions of dollars in soccer, golf, boxing, tennis, the Esports Olympics and a yet-to-be-built ski resort will get its most cov-

eted prize next week from FIFA, the 2034 World Cup in men's soccer. The close ties between FIFA president Gianni Infantino and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman were built since 2018 amid global criticism of the kingdom's record on human rights, including for women, migrant workers and freedom of expression.

"Saudi Arabia's sports strategy seeks to divert attention from these realities, revealing the tension between the ideals of sport and the realities of power, money, and politics," Play The Game's Stanislav Stanislav said in the report.

FIFA passed a mandatory step toward the 2034 decision by publishing at the weekend an in-

house evaluation of the World Cup hosting plan that offered more praise than critical analysis, including labor issues for how most of the 15 stadiums will be built.

On Dec. 11 in Zurich, FIFA will host an online meeting to ask more than 200 member federations to acclaim Saudi Arabia as the 2034 host, 14 months after shaping a fast-tracked and narrow-focused contest that produced just one candidate.

Nearly 50 of those voters have signed working agreements with the Saudi soccer federation, while the soccer bodies for North America, Africa and Asia separately struck cooperation deals or tournament sponsor deals with the sovereign Public



Investment Fund (PIF), state oil firm Aramco and the planned megacity project Neom.

"The awarding of the 2034 World Cup to Saudi Arabia is merely the culmination of years

of strategic investments and behind-the-scenes manoeuvring," said the report, called "Saudi Arabia's grip on world sport."

FIFA itself signed Aramco in April to an elevated World Cup

sponsor category of "major worldwide partner," worth a reported \$100 million each year through 2027.

The chairman of Aramco, Yasir Al-Rumayyan, also is governor of the PIF which has a goal to "deliver a strategy focused on achieving attractive financial returns and long-term value for the country." He is chairman also of the LIV Golf project, new airline Riyadh Air, and English Premier League club Newcastle.

"Aramco and FIFA intend to leverage the power of football to create impactful social initiatives around the world," FIFA said in April.

Saudi state and sports officials have consistently cited the crown prince's Vision 2030 pro-

gram to diversify the economy beyond dependence on oil and modernize the traditionally conservative society while giving opportunities to a young population. Infantino has not taken questions from international media, nor held a news conference, in the 14 months since the Saudi candidacy was declared. No news conference is scheduled on Dec. 11 at FIFA headquarters after the closed-doors meeting.

More Saudi commercial deals are expected after the 2034 World Cup decision, either for the 2026 edition being played in North America or the revamped Club World Cup being staged by the United States next year. (AP)

# Carey backs Australia's 'world-class' batters to counter Bumrah threat

**ADELAIDE, Dec 3:** Alex Carey on Tuesday maintained Australia are a "united group", confident that their "world-class" batters will come up with better plans to counter India's pace threat Jasprit Bumrah in the upcoming pink-ball Test here.

With their backs against the wall, India came out all guns blazing in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series opener at Perth to win by a massive 295 runs with Bumrah (5/30 and 3/42) ripping apart Australia's batting in each innings.

The heavy margin of defeat left Australia looking for answers as their batters flopped collectively, leaving their famed bowling attack with a lot to do.

"He's obviously a fantastic bowler; (he) has been for a number of years. Our batters are world class as well and always find ways to come up with solutions," Carey told the media.

"We've had a look at him now. Hopefully we can combat that first, second spell. Get him bowl-



ing a little bit deeper in the innings with an older ball."

"We saw Travis (Head) sort of counterpunch a bit (in the second innings). I trust our batters, we'll find a way not only (against) Bumrah. They played a couple of other debutants who bowled well as well," Carey said.

After Australia were set an im-

probable 534 to win, Josh Hazlewood had invited the media to ask their batters how they planned to go about in the second innings, sparking rumours of a rift between the batting and bowling groups.

Carey, however, declined there was any tensions in the dressing room.

"If you ask the batters, we all want to perform better and (as) cricketers, you go out there to score a hundred and if you don't do that, I think you're at times disappointed," Carey said.

"But we're a very united group. We all do get the opportunity to bat and we're all keen to continue to put those big runs on the board and I trust the guys to do that," he added. Carey said Australia's re-sounding loss at Perth sparked a "big reaction externally" but maintained that the team will stick to its processes.

"It's quite a big reaction externally for one Test loss. Internally, we don't feel that. We didn't play the way we would have liked to have played."

"We know (that) over four or five Test matches, (if) we keep rocking up and playing our style of cricket we will have the success. We've had that success to, I guess, call upon the method does work."

"We're calm internally, we're excited to get back out and play a

better style of cricket and we've got that opportunity come Friday."

Carey did not want to draw much attention to the last contest here in which India were shot out for their lowest-ever Test total of 36.

"There are obviously amazing days in cricketing history but we don't expect to go out there and do that again. We have a process and a plan that we try to execute and whatever happens, happens. I was not here for that Test match."

Australia have never lost a pink ball Test in Adelaide, in fact they have only lost once in day and night fixture.

"We are excited. We take a lot of confidence for our record in pink-ball cricket - it doesn't mean we will have the success but (with) our methods, our style of play and the experience we have in this group we'll bounce back from Perth," he added.

The two teams will take on each other in the second Test, starting here from Friday. (PTI)

## New Zealand penalised WTC points, drop to fifth in table



**DUBAI, Dec 3:** New Zealand's aspirations of qualifying for the World Test Championship Final suffered a setback after they were docked three penalty points due to slow over-rate against England leading to a drop in the ranking table, the ICC stated on Tuesday.

The deduction is a welcome news for India, who enjoy pole position with 61.11 percentage points.

New Zealand now have a points percentage of 47.92 percent and can only move as high as 55.36 percent with victories from their remaining two fixtures against England. South Africa (59.26), Australia (57.26) and Sri Lanka (50) are placed second, third and fourth respectively.

"The race to feature at next year's ICC World Test Championship Final at Lord's has taken a twist with New Zealand and England sanctioned for maintaining a slow over-rate during the opening Test of their series in Christchurch," the ICC said in a statement.

"Both teams were fined 15 percent of their match fees and penalised three crucial World Test Championship competition points, adding more intrigue to the thrilling final stages of the ongoing cycle," it further stated.

While England are already out of contention of reaching next year's final despite the impressive eight-wicket triumph at Hagley Oval, the loss in competition points is a major blow to New Zealand who drop from equal fourth to outright fifth on the standings as a result.

It means the inaugural World Test Championship winners face a tough ask to qualify for next year's one-off Test in June 2025, with two wins against England and several other results also needing to go their way if they are to reach the Lord's decider.

New Zealand and England were both found to have three overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration, with sides penalised one point for each over they were found to be short.

Both captains - Tom Latham of New Zealand and Ben Stokes of England - pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing.

On-field umpires Ahsan Raza and Rod Tucker, third umpire Adrian Holdstock and fourth official Kim Cotton levelled the charges, with David Boon of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees imposing the sanctions. (PTI)

## India women's team heads to Oman for Junior Asia Cup title defence, eyes WC qualification

**BENGALURU, Dec 3:** The Indian junior women's hockey team departed Muscat on Tuesday to defend its Asia Cup title which would also help the side qualify for next year's FIH Junior World Cup. The Junior Asia Cup is scheduled to be held from December 7 to 15 and India will begin their campaign against Bangladesh on Sunday. The top three teams in the showpiece will make the cut for the World Cup scheduled in Santiago, Chile.

India will be up against China, Malaysia, Thailand, and Bangladesh in Pool A while Pool B will feature South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka.

India's campaign will be spearheaded by captain Jyoti Singh along with vice captain Sakshi Rana and the squad also features players who have had the experience of playing with the senior side.

These players are Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Sunelita Toppo, Mumtaz Khan, Deepika and Beauty Ddungdung. The team is being coached by former India captain Tushar Khandker. "We are very confident and upbeat about our campaign. We have a good, experienced team. We have worked hard over the past few months and the team is quite eager to do our best in Muscat, Oman," Jyoti said ahead of the team's departure.

"It's heartening to see the men's team enter the knock-out stage and they are cruising towards the title. We have been following their matches and we will be there to cheer for them in the remaining matches," added Sakshi, referring to the men's continental event currently being held in Muscat. (PTI)

## Sub-Junior Women's National hockey

**SECUNDERABAD, Dec 3:** Mizoram, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha advanced to the semifinals of the 14th Hockey India Sub-Junior Women National Championship 2024 after registering victories in their respective quarterfinal matches here on Tuesday.

Mizoram won the first quarterfinal against Uttar Pradesh 1-0, while Jharkhand thrashed Maharashtra 12-0 in their second last eight match.

In other quarterfinals, Madhya Pradesh registered a hard-fought 3-2 comeback victory over Haryana, while Odisha defeated Delhi 3-0 to secure the 1st semifinal spot. (PTI)

# India was so brave... they batted first, didn't bother playing Ashwin: Cook

**LONDON, Dec 3:** Opting to go in without a proven performer like R Ashwin and batting first in an opening Test of a high-pressure series in Australia are reflections of an Indian team that is brave and supremely confident in its ability to win from any situation, feels England's all-time great Alastair Cook. Cook, a former captain and the first England batter to make 10,000 runs in Test cricket, praised India for their remarkable comeback after getting bowled out for just 150 in the first Test at Perth.

"I thought India was so brave. I thought that first, you know, they win the toss and bat on that wicket, you look there, even though there's only 150 they got, the thought process to say, 'we're going to take Australia on there. We know it's going to be hard, but we think it's going to be hard for both sides only, and then it'll be a one-innings game,'" Cook said on TNT Sports.

He added, "I think most captains would have bowled first, certainly would have done and probably got the end of a bad result, like normally in Australia. But India took it on brilliantly. It



was just an all-round fantastic performance.

"You think... bowled out for 150, you think we're struggling here, but to bounce back when you've got Boomer (Jasprit Bumrah) up with the new ball on those kinds of wickets, he's always going to be outstanding and backed up by team."

Captaining the team in the absence of Rohit Sharma, pace spearhead Bumrah came up with a magnificent performance to grab

eight wickets, including a first-innings five-for, to lead India to a memorable win.

Speaking about India's move to exclude the senior off-spinner Ashwin from the playing XI, Cook said, "... Just think of how brave they were? They didn't bother playing Ashwin who has got 500 Test wickets. They've kind of played a couple of like, not makes you spinners, but you know, I thought Ashwin would have been outstanding, but you

know, great thinking by them. "And isn't it nice to see Australia get thrashed?"

Cook lauded the "classy" Yashasvi Jaiswal for the manner in which he dominated the formidable Australian pace attack and said he wouldn't have told the menacing Mitchell Starc he is bowling too slow even if he was.

After failing to open his account in the first innings of the series opener, Jaiswal adapted to the conditions beautifully and played a brilliant 161-run knock in the second essay, his maiden century on Australian soil.

During the second day of the match, Jaiswal told Starc, "It's coming too slow", with his confidence attracting the attention of many in the cricket world, including the former England captain, who had been a prolific scorer in Tests for a prolonged period.

"We've seen his celebration enough here, but it's more enjoyable against Australia than England, certainly," Cook said, referring to Jaiswal's phenomenal run in the Test series against England, when he amassed over 700 runs.

## India to host first ever women's T20 World Cup for Blind in 2025

**NEW DELHI, Dec 3:** Pakistan will play its share of matches in next year's inaugural blind women's T20 World Cup in either Nepal or Sri Lanka after a hybrid model for the event was finalised at the World Blind Cricket Council's (WBCC) Annual General Meeting in Multan.

The development comes a few weeks after India withdrew from the men's T20 Blind Cricket World Cup in Pakistan owing to security concerns.

The hosting rights for the women's event were awarded to India last year and affirmed at the AGM on Monday in which 11 member countries were present. India, England and New Zealand joined the meeting virtually.

"The hosting rights of the tournament was awarded to India last year (2023) only. It was also decided back then that in case there is visa issue with the Pakistan

team's coming to India, the tournament will be held in Hybrid Model. Pakistan will play all its matches at a neutral venue," GK Mahantesh, president of the Cricket Association of Blind in India (CABI), told PTI.

Asked where would Pakistan's matches be held, Mahantesh informed that they have zeroed in on two countries.

"Pakistan's visually challenged women's team will be based either in Nepal or in Sri Lanka for the entire duration of the tournament," he stated.

"The Indian team will travel to Nepal or Sri Lanka to play against them. The cost of the entire event will be borne by our cricket board. We will pay for Pakistan team's entire stay in either of these two countries," he added.

The CABI is neither affiliated to BCCI, nor the ICC. Several other key decisions

were also taken at the AGM, including the appointment of India's Rajanish Henry and Chandrasekhar KN as the Secretary General and Director Finance respectively, for a two-year period.

Henry, who previously served as Vice President of WBCC, is also the President of the Cricket Association for the Blind in Kerala. While Chandrasekhar, a founder member of the CABI, has previously served as its Treasurer.

It was confirmed that the next men's T20 World Cup will be held in 2027, the date and venue for which will be finalised during the AGM in 2025.

The members also decided that all international tournaments for cricket for the blind will now adhere to the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) Sight Classification rules, ensuring uniformity and inclusivity across the sport. (PTI)

## World No 4 Indian Arjun Erigaisi to compete at Norway Chess 2025

**STAVANGER (NORWAY), Dec 3:** Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi, who recently became the second Indian after the legendary Viswanathan Anand to reach the gold-standard ELO rating of 2800, will make his debut at the prestigious Norway Chess tournament next year.

Norway Chess 2025 will take place from May 26 to June 6. At just 21 years old and ranked world No. 4, Arjun is expected to bring youthful ambition and exceptional talent to one of the most premier tournaments in the chess calendar.

Reflecting on his style and growth, Arjun remarked, "I used to lose games because of over-ambition and a lack of objectivity, but now I strive to channel my ambition in a balanced way."

As anticipation builds up for the tournament, Arjun expressed his enthusiasm about the event's innovative format.

"There are a lot of exciting things about Norway Chess, but for me, I would say the time control and Armageddon format stand out the most to me," he said.



Arjun's journey to the top has been nothing short of phenomenal, with 2022 being his breakout year, when he claimed several high-profile victories.

In January, he won the prestigious Tata Steel Chess Challengers, and by March he was crowned the national champion. That summer, he dominated the 28th Abu Dhabi International Chess Festival, showcasing his ability to thrive in various formats. To cap off the year, Arjun claimed victory at the Tata Steel Chess India Blitz, strengthening his reputation as a rising star.

He continued in same vein in 2023 and emerged as the outright winner of the Sharjah Masters, and later in the year he reached the quar-

terfinals of the World Cup.

This year, Arjun reached new heights as he began with victories at the Menorca Open A, the Stepan Avagyan Memorial, and the WR Chess Masters Cup in London, proving his consistency and dominance in competitive play.

In September, Arjun led Team India to gold at the Chess Olympiad, delivering a standout performance on board three with a breathtaking rating performance of 2968. The remarkable performance also earned him an individual gold medal.

The same month, Arjun became India's top-rated player, reaching a career-high live rating of 2801 in December. By crossing the prestigious 2800 threshold, joining an elite club of players.

The Norway tournament brings together the top male and female players in a distinctive six-player double round-robin format. The introduction of Norway Chess Women in 2024, with equal prize funds for men and women, underscores the event's commitment to gender equality and innovation in the sport. (PTI)

## Sonitpur Para Athletes bags 10 medals in 1st North East Para Sports Meet 2024

**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, Dec 3:** The Sonitpur District Para Athletes team bags ten medals in the first North east Para sports meet 2024 organised by the Paralympic Association of Assam in association with the Paralympic Committee of India at Guwahati-Sarusajai stadium from November 27 to 29.

Sonitpur District Para-Sports Association secretary Geet Gunjan Deka informed that nine para-athletes represented Sonitpur District in this event. The team included officials Amit Raj Konwar, district president, Geet Gunjan Deka, general secretary, and Bimpi Hazarika, treasurer.

He also informed that Sonitpur Para Athletes clinched a total of 10 medals consisting of 3 Golds and 7 Silvers Medals for Assam. Sandhya Bhumij won the Gold Medal in Boccia (Category BC4 - Female) and Silver Medal by Seema Thakur in Boccia (Category BC4 - Female), while Trishna Devi won Gold Medal in Discuss (Category F55/56/57 - Women), Tarangita Das grabbed Silver Medal in Shot Put (Category F55/56/57 - Women), Yakub Ali grabbed Silver Medal in Shot Put (Category F42 Male) and Silver Medal in Discuss (Category F42), Moudoodur Rahman Choudhury grabbed Silver Medal in Discuss (Category F44 - Male) and Silver Medal in Shot Put (Cat-

egory T13 - Male). Saddam Hussain won Gold Medal in Long Jump (Category T45/46/47 - Male) and Silver Medal in 200 meter Running (Category T45/46/47 - Male) with other Sonitpur Para Athletes Hanif Ali and Hareram Sutradhar Participated in the event.

Briefing the event president of the association, Amit Raj Konwar said that Assam Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment Pijush Hazarika officially inaugurated the event in the presence of Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, organising president with several other dignitaries.

"More than 550 Para Athletes participated from 6 states. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma delivered an inspiring speech at the closing ceremony and presented the trophy to the winning state." Amit Raj Konwar said adding last year they had made history by winning 9 medals in the Para State Meet.

"This year, we've surpassed it with 15 medals in the Para State Meet and 10 medals in the 1st North East Para Sports Meet for Sonitpur District." He emphasized the goals of Para Sports, encouraging members, volunteers, and persons with disabilities (PWD) to actively support and participate in these activities. He also invited interested individuals to contact the Sonitpur District Para Sports Association at Edupur Foundation, at Tezpur, for details on joining and training opportunities.

## ID Cup Football Tournament: Manipur ASUFII beat Star Sporting Club Nagaon to enter semifinals



**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Dec 3:** In a quarterfinal match of the ongoing 76th ID Cup Prize Money Football Tournament at Nagaon Nurul Amin Stadium here, the powerful Manipur team, ASUFII Football Association, defeated Star Sporting Club by 2-0 goals on Tuesday here, entering to the semifinals.

The Manipur team dominated the game from the beginning, creating pressure on the opponent till the end. In the 40th minute, Mathanomei from Manipur, scored the first goal, taking the lead with 1-0 till the half time.

After the break, the Star team increased their attack in search of an equalizing goal but failed to breach the opponent's defense. Maintaining the game's momentum, Arun Kumar

from Manipur scored another goal in the 63rd minute, securing a 2-0 victory for Manipur.

Following the match, Mrinal Hazarika, the in-charge of the Star Sporting Club, expressed satisfaction and pride in playing the quarterfinal match against a team from outside the state in the prestigious tournament. The match started following introduction to the guests, PP Sharma, Chief Manager of the Nagaon branch, State Bank of India, and Philip, a personnel from the bank's Human Resources Department, to the players of both teams by Tapan Kumar Das, general secretary of Nagaon Sports Association.

Wednesday's schedule: Oil India Football Club vs Eleven Star Club, Bongaigaon.