- Himanta's leadership is guiding Assam to prosperity: Krishnendu Paul
- **MLA Lawrence Islary distributes relief** cheques in Kokrajhár
- 'Dilli Chalo' march: Tear gas, water cannon used against farmers
- Bihar PSC exam paper leaks 'state-sponsored', alleges Tejashwi



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Government of Assam **Finance Department** 



15 - 28 December 2024

Inclusive, Fair and Transparent **Delivering of Financial Assistance to Deserving Families** 



Orunodoi Poxek: A two week long initiative to select beneficiaries for the Orunodoi Scheme

**Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma** Chief Minister, Assam



**Transforming Lives** 

**Through Empowerment** 

### **Gaon Sabha**

Local meetings to identify and verify eligible beneficiaries



**Draft Beneficiary List Preparation** 

Beneficiaries will be shortlisted as per Orunodoi 3.0 guidelines



Transgender

age home

disorder

beneficiary

per annum

# **Eligibility Criteria**

Who Can Apply?

- Applicant should be a permanent resident of Assam and presently residing in Assam
- Applicant should have a valid AADHAAR- seeded Ration Card.
- ▶ One Ration Card One Orunodoi

▶ Widow, unmarried (above the age of

> Person with disability as defined in the

2016, irrespective of gender

Old/Infirm woman including those

▶ Women of the Household, where

Woman in household, where any

member is suffering from HIV/

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act,

residing in Government registered old

earning members are either disabled or

aged (more than sixty years of age)

Thalassemia/ Haemophilia/ Cerebral Palsy/ Leprosy/ Autism spectrum

▶ Woman in household without shelter

Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) woman

composite income is less than ₹2 lacs

▶ Destitute woman living on alms

Women in the household, where

45 yrs), divorced and deserted woman



## Who Can't Apply?

### Household of-

- MPs, MLAs, CEMs, EMs, Ex MPs, Ex MLAs, Ex-CEMs, Ex-EMs
- Current Members of Panchayati Raj Institutions, Urban Local Bodies and Autonomous Councils/ VCDCs etc (in Sixth Scheduled districts)
- Doctors, Engineers, Architects, Charted Accountants, Bank officials, Lawyers
- University, College, Higher Secondary, Junior College, High School, Upper Primary and Lower Primary School teachers including contractual/ temporary
- ▶ Any Government regular employee, pensioner or contractual employee, including Anganwadi worker, Mid-day meal worker, ASHA worker, ASHA supervisor, Gaon Pradhan
- Government contractors and suppliers, real estate builders, industrialists, trade license holders who pay income tax
- Businessmen/entrepreneurs, Shopkeepers, traders who pay income tax
- Land holders other than small and marginal categories
- Owning motorized four-wheeler vehicles
- Beneficiary under the 'Orunodoi Plus' scheme and any beneficiary of similar scheme, receiving the same cash benefit from State as Orunodoi 3.0, or more than that
- Composite household income exceeds the limits notified in the extant "Assam Food Security Rules" under the "National Food Security Act, 2013" (NFSA)





### **Participate Actively**

Attend Gaon Sabha in your locality





### **Verify Details**

Help ensure genuine beneficiaries are selected



**Share Information** 

Inform others in your community about the event

For details, contact your local Gaon Panchayat Office

https://finance.assam.gov.in 🕴 🖎 📵 🗗 @assamfindept

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Janasanyog /D/10555/24/15-Dec-24

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ceived more than 3,800 proposals for setting up factories in the state since it floated a progressive industrial investment promotion policy in 2016, proving to be a pivot for its rapid development, its Chief Secretary Amrit Lal Meena said.

Bihar Industrial Investment Promotion Policy, 2016, offers a slew of incentives to investors that range from interest subvention to reimbursement of State GST, stamp duty waiver, export subsidy and concessions for transportation, power, and land fees. It also created a State Investment Promotion Board to approve investment pro-

"From 2016 till now, in the last nine years, there has been a massive response from the industry because of the promotional policy, and subsequently, sectoral policies have been approved by the government. So, from different sectors, there are over 3,800 proposals for consideration of a state industrial promotion board and 3,100 proposals have been accorded firststage approval," he said.

Over 780 industries are operational, providing employment to about 34,000.

"₹ 8,000 crore worth of investment has come (so far)," he said, adding that the industries are mainly from the food processing, textile, manufacturing, renewable

### Senco Gold raises ₹459 crore via QIP, allots 40.8 lakh shares

KOLKATA, Dec 14: Kolkatabased jewellery retail chain Senco Gold Limited said it raised ₹ 459 crore through a Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP) by allotting 40.8 lakh equity shares.

The QIP committee of the company's board approved the issuance and allotment of equity shares of ₹ 10 were issued at a price of ₹ 1,125 per share, including a premium of ₹ 1,115, Senco Gold said in a regulatory filing on Friday evening

Post the QIP, the company's paid-up equity share capital has increased to ₹81.80 crore, comprising 8.18 crore shares, from ₹ 77.72 crore (7.77 crore shares), the company added. Among the major allottees, four funds under Tata AIA Life Insurance Co. grabbed 14.49 per cent of the issue size. On a standalone basis, Tata Multicap Fund received the largest portion with 8.77 per cent of the issue size. followed by Tata AIA Life Insurance Co. Ltd's Emerging Opportunities Fund (6.40 per cent) and ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Co. Ltd (6.54 per cent).

Other significant investors included BOFA Securities Europe SA (5.23 per cent), Bank of India Flexi Cap Fund (5.07 per cent), Carnelian Bharat Amritkaal Fund (5.01 per cent), and Bandhan Small Cap Fund (5.01 per cent). (PTI)



energy, IT and cement sectors.

The state has created a land bank of over 3,000 acres to be provided to set up industries. Bihar is also offering about 2.4 million square feet of ready-to-move plug-andplay industrial sheds, equipped with all basic infrastructure requirements, situated in industrial areas across the state. These are available for any industry at a fixed rate.

"So, various sectors are now showing interest and Bihar Industrial Area Development Authority, which is the state apex body for providing land to the industrialists, has over 3,000 acres of surplus land." he said.

"And as and when an industrial-

Bihar, there is a portal, they apply, and within a specified time frame,

Bihar offers a single window clearance not just at the time of approval but also in the disbursal of incentives. Also, the state chief minister regularly meets industrialists to sort out their difficulties.

land is allotted at reasonable

"Our policy provides for major incentives, including the interest subsidy, tax incentives, stamp duty exemption, and various other forms of support. And we have a single window clearance system, whereby following the principles of ease of doing business, very fast clearance is accorded," Meena said. The chief minister, he said,

through organising Udhami Panchayat. So, in those Udhami Panchayats, all government departments and all industry associations do meet and issues, which the industries are facing, are discussed and appropriate decisions are taken. Resultantly, in the last nine years, a significant number of industries have come into operation".

Business

Bihar Business Connect - the annual investor meet of the state drew "tremendous success by signing MoUs of more than ₹ 50,000 crore" of investment proposals in its maiden show in 2023, he noted. The second edition is planned to

be held here on December 19-20. "And this year, the industries department has undertaken various meetings with investors in different parts of the country. We are receiving very, very positive and encouraging responses. And we are hopeful that Bihar Business Connect 2024 being organised this month will draw a lot of attraction." he added.

On Udhami Panchavat, Meena the top bureaucrat in the state government, said the chief minister meeting the industry along with all the departments gives the industry confidence. "They can raise issues. Their issues are then followed up. Appropriate decisions are taken So, that brings in confidence and

# G20 has will, capacity and determination to address global challenges: S African finance minister

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 14: G20 countries have the will, capacity and determination to address the formidable global challenges ahead, South African Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana has said here.

He was speaking at a Finance and Central Bank Deputies Meeting of the bloc here on Thursday.

"The global challenges ahead are formidable. But the G20 has the will, capacity and determination to address them," Godongwana said as he added that this was captured in the theme of South Africa's G20 Presidency -- 'Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability'.

"There is an African proverb that reads: 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.' Through our presidency, we will seek to strengthen and advance our common pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Pact for the Future," the minister said.

He added that South Africa intended to use the presidency, which it took over from Brazil on December I, to advance an African agenda.

"To further this agenda and ensure that we strengthen the manner in which the G20 respond to the social and economic needs of our continent, we intend to establish a G20 Africa Expert Panel to support the G20 Finance Track. The G20 Africa Expert Panel will be composed of leading African economic, development and finance experts from the public sector, think tanks, academia and international financial institutions," Godongwana said.

The minister said that one of the areas South Africa would request the G20 Africa Expert Panel to advise on was how the G20 could ensure that the various African initiatives, including the compact with Africa, could be strengthened to the benefit of the continent.

"South Africa has also proposed a stocktake of the G20 finance track, to ensure that the G20 remains agile, responsive and fit for purpose. G20 leaders stated at the Rio Summit last month that they will accelerate the reform of the international financial architecture so that it can meet the urgent challenges of sustainable development, climate change and efforts to eradicate poverty.

"The G20 Roadmap towards Better, Bigger and More Efficient MDBs was a milestone achievement under Brazil's Presidency. Now, the focus turns to implementation and monitoring," Godongwana said.

"We will also keep our focus on enhancing debt sustainability, through improving the implementation of the Common Framework. We are aware that there are countries whose debt is sustainable, but which are facing acute liquidity challenges, which, if not addressed, could result in solvency challenges.

"These challenges necessitate a comprehensive approach towards debt sustainability, which means there is no one size fits all' approach," the minister said, proposing that this should be addressed through a focus on putting in place the measures for countries to make the right investments and undertake appropriate reforms to support sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The private sector also needed to be involved, the minister added.

"In our efforts to scale up finance, we cannot omit the important role of private sector finance.

"Indeed, G20 engagement with the private sector remains critical if we are to achieve many of the goals we have set out for ourselves. South Africa's G20 Presidency will continue to work with business and other stakeholders, in order to unlock the global economy's full potential," he said

The discussions under South Africa's G20 Presidency will take place alongside the 5th Finance in Common Summit (FiCS) that will take place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, South Africa, from February 26 to 28, 2025, as well as the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) in Spain in June 2025. (PTI)

## Pune sees 11% drop in property registration during Nov: Knight Frank

**NEW DELHI, Dec 14:** Registration of properties in Pune fell 11 per cent year-on-year in November to 13,371 units despite strong demand, according to Knight Frank India. In a statement on Saturday, real estate consultant Knight

Frank India said Pune recorded 13,371 property registrations in November 2024, generating Rs 475 crore in revenue for the state exchequer.

As many as 14,988 units were registered in November

Registration of properties fell 36 per cent in November compared to 20,894 units in October this year.

Knight Frank India Chairman and Managing Director Shishir Bajial said, "Pune's property market continues to exhibit steady registrations, adapting to evolving buyer preferences and market conditions". Commenting on the data, Rohit Gera, Managing Director of Pune-based Gera Developments, said the registrations in November typically result from sales made in September. (PTI)

# RBI raises collateral-free agricultural loan limit to Rs 2 lakh to aid farmers

**NEW DELHI, Dec 14:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has enhanced the collateralfree loan limit for farmers from ₹ 1.6 lakh to ₹ 2 lakh, effective January 1, 2025, a move aimed at supporting small and marginal farmers amid rising input costs.

The new directive instructs banks nationwide to waive collateral and margin requirements for agricultural and allied activity loans up to ₹2 lakh per borrower.

According to the agriculture ministry, the decision comes in response to the rising input costs and the need to improve credit accessibility for farmers. "This measure will significantly benefit over 86 per cent of farmers who are small and marginal landholders," the statement said. Banks have been instructed to imple-

ment the guidelines swiftly and ensure widespread awareness about the new loan provisions. The move is expected to facilitate easier access to KCC loans and complement the government's Modified Interest Subvention Scheme, which offers loans up to ₹ 3 lakh at a 4 per cent effective interest rate. The initiative is seen as a strategic step to enhance financial inclusion in the agricultural sector, providing farmers with much-needed financial flexibility to invest in agricultural operations and improve their livelihoods. Agri experts view the initiative as a critical step towards enhancing credit inclusivity and supporting agricultural economic growth, addressing inflationary pressures on farming input costs. (PTI)

# Union minister Sonowal to launch cargo promotion scheme, vessel services from Kolkata

KOLKATA, Dec 14: Union Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal is scheduled to flag-off three cargo vessels from here on Sunday, launching a new Cargo Promotion Scheme and Scheduled Cargo Vessel Services along National Waterways 1 and 2, with routes to Varanasi, Patna, and Guwahati.

The Guwahati-bound cargo vessel will follow the Indo-Bangladesh protocol route, which has so far remained unaffected despite the ongoing unrest in the neighbouring country.

The cargo vessel headed to Patna will carry gypsum, while the one bound for Varanasi will transport coal, and the one to Guwahati

will carry cement, officials said. Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) officials told PTI that trade via the protocol route has not been disrupted despite the political



unrest in Bangladesh. "Both countries are providing permissions without any issues so far," an IWAI official said. He, however, acknowledged that trade between the two countries has declined over the past year due to

several factors. Sagar Khastagir, an Indo-

Bangladesh trade analyst, pointed out that the transportation of fly ash a key commodity for cement plants in Bangladesh has dropped by nearly 35-40 per cent in recent

"This decline is linked to a slowdown in infrastructure development in Bangladesh, following the

fall of the Hasina government and the resulting political instability," he said, adding that delays in payments are also affecting vessel operators.

He noted that under normal circumstances, over 3,000 vessels used to annually transport fly ash, but both the volume and the number of vessels have declined due to the ongoing political and financial challenges.

Former FIEO (Federation of Indian Export Organisations) Eastern Region chairman Sushil Patwari, however, claimed that while there have been no significant disruptions in trade, the business volume has taken a hit because of broader economic challenges. However, despite the unrest in Bangladesh, Petrapole the largest land port between the two neighbouring nations has continued to function normally, officials said. (PTI)

### Contd. from Page 3...

### Nari Sashaktikaran not a slogan

and the prompt repair of flood-damaged infrastructure."

He also touched upon ongoing initiatives such as the Assam Mukhya Mantri Udyamita scheme, under which women in self-help groups would receive ₹10,000 in financial support, with plans to increase the amount to ₹15,000 in the following year along with assistance from the government in availing bank loans.

He added, "The government is working to distribute ration cards to 10,000 more families from every constituency in Golaghat and to include 1.5 lakh women under the Orunodoi Scheme, an initiative aimed at empowering women in Assam." The event was attended by the minister of finance Ajanta Neog, minister of agriculture Atul Bora, MLAs Bhabendra Nath Bharali, Biswajit Phukan, Mrinal Saikia, and other dignitaries. Later on the day, the CM took stock of the progress of the Golaghat Integrated District Commissioner's Office construction and issued directives to ensure its timely completion. He also assessed the ongoing construction of the Golaghat Medical College and Hospital, which is being built at an estimated cost of ₹ 582 crores, along with the Golaghat Cancer Hospital.

'With 52% of the Golaghat Medical College and Hospital already completed, the project is expected to be finished by mid-2026, marking a significant milestone in the state's healthcare infrastructure," Sarma said during the assessment. Prior to his engagement in the "12 Days of Development" event in Golaghat, chief minister Sarma commenced the day by planting a pine tree within the grounds of the Lachit Borphukan Police

### India, Israel share same security

referring to the attacks by Hamas on Israel last year. "Israel and Bharat share similarities in their challenges related to security and extremism," he said. Shoshani further pointed out that crises can lead to innovation, citing advancements in telecommunications and medical technology. "Bharat is Israel's biggest friend in Asia," he said and underscored the need for continued collaboration between the two nations.

The Israeli envoy emphasised the importance of strong military and economic foundations for both nations. "You can't have a strong economy with a weak Army," he said, stressing that military strength is essential for economic stability. Shoshani was sent to Mumbai by Israel's ministry of foreign affairs following the 26/11 terror attacks in 2008. He said whenever he returns to Israel, "some part of my heart will always remain behind". (PTI)

### Imperative need to hold simultaneous

The bill pointed out that the general elections to the House of the People and all State Legislative Assemblies were held simultaneously in the years 1951-52, 1957, 1962, and 1967. "However, due to premature dissolution of some Legislative Assemblies in 1968 and 1969, the cycle of holding polls simultaneously with the House of the People got disrupted," it recalled. The statement of objects and reasons for the bills states that the measure is based on the recommendations of the high-level committee on 'one nation, one election' headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind. While the Kovind panel had also proposed holding the municipality and panchayat polls along with the national and state elections in a phased manner, the Cabinet on Thursday decided to stay away, "as of now", from the manner in which local body elections are conducted.

The Constitution amendment bill to hold simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies will not require ratification by at least 50 per cent of the states, government functionaries said quoting article 368 of the Constitution which deals with the power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and procedure.

The government has also listed another bill, which needs a simple majority for passage in the two Houses. The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 proposes to make "consequential amendments" to the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 (related to Puducherry), the Government of National Capital-Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 to "align the holding of simultaneous

elections along with the House of the People and State Legislative Assemblies". Delhi, Puducherry, and Jammu and Kashmir are the three Union Territories with Legislative Assemblies. (PTI)

# Our govt strengthened Constitution

a Supreme Court judgment that annulled her election as an MP. She "throttled India's democracy and mutilated the Constitution" when the 25th year of its adoption was approaching, to save her chair as prime minister, he said, noting that she also effected an amendment to protect the President, Vice President and herself from any legal challenge to their position with a retrospective effect. The country was turned into jail and the judiciary was throttled, he said. Rajiv Gandhi, who took over as Prime Minister after his mother's assassination, also amended the Constitution. This blot on the Congress cannot be washed off, Modi asserted. Without naming Rahul Gandhi, the Prime Minister said an "arrogant" person tore the decision of the Cabinet when the Congress-led UPA government headed by the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was in power.

The National Advisory Council, which was headed by Sonia Gandhi, was put "above" the Cabinet during the UPA rule, he added. While the makers of the Constitution took a considered decision to disallow reservation on the basis of religion and faith in the interest of the country's unity and integrity, the Congress in its "greed for power" and to "appease its vote bank" pushed for it in violation of the constitutional spirit, he said.

His government, Modi said, repealed Article 370 to unify the country and brought in GST to roll out "one nation one tax" regime. He hailed India's journey since the adoption of the Constitution in 1949 as "extraordinary", asserting that the country's ancient democratic roots have long been an inspiration for the world.

India is not only a big democracy but it is the mother of democracy, he said in the Lok Sabha replying to a twoday debate on the 75 years of the adoption of the Constitution. Modi said India has resolved to become a developed country by 2047 and its unity is the biggest requirement

to achieve the goal. "Our Constitution is the basis of our unity," he said. Modi said India defied all apprehensions about its democratic future after independence and added its Constitution has brought the country to this stage. He paid tributes to the makers of the Constitution and the country's citizens for living up to the spirit of its

makers. Those involved in the making of the Constitution were well aware that India was not born in 1947 or turned democratic in 1950, he said, citing remarks of eminent personalities like Purushottam Das Tandon and

# Your 'supreme leader' Savarkar

and how he thought India should be run," he said. "The worst thing about the Constitution of India is that there is nothing Indian about it. Manusmriti is that scripture that is most worshippable after the Vedas, and which, from ancient times, had begun the basis of our culture, customs, thought, and practice. This book for centuries has codified the spiritual and divine march of our nation. Today, Manusmriti is law'," Gandhi stated.

Savarkar has clearly stated in his writings that there is nothing Indian about the Constitution and that the book that India is run by should be superseded by the Manusmriti, Gandhi said, adding that this is what the fight is about. "It is nice that all of you are so-called defending the Constitution. But I want to ask you, do you stand by your leader's words? Do you support your leader's words? But when you speak about defending the Constitution, you are ridiculing Savarkar, you are abusing Savarkar, you are defaming Savarkar," Gandhi said.

Responding to an MP's query about what his grandmother and former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi thought of Savarkar, Gandhi said she told him that Savarkar had compromised with the British. "Savarkar wrote a letter to the British and asked for forgiveness from the British," he said. "Indira ji also said that Gandhiji went to jail, Nehru ji went to jail, and Savarkar apologised. That was Indira Gandhi's position," Gandhi said.

"In my first speech, I described the idea of a battle taking place. I described the Mahabharata and the Kurukshetra. There is a battle taking place today in India. And on this side (our side) are the defenders of the idea of the Constitution. We have defenders of the Constitution from each state: If you ask for Tamil Nadu, we have Periyar. If you ask for Karnataka, we have Basavanna. If you ask us about Maharashtra, we'll say Phule ji, Ambedkar ji If you ask about Gujarat, we have Mahatma Gandhi," he said.

'You praise these people hesitatingly because you have to. But the truth is you want India to be run the way it used to be run," he said. Gandhi narrated the story of Eklavya from the epic Mahabharata and said that just like Dronacharya got Eklavya's thumb cut, this government is chopping off the thumb of the country.

"When this government hands over the country's assets to Adani, then the thumbs of small and big industries and businessmen of this country are cut," he said. Referring to his visit to Uttar Pradesh's Hathras, Rahul Gandhi said he met the family of the woman who was allegedly gang-raped and killed. He said the victim's family is locked in the house, while the accused roam free. "Where is this written in the Constitution that the family of the person raped be confined to a house. This would be written in your (BJP) book not in the Constitution," he said. (PTI)

### IIT climate assessment report

Devendra Jalihal, the IIT-Guwahati director. The study integrated climatic hazards, exposure and vulnerability to offer a comprehensive view of district-level risks to aid in disaster risk reduction and highlight the direct impact on people and livelihoods, paving the way for data-driven adaptation planning.

'Climate change is one of the most formidable challenges of our time, impacting agriculture, livelihoods, and every aspect of life. No single entity can address this alone -- it requires collective efforts and innovative frameworks. Through this report, we take a significant step towards identifying vulnerabilities, assessing sensitivity and addressing challenges faced by local communities at risk," said Anita Gupta, head of scientific divisions in the Department of Science and Technology.

Translating these findings into on-ground actions is essential, and the insights must reach every stakeholder at both national and state levels. This is just the beginning, as India moves forward with a balanced adaptation and mitigation strategy to achieve a cleaner, greener and climate-resilient future. Together, we will fast-track our goals for a Viksit Bharat and a Net Zero Bharat by 2047," Gupta added. (PTI)

Exchange of words between

is not our concern. We still don't know which APHLC group has called the meeting," Engleng said Another BJP spokesperson Chomang Kro said it is Kathar himself who has conspired to call the December 17 meeting. In order to hide his misdeeds Kathar has put the blame on RSS and BJP, he alleged.

In the invitation letter to the president, BJP - EKADC by the APHLC committee organising the rally reads, "It is with great honour and respect that we extend this invitation to you to attend the official launch ceremony of APHLC. This significant occasion marks the revival of a non-political platform dedicated to advocating for the rights, identity, and aspirations of the hill tribes of Karbi Anglong." The letter also mentioned that the APHLC committee was formally constituted on December 6, 2024, which aspires to unify various political parties, social organisations, and community representatives in the collective effort to advocate for the implementation of Article 244 (A) of the Indian constitution and the establishment of a separate state for the hill tribes. The letter is signed by the president, APHLC without mentioning the person's name holding the post of president.

### WHO urges SE Asian countries

Community programs that teach water safety, swimming and rescue skills, provide supervised childcare, and integrate flood risk management strategies are recognized as critical components of drowning prevention, Wazed said. "Drowning prevention is fundamentally an issue of equity. By prioritising vulnerable populations, fostering innovative leadership, and embracing global collaboration, countries can significantly reduce drowning deaths. With sustained commitment and collective action, we can ensure that everyone, everywhere, can live safely around SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2024

THE HILLS TIMES 3

'Significant milestone as 52% of the Golaghat Medical College and Hospital completed'

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

# Nari Sashaktikaran not a slogan but cornerstone of our governance: CM

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma recapitulated the importance of women empowerment in the state on Saturday

"Nari Sashaktikaran is not just a slogan but the cornerstone of our governance,' Sarma stated while addressing a gathering at Golaghat as part of the ongoing '12 Days of Development' initiative.

The chief minister also announced that No Due Certificates are being distributed to women to promote entrepreneurship and further bolster the economy.

"In the ongoing #12DaysOfDevelopment, we are distributing No Due Certificates to lakhs of women borrowers by clearing their debt and making them creditworthy. This will have a multiplier effect on the economy as more women entrepreneurs will be able to set up and expand their business, create employment opportunities, and drive growth at the grassroots," CM Sarma said during the event.

These included No Due Certificates to beneficiaries under the Assam Microfinance Incentive and Relief Scheme (Phase III, Category II), Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) to those affected by the 2024 floods, and seed capital to self-help groups

tion of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) scheme.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarma highlighted, "Under the third phase of the Assam Microfinance Incentive and Relief Scheme, 5,119 women borrowers in Golaghat have been freed from their microfinance loans. Additionally, financial assistance has been provided to 2,011 families affected by floods in the district, with Bokakhat being the worst-hit area, where 1,970 families suffered losses.'

He stated how 189 self-help groups in Golaghat had received seed capital through the PMFME scheme, marking an important step toward promoting entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency in the region. "A development model powered by Nari

Shakti, a dream of Adarniya Shri @narendramodi ji will enable to realise our dream of a #ViksitAssam," he added.

The CM emphasised that the "12 Days of Development" initiative is a concerted effort by the state government to reach out to people across Assam. "The initiative aims to engage with communities, hold discussions, and implement measures that directly address the concerns of the popu-



The ongoing "12 Days of Development" initiative was launched on December 11 to developmental accelerate Assam's progress and prioritise the well-being of its

The chief minister also distributed several key benefits to the community during the event. "Six key schemes are being ac-

tively pursued during this period to fulfil the public's aspirations, with three schemes focused on students and the other three aimed at benefiting mothers," said

He also pointed out the launch of awards such as Dr Banikanta Kakati and Anundograde students. He noted that members of the Assam Cabinet have been working tirelessly across districts to provide debt relief to women borrowers, offer assistance to flood-affected families, and distribute support to self-help groups under the PMFME

He also emphasised the transparency of government recruitment processes, including exams conducted by the Assam Public Service Commission, ensuring that even children from economically disadvantaged families have the opportunity to secure government jobs based on merit. "This merit-based approach has instilled a renewed focus on education among the youth, marking the beginning of a new era for Assam," Sarma reiterated.

Sarma also outlined the state's ambitious plans for infrastructure development. announcing the commencement of a tunnel road construction project from Numaligarh to Gohpur, with an estimated investment of ₹12,000 crores. He reaffirmed, "The state government's commitment to strengthening Assam's infrastructure, including the construction of bridges over the Brahmaputra, medical colleges, and

# India, Israel share same security and extremism challenges: Israeli envoy

MUMBAI, Dec 14: India and Israel share similarities in challenges related to security and extremism, an Israeli envoy said on Saturday while underscoring the need for continued collaboration between the two na-

Speaking at the plenary session at the World Hindu Economic Forum (WHEF) 2024, Kobbi Shoshani, the Consul General of Israel to Mumbai, expressed solidarity with the Hindu community in Bangladesh, condemning the violence and persecution they face.

"What is happening there is unacceptable," Shoshani said and emphasised the urgent need to address the challenges faced by the Hindu community in the neighbouring

He articulated a shared understanding of suffering, drawing on the historical experiences of the Jewish community who have lived in India without fear or persecution.

"We understand what it is like for daughters and children to be murdered and butchered by criminals. he said, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Inter-state cybercrime gang busted, 5 arrested

NAGAON, Dec 14: An inter-state cybercrime gang was busted with the arrest of five people in the Nagaon district of Assam, police said on Saturday.

Following intelligence inputs, a team of the Juria police station arrested the accused on Friday night, Nagaon Additional Superintendent of Police Jayanta Barua told reporters here.

The gang was mostly involved in making fake Aadhaar cards apart from other financial crimes, he

Barua said that out of the five accused criminals, two each are from Assam and Uttar Pradesh, and one hails from Bihar.

"The investigation is underway to find more members of the gang and expose the complete network. We appeal to the public that don't

# Imperative need to hold simultaneous polls as elections have become expensive: Bill on 'ONOE'

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: There is an imperative need for holding simultaneous elections for various reasons as polls have become expensive and timeconsuming, according to the proposed bill being brought to implement the ambitious 'one nation, one election'

According to the constitution amendment bill listed for introduction in the Lok Sabha on Monday, the imposition of a Model Code of Conduct in several parts of the country that are poll-bound puts on hold the entire development programmes and causes disruption of normal public life.

Frequent poll code imposition also impacts the functioning of services and curtails the involvement of manpower from their core activities for deployment for prolonged periods for election duties, the 'Constitution (129th) Amendment Bill, 2024' underlined.

The bill seeks to insert a new article



hold simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies.

The bill proposes to insert a new article 82A -- simultaneous elections to the House of the People (Lok Sabha) and all legislative assemblies and to amend Article 83 (Duration of Houses of Parliament), Article 172 (Duration of State Legislatures) and Article 327 (power of Parliament to make provision with respect to elections to Legis-

It also provides that after its enact- the House or the Assembly. ticles to put in place the mechanism to ment, a notification is to be issued by plained. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

the President on the date of the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election, and that date of the notification will be called the appointed date.

five years from that appointed date. The tenure of all state Assemblies,

The tenure of the Lok Sabha will be

constituted by elections to the Legislative Assemblies after the appointed date and before the expiry of the full term of the House of the People, shall come to an end on the expiry of the full term of the Lok Sabha.

"Thereafter, all general elections to the House of the People and all Leg-islative Assemblies shall be held together simultaneously.

"In case of dissolution of the House of the People or a Legislative Assembly, sooner than the full term of the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly, the term of the House or Assembly constituted pursuant to elections shall be for the unexpired term of

# Our govt strengthened Constitution, Congress repeatedly wounded it after tasting blood: PM

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday alleged that the Congress, having "tasted blood", repeatedly wounded the Constitution while his government's policies and decisions since it took office in 2014 have been aimed at boosting India's strength and unity in line with the vision of the Constitution.

Replying to a two-day debate in Lok Sabha on the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution, he took a swipe at the past Congress governments, accusing them of planting "poisonous" seeds in the country's diversity to accentuate its contradictions and damage its unity

Training guns at the Nehru-Gandhi family of the Congress, he said they left no stone unturned to strike blows to the Constitution. "This family challenged the Constitution at every level," he said, adding that he was singling out the family as its members were in power for 55 years.

The family, having "tasted blood", repeatedly wounded the Constitution, he said, citing several decisions of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi when they held the office of Prime Minister. Their next generation is also into the same game, he said in a swipe at the leader of opposition in the House Rahul Gandhi and his MP sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.



Modi said leaders like him and many others who came from ordinary families could never have reached where they did but for the strength of the Constitution, as he underlined his long commitment to its values.

As chief minister of Gujarat, he said, his government celebrated the 60th year of the Constitution's adoption by placing a copy of the document on an elephant, while he walked underneath barefoot in a symbolic gesture to highlight its supremacy.

Slamming the Nehru-Gandhi family, he said first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru amended the country's guiding document to curb freedom of ex-

# Your 'supreme leader' Savarkar preferred Manusmriti to Constitution: Rahul jabs BJP

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Leader of opposition Rahul Gandhi on Saturday cited Hindutva idealogue V D Savarkar's criticism of the Constitution that there was "nothing Indian about it" to attack the BJP and said the ruling party is "defaming and ridiculing" its own "supreme leader" when it talks about defending the Constitution. The BJP and the RSS are "supporters of

Manusmriti" but the country will be run on the Constitution, Gandhi said. Drawing a parallel with the story of Eklavya who had to chop off his thumb as 'Guru Dakshina' to Dronacharya, Gandhi alleged that by the

creation of "monopolies" for the Adani Group in

various sectors, bringing in the Agnipath scheme,



firing teargas at protesting farmers, bringing in lateral entry and allowing paper leaks, the government was "chopping off" the thumb of the youth, tillers, backward class people, and the poor. Participating in a debate on 75 years of the adoption of the Constitution, Gandhi used the metaphor of the thumb as a symbol of livelihood

The former Congress chief said that he wants to tell every poor person that the Constitution protects them, but the BJP keeps attacking it 24X7. He also reiterated his promise made on the floor of the House last session that a caste census will be conducted and the 50 per cent cap on the reservation will be done away with to usher in a

"new type of development" in the country. "I want to start my speech by quoting your supreme leader Savarkar and his ideas on the Constitution of India (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### flood, drought risk in 11 districts ing Patna (Bihar), Alappuzha (Kerala) and Kendrapara (Odisha), are at NEW DELHI, Dec 14: At least 11

districts, including Patna, Alappuzha, and Kendrapara, are at a "very high" risk for both floods and droughts, necessitating immediate intervention, according to a climate risk assessment report compiled by

The report was released by the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) Guwahati and Mandi, in collaboration with the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), Bengaluru.

According to the report titled "District-Level Climate Risk Assessment for India: Mapping Flood and Drought Risks Using IPCC Framework", 51 districts in India face "very high" flood risk, with 118 more categorised as "high" risk.

IIT climate assessment report flags

Vulnerable regions include Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Odisha, and Jammu and Kashmir.

The report has flagged that 91 districts were identified with "very high" drought risk and 188 districts faced "high" drought risk, primarily Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand,

Odisha, and Maharashtra. Alarmingly, 11 districts, includa "very high" risk for both floods and droughts, necessitating immediate interventions, the report said. "India's agrarian society is deeply

dependent on the monsoon, making the challenges posed by climate change, such as droughts and excessive rainfall, increasingly critical. This report, a collaboration between DST, SDC, provides a comprehensive risk assessment for over 600 districts, offering invaluable insights for effective mitigation strategies," said (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# **Exchange of words** between APHLC and **BJP** members in KA

DIPHU, Dec 14: The All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) and the BJP party of East Karbi Anglong District Committee exchanged words at the proposed mega gathering on December 17 at Diphu govt boys HS school playground.

The gathering was being organised under the 'APHLC committee' as the APHLC president, Jones Ingti Kathar pointed out that it is the conspiracy of RSS and BJP to weaken the APHLC. At the same time, the BJP – East Karbi Anglong District Committee (EKADC) say it has nothing to do with the internal conflict of the APHLC.

In a press conference convened by APHLC here on Saturday, the party president Kathar said, "APHLC means a unity of all tribes. Seeing the unity of the tribal people under the APHLC umbrella, the RSS and Bongosena were jealous and directed the BJP to organise a rally inviting all communities, tribes, political parties, NGOs, including KAAC officials to join in the meeting. The BJP and RSS have conspired to divide the APHLC."

ganising the meeting.

Soon after the APHLC press con-

Kathar further alleged that BJP has sanctioned ₹ 15 lakhs funded by the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang for or-

ference the BJP - EKADC countered the statement of Kathar in a press conference at the BJP -EKAD office here, where one of the party spokespersons Laichan Engleng said the BJP is not concerned about the internal clash of the APHLC. "They should not unnecessarily take the name of the BJP," he stated. Dismissing Kathar's statement as illogical and baseless, Engleng said, "In the name of the autonomous state and sixth scheduled, Kathar has created confusion in the minds of the people." "BJP has nothing to say about the internal conflict of the APHLC. Whether there is an A or B team or duplicate APHLC that *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)* 

'Drowning is the third leading cause of death for children aged 5-14'

# WHO urges SE Asian countries to strengthen measures to prevent drowning

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: The World Health Organisation (WHO) has called on countries in the South-East Asia region to strengthen measures to prevent drowning, which it says disproportionately affects children and vulnerable populations.

According to WHO's first Global Status Report on Drowning Prevention, South-East Asia reported 83,000 drowning fatalities in 2021, accounting for 28 per cent of the global drowning burden. This contributes substantially to the nearly 30 lives lost to drowning every hour

Nearly 43 per cent of drowning fatalities in the region involved children aged 14 years or younger, the report said.

"Drowning is the third leading cause of death for children aged 5-14 years and the fourth leading cause of death for children aged 1-4 years," the WHO report said.

"To save lives and ensure equitable safety for all, expanding and scaling up proven drowning preven-



tion interventions across the region is not just essential, but a moral imperative," said Saima Wazed, WHO Regional Director for South-East

Poverty, limited access to safety measures, and inadequate infrastructure exacerbate drowning risks, particularly in low and middle-income countries, she said.

Children face heightened vulner-

abilities due to inadequate supervision, limited swimming skills, and lack of water safety knowledge. For older children and adolescents, peer pressure, risk-taking behaviours, and substance use further increase

their risk, WHO said in a statement.

Children with disabilities face additional challenges in recognising and responding to water hazards, WHO added.

Non-fatal drowning incidents can lead to severe long-term neurological complications and disabilities that require prolonged care, the organisation said. The Regional Director noted that while most countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region have comprehensive drowning prevention strategies, much more needs to be done.

Enacting laws mandating life jacket use, creating barriers around water hazards and implementing safe boating regulations have shown potential, though enforcement remains inconsistent in many countries. Regulations restricting alcohol consumption near public water bodies are lacking in many areas, she said. Wazed emphasised the importance of strengthening governance, establishing a dedicated lead agency to implement drowning prevention activities, enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration, improving drowning data, and implementing evidencebased community-level interventions. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### BRO steps up India-Myanmar border fencing work near Manipur's Moreh

IMPHAL, Dec 14: Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has stepped up India-Myanmar border fencing work near Moreh town in Manipur's Tengnoupal district, an official said on Saturday. India shares a 1,643 km border with Myanmar of which 398 km is in Manipur. "BRO has commenced work of erecting the border fencing along the India-Myanmar border in the general area of Moreh in Tengnoupal district," PRO Defence Kohima told PTI over the phone. "Work has just commenced... Things are being done phase-wise. Only when the project reaches a substantial length, we will be able to give more details on the project" the PRO said. The work is undertaken by Project Sewak which is looking after road construction in Nagaland and Manipur. Its headquarters is based in Dimapur, the officer said. Only 10 km of the international border with Myanmar is fenced near Moreh in Manipur. The entire 1,643 km porous India-Myanmar border, known for the smuggling of arms, ammunition, and narcotics, will be fenced at a cost of ₹ 31,000 crore. (PTI)

# Arunodoi: Catalyst of Assamese nationalism and cultural renaissance

By: Dipak Kurmi

4 THE HILLS TIMES

The mid-19th century in Assam marked a transformative period in the region's intellectual and cultural history. Emerging during this era, Arunodoi became a defining force in shaping the identity of the Assamese people, laying the groundwork for a cultural revival that would later evolve into a powerful nationalist movement. Published for the first time in 1846, this pioneering Assamese-language journal transcended its role as a periodical, asserting the significance of the Assamese language and promoting a burgeoning sense of pride in the region's rich cultural heritage. Through its literary contributions, social discourse, and intellectual endeavors, Arunodoi played an indispensable role in fostering Assamese nationalism and providing a foundation for modern Assamese

The Context of Arunodoi's Emergence: The significance of Arunodoi can only be fully appreciated against the backdrop of early 19th-century Assam. The annexation of Assam by the British Empire in 1826, following the Treaty of Yandabo, introduced sweeping changes to the region's governance, language, and cultural landscape.

English was established as the language of administration, commerce, and education, reflecting the British colonial agenda of asserting control. Compounding this linguistic dominance was the growing influence of Bengali culture, a consequence of the influx of Bengali administrators, educators, and merchants into Assam.

This dual imposition of English and Bengali overshadowed Assamese, relegating it to the status of a secondary dialect rather than an independent language. The diminished prominence of Assamese in public life alienated its speakers from intellectual and cultural participation, leaving the language at the brink of obscurity.

It was within this challenging milieu that Arunodoi emerged, conceived by Reverend Nathan Brown, an American missionary who recognized the need for a platform that would champion the revival of Assamese language and culture. Brown's vision extended beyond the preservation of linguistic heritage; he sought to inspire pride among the Assamese people, challenge colonial hegemony, and introduce a discourse that intertwined cultural identity with social progress

A Platform for Linguistic Revival: The publication of Arunodoi was a bold step toward the reclamation of Assamese as a language of intellectual and cultural expression. At a time when English and Bengali held sway, Arunodoi reasserted the relevance of Assamese, underscoring its potential as a medium for literature, education, and public

discourse. The journal provided an unprecedented platform for Assamese writers and thinkers to articulate their ideas, fostering an environment in which Assamese could flourish as a written language.

The importance of Arunodoi in the development of Assamese literature cannot be verstated. Prior to its publication, Assamese literature was largely confined to oral traditions, with limited written texts available to engage readers. Arunodoi filled this void, introducing essays, poems, stories, and translations that enriched the Assamese literary tradition. The journal served as a launchpad for a new generation of writers whose contributions would shape the course of Assamese literature for decades to come.

Among the notable contributors to Arunodoi were Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and Hemchandra Barua, intellectuals who played pivotal roles in defining the trajectory of Assamese literature and cultural identity. Dhekial Phukan's essays and poems explored themes of Assamese history, culture, and identity, offering a literary foundation upon which future generations of writers could

Similarly, Barua's works reflected the complexities of Assamese society and the challenges of navigating colonial rule, adding depth and diversity to the journal's offerings. A Forum for Social Reform:

While Arunodoi was instrumental in reviving the Assamese language, its influence extended far beyond literature. The journal became a platform for addressing broader social concerns, including the status of education, the role of women in society, and the socio-political transformations brought about by British rule. The editors of Arunodoi recognized the transformative power of education and championed initiatives to expand access, particularly for women and marginalized groups.

The journal's engagement with social reform reflected its commitment to fostering a more equitable society. Articles advocating for the inclusion of women in education and discussions on the need for critical thinking demonstrated a forward-looking vision that sought to align Assamese society with contemporary global ideas of progress and equal-

The breadth of topics covered by Arunodoi further underscored its intellectual ambition. From history and literature to social issues and colonial politics, the journal's content cultivated a well-informed and engaged readership. This intellectual engagement created fertile ground for the cultural revival that underpinned the emergence of Assamese na-

The Formation of Assamese Identity: One of Arunodoi's most enduring contritinct Assamese identity. By publishing works that celebrated Assamese culture, history, and traditions, the journal helped foster a sense of unity among Assamese speakers. Its focus on local folklore and historical narratives reinforced a collective consciousness that was rooted in the region's unique heritage, providing a counterbalance to the external cultural influences that threatened to overshadow it.

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This assertion of identity was not confined to cultural expression but extended to broader socio-political implications. By cultivating pride in Assamese heritage and language, Arunodoi laid the groundwork for a nationalist movement that sought to reclaim autonomy and self-determination for the Assamese

While the journal did not explicitly advocate for political independence, its promotion of linguistic and cultural revival created an intellectual framework that supported nationalist aspirations.

The Legacy of Arunodoi:

The influence of Arunodoi resonates far beyond its years of publication. The journal provided a model for subsequent Assamese periodicals, shaping the trajectory of Assamese literature and intellectual thought. Its legacy can be traced in the works of later figures such as Laxminath Bezbaroa and Rajanikanta Bordoloi, who carried forward its mission of cultural preservation and nationalist advocacy.

In the broader context of Indian cultural history, Arunodoi stands as a testament to the power of language and literature in resisting colonial domination and asserting cultural sovereignty. It demonstrated that intellectual engagement and cultural pride could serve as catalysts for social transformation, inspiring communities to reclaim their identities and envision a future defined by self-reliance and autonomy.

Arunodoi was not merely a journal; it was a cultural institution that shaped the intellectual and cultural renaissance of Assam. By championing the Assamese language, advocating for social reform, and celebrating the region's heritage, Arunodoi provided the foundation for the emergence of Assamese nationalism.

Its contributions to literature, education, and identity-building continue to influence Assam's cultural landscape, serving as a reminder of the enduring power of ideas and the written word in shaping the course of history. As Assam navigates its present and future challenges, the legacy of Arunodoi remains a guiding light, exemplifying the transformative potential of intellectual and cultural engagement. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmiglpltd@gmail.com)

# Keli Gopala: A drama par excellence

he Keli Gopala is the most popular and influential drama of Sankardeva. It isn't merely a drama. No other drama in Assam is accorded with such an honour. It became a state wide festival as a unifying or connecting force. It's celebrated from the middle of November to half of December and starts on "Raas Purnima" or the full moon day. Like other dramas of Sankardeva, this is also not his fundamental creation but specially depicted as an Assamese indigenous festival.

Origin

The tradition of Raasleela started from Krishna's mythology. The activities of Lord Krishna is playfully enacted here. The first Raasleela started in Vrindavan probably in the fourteenth to sixteenth century by Swami Uddhavaghamanda Devacharya. He was a follower of Nimbarka cult. The idea of Rasa symbolically grows long before Swami Uddhavaghamanda. Swami Bhattadevacharya taught his disciple Swami Harivyasa Devacharya to imagine or meditate the image of Radha Krishna in his empty lap. So the seeds of Rasa sprouted informally from before or that time itself. Swami Harivyasa happened to be Guru (mentor) of Swami Uddhavghamanda.

Later Vallabhacharya (1478–1531) of Pushtimarg (Path of nourishing) sect propounded the Shuddhadvaita (Pure monotheism) doctrine. His son Vitthalnatha (1516-1586) alias Gusainji was a great spiritual scholar. He also carried forward his father's legacy and more popularised the Krishna centric festival. The Raas eventually spread from the land of Braja to other parts of the country. The other Indian communities like Gujrati, Manipuri or Assamese have moulded the form of Raas in their own way or

The pattern of the Raasleela dance is different from that of others. It's a Krishna centric dance performed between only Lord and cowherd damsels. Therefore the dance may be in circular

form. Many Indian classical dances including Kathak emanated from Raasleela

The Harivamsa Purana that deals with the origin of Krishna, describes Rasa as "Hallisaka" dance. The dance of ladies centering around a male is called Hallisaka dance. The steps and movement of the ladies are swayed by rhythm and they chain their hands holding with each other. Lord Krishna remains and dances within the cosmic circle. This is called Raas

sands of Gopis.

Mandala. Mandala denotes divine circle. Lord mesmerizes the Gopis (Lady Devotee) with his multiple similar forms. Everyone feels Krishna's fictitious physical presence with the thou-

It's said that during the time immemorial the Yadavas prepared "Som Rasa" (A fermented drink). During the preparation the Yadavas used to perform this kind of dance. We think the Yadava is just an example of a community. The other communities also followed the suit. The way It is born and performed, is not regimented at all for being folk dances. Therefore the famous commentator of Harivamsa Neelakantha Chaturdhara terms it as "Raas Gana". This is probably the most genuine social source of ancient Raas. The enjoyment and nature of human is the same for all the ages, but expression

varies and depends on perspective of civilization. Keli Gopala is performed under moonlight and club dance is lit by neon bulbs. Are there any connectivity? It may sound bizarre or absurd also. But it has connectivity as a dance festival ultimately. The circular dances of men and women are prevalent in many countries and cultures. The men and women mingle in discoid dances are connected to human reproduction i.e. sexuality. Assamese Bihu dance has also act of circumambulation. Sometimes it's like a pole dance around a small spike rooted in earth. Commentator Neelkantha assumes the half foot height lengthy spike as male sexual organ. Almost all the folk dances of the world have been performed on stage since the middle of twentieth century.

What kind of drama is Keli Gopala? Philosophically it bears the character of erotic mysticism. Dr. Maheshwar Neog defends it spiritually by saying: (Sankara takes the story from the Bhagawat Purana and also accepts its ethical interpretation. He is therefore free to put highly erotic suggestions in the lyrics and in the Sutradhara's narration, even where the Purana isn't explicit on these points. He, moreover, places his confidence, after Sridhar Swami, in the efficacy of this story in subduing people's passion, and

calls it Kama-jaya, 'the subduer of desire'.) It's like a modern dance drama. But it remains traditional or mythological for the spiritual cap it wears .Hallisaka is sublimated into modern Raasleela. The ingredients of morality and theology added to it. Dr. Banikanto Kakoti also admitted that Raasleela originated as folk dance. All the Gopis want companion of Krishna. So Lord has to remain static in the centre of the Mandala .That all the Gopis come to him in rotation. That's why it's Raas Mandala. It's the justification or necessity of Raas Mandala in Vishnu Pu-

The Keli Gopala or Raas comprises all nine devotions, from remembering Lord to self submission of the Gopis.

L.N. Bezbaruah

Famous litterateur of Assamese literature Lakshminath Bezbaruah have scholarly discourse on 'Bastra Harana Tattva' and 'Rasleela Tattva'. He considers the "Bastra Harana" (Disrobing of clothes) as introductory episode of Raasleela in his article "Bastra Harana Tattva". Lord Krishna scrutinizes the vedantic knowledge of the Gopis through the "Bastra Harana". But they eventually failed. The supreme Lord sent them back for more preparation to attain the sense of one being with Lord. The name of next examination is Raasleela. The monotheistic ideology is the key attribute of it.

So the subject matter of the 'Bastra Harana Tattva' and 'Rasleela Tattva' are homogeneous and complementary. The Raasleela started virtually from the time of disrobing of the female devotees.

Some scholars complain that the erotic description of Raasleela crosses the line of obscenity in many cases. It seems to be contrary to devotional tenet.

Even many scholars objects the inclusion of sensuous game between Krishna and the Gopis in the Bhagawat Purana. Bezbaruah also counters this contention like Dr Maheshwar Neog from the explanation of the Geeta, Upanishads, Vedas etc. He also expounds the allegorical verses of Sankardeva and Madhavdeva.

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(According to Bezbaruah, there is no action in the activities of the Raas, there is fruit only; there is no desire, there is satisfaction; there is no orgasm, there is pleasure. The final conclusion of this discussion is that just as a tree cannot grow from fried or cooked rice, so one whose mind is devoted to God can never develop animal instincts even if he has a sense of desire in his heart.)- Excerpts from "Lakshmi Nath Bezbaruah'r Sankardeva Charcha" by Dr. B. Mazumder.

Sources Mahapurush Sankardeva took the story of Raasleela from various Hindu religious texts. These are mainly available in the Bhagawat Purana, Harivansh Purana, Padma Purana, Vishnu Purana Brahmayaibarta Purana etc. But Sankardeva mainly followed from the Bhagawat Purana and Sridhar Swami's "Bhavartha Deepika". Sankardeva cherishes this divine love of Krishna in the Dasama, Kirtana and drama Keli Gopala. The Raasleela is product of Krishna centric Bhakti movement.

The Raasleela is described in Shiva Purana also basing on the amorous play of Lord Shiva and His consort Goddess Gauri. The Bhagawat, Vishnu and Harivansh Purana describe the sporting of child Krishna with the ladies of Vraja. The description in the Bhagawat Purana is comparatively long and mystically more vivid than that of the other Puranas. On the other hand in the Harivansh Purana, the term Raasleela is written as "Hallisaka" dance. The details of the Hallisaka dance is described above. This is native dance of Gujarat, has been influencing Indian

> music a lot. Radha Character The followers of Sankardeva

celebrate Raasleela in Assam as Keli Gopala. So naturally it has some differences with other parts of India. The name of Radha isn't mentioned in the Bhagawat Purana and Bhavartha Deepika of Sridhar Swami from

where Sankardeva takes the main theme. But the name of one particular Gopi, namely Anayaradhitu is described. Many commentators of the Bhagawat Purana refer to Anayaradhitu

as only Radha. On the other hand the Geet Govinda by twelve century poet Jayadeva clearly applied the name of Radha.

The story of Radha Krishna surfaced in first century Prakrit literature. That is the "Gatha Saptasati", one of the ancient Indian love poems. It deals with pre marital or extra marital affairs and touches somehow the divinely erotic emotions of Raasleela. Assamese scholar Kaliram Medhi assumes the Radha's name in Sankardeva's Keli Gopala as later addition. Personally we have also not found the Radha's name in few printed scripts of Keli Gopala. Because Sankardeva never believes in dualism and no special event is shown with a particular Gopi in Keli Gopala. But these assertions are not unanimous.

Present Keli Gopala

As other Ankiya dramas of Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, the Keli Gopala has also gone through many changes. Only the format remains, the dialogues and songs are linguistically changed. The songs are rewritten in vernacular modern Assamese language in simplified wordings. The character of Radha is accepted for dramatic interest.

As Radha sings in her entry:

(Oh my Gopala, please come out at once. What wrong have I done? You are not visible to us.

Don't go away, praying for your entire life. Wave of Yamuna, emitting colourful gems. The moon of the sky shaking my mind. Patience I don't have without you. My life is vain, oh my Gopala. Please come

The lyrics of the Gopis' first entry into the stage of the Keli Gopala is also differently presented in common popular performances of Assam. This is as

(Oh Lord Krishna, can't cross the mundane world. Without chanting your name Saint Suka saying to

Say me frolic of Raas,

And the nature of Lord Krishna. Very beautiful night of autumn.

The moon is rising.

Amorous ladies forgetting everything, Lord Krishna seeing the moon of full moon day.

Face is the reddish sun of Lotus. No fear, no fear you are Lord with us. No friends, we have except you.) N.B: Both the above mentioned songs are translated by a writer Arup Saikia from a modern script of Keli Gopala and presented in a

Russian performance. These songs are not available in original Brajawali Keli Gopala. But the theme and fragrance of the Raasleela is maintained .The entire drama is presented in the line of Sankardeva's Keli Gopala like other "Bhaonas" in the post Sankari era. The Keli Gopala is also one of the seven Ankiya Bhaona drama of Sankardeva. But for immense popularity of

Keli Gopala, it emerges as an independent brand festival of Assam. The people of Assam celebrate Keli Gopala as Raas Mahotsav for many days or month.

Raas Leela or Keli Gopala is one of the most appealing and popular traditional dance drama of Assam and India. It was not performed before the era of Sankardeva. If we judge from an international perspective, Keli Gopala can compete with other traditional dramas of the world in terms of popular style of presentation. There is romance, separation, longing, fighting and terror as in full fledged drama. But the romance is spiritualized. The divinity is reflected through the Gopis.

Lord Krishna symbolises the grace of devotion. The changes occur naturally. But the transformation should be within culturally permitted parameter. So we should preserve it in its traditional form for future generations. (The author is a cultural enthusiast. Bhaona artist, noted writer and alumnus of the University of Delhi. He can be reached at arupsaikia07@gmail.com)

# Understanding the astronomical phenomena!

By: Satyabrat Borah

stronomical phenomena are fascinating events that occur in space and captivate the attention of scientists and stargazers alike. These experience, especially in areas natural occurrences help us understand the universe and its mysteries. Every phenomenon tells a unique story about the cosmos and offers a glimpse into the workings of stars, planets, and other celestial bodies. Some of these events can be observed with the naked eye, while others require advanced telescopes to reveal their beauty and significance. In this article, we will explore various astronomical phenomena in a simple and easyto-understand manner.

One of the most common astronomical phenomena that many people have experienced is a solar eclipse. A solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Earth and the Sun, blocking the Sun's light either partially or completely. It can turn day into night for a short period, creating a magical atmosphere. People often gather in open spaces to witness this rare event, using special glasses to protect their eyes from harmful rays. The most stunning type of solar eclipse is the total eclipse, where the Sun is completely covered by the Moon, leaving only the glowing corona visible. This sight is breathtaking and has been a source of wonder for cen-

Another beautiful phenomenon is the lunar eclipse. A lunar eclipse occurs when the Earth comes between the Sun and the Moon, casting its shadow on the Moon. Unlike a solar eclipse, it is safe to watch a lunar eclipse without any special equipment. The Moon often appears reddish during this event due to the scattering of sunlight through the Earth's atmosphere, which is why it is sometimes called a "Blood Moon." Lunar eclipses are more frequent than solar eclipses and can be observed by people from large parts of the Earth.

Meteor showers are another fascinating event that people love to watch. These happen when Earth passes through the trail of debris left by a comet or asteroid. As these tiny particles enter the Earth's atmosphere, they burn up, creating bright streaks of

light across the night sky. Meteor showers occur regularly, and some of the most popular ones include the Perseids, Geminids, and Leonids. Watching a meteor shower can be an awe-inspiring

with little light pollution where the stars shine brightly. The Northern and Southern Lights, also known as auroras, are stunning natural light displays that occur near the Polar Regions. These lights are caused by charged particles from the Sun colliding with the Earth's magnetic field. The interaction produces vibrant colors, often green and pink, that dance across

the sky like curtains. Auroras are more visible during periods of high solar activity, and witnessing them is considered a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many people. Scientists study auroras to better understand the relationship between the Sun and the Earth's magnetic

environment. Comets are another celestial wonder that often excites skywatchers. A comet is a small icv body that orbits the Sun. When it comes close to the Sun, the heat causes the ice to vaporize, creating a glowing tail that can stretch for millions of kilometers. Comets have fascinated humans for centuries and have even been considered omens in ancient cultures. One of the most famous comets is Halley's Comet, which appears approximately every 76 years. Observing a comet in the night sky can be a humbling re-

minder of the vastness of space. Stars, too, have their moments of glory through phenomena like supernovae. A supernova is the explosive death of a massive star. releasing an enormous amount of energy and light. This explosion is so bright that it can outshine an entire galaxy for a short period.

Supernovae play an essential role in the universe by spreading elements like carbon and oxygen into space, which are crucial for life. Studying these events helps astronomers understand the life cycle of stars and the formation of new celestial bodies.

The formation of rainbows in the sky is a common yet intriguing phenomenon that occurs due to the refraction and dispersion of sunlight by water droplets. While it is not technically an astronomical event, rainbows remind us of how light behaves and interacts with the atmosphere. Rainbows are often seen after rain showers and have inspired myths and stories in cultures around the world.

The movement of planets in our solar system also gives rise to interesting phenomena. For example, when a planet passes directly between the Earth and the Sun, it creates a transit. The transit of Venus or Mercury is a rare event that allows scientists to study the planets' atmospheres and refine measurements of their

Planetary conjunctions, where two or more planets appear close together in the sky, are another fascinating occurrence that attracts attention. These alignments create a beautiful spectacle visible even to the unaided eye.

The vast expanse of space also holds phenomena that challenge our understanding of physics and astronomy. Black holes, for instance, are regions of space where gravity is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape. While we cannot see black holes directly, their presence can be inferred from their effects on nearby stars and matter. Studying black holes helps scientists explore the boundaries of science and unlock secrets about the na-

ture of space and time. Another intriguing phenomenon is the discovery of exoplanets, or planets that orbit stars outside our solar system. These planets come in various sizes and compositions, ranging from rocky Earth-like worlds to massive gas giants. The search for exoplanets has been driven by the quest to find other habitable worlds. With advanced telescopes like the James Webb Space Telescope, scientists are uncovering new exoplanets regularly and analyzing their atmospheres for signs of life.

tial neighbor, also hosts interesting events like supermoons. A supermoon occurs when the Moon is at its closest point to Earth during its orbit, making it appear larger and brighter than Supermoons provide an excellent opportunity for people to ob-

serve the Moon in detail and

appreciate its beauty. Similarly,

blue moons, which refer to the

second full moon in a calendar

month, are rare and carry a sense

The Moon, our closest celes-

The galaxy we live in, the Milky Way, is filled with phenomena that continue to amaze astronomers. The galactic center, for example, hosts a supermassive black hole that influences the movement of stars and other objects in its vicinity

The spiral arms of the galaxy contain regions where new stars are born, surrounded by clouds of gas and dust. Observing the Milky Way on a clear night can be a humbling experience, reminding us of the vastness of the

Astronomical phenomena are not limited to distant stars and galaxies: they also involve the Sun, which is crucial for life on Earth. Solar flares and coronal mass ejections are powerful eruptions of energy from the Sun's surface that can affect Earth's magnetic field. These events can disrupt communication systems and satellites, but they also contribute to the beauty of auroras. Scientists closely monitor solar activity to understand its impact on our planet and prepare for potential disrup-

In recent years, the advancement of technology has allowed us to study astronomical phenomena in greater detail. Space telescopes, robotic missions, and observatories on Earth have provided us with stunning images and valuable data about the universe. These tools have also helped us discover phenomena that were previously unknown, such as gravitational waves. Gravitational waves are ripples in space-time caused by massive objects like merging black holes or neutron stars. Their discovery has opened a new window into understanding the universe.

Astronomical phenomena are a testament to the beauty and complexity of the universe. They inspire curiosity and remind us of the endless possibilities for exploration and discovery. Whether it is watching a meteor shower, observing a lunar eclipse, or marveling at the Northern Lights, these events connect us to the cosmos and spark a sense of wonder. They encourage us to learn more about our place in the universe and the forces that shape it. The study of these phenomena not only enriches our knowledge but also deepens our appreciation for the natural



# Can you understand the truth of life? Trapped by desire

#### By: Aubaid Ahmad Akhoon

ife, like a calm river, often conceals hidden perils beneath its tranquil surface. We chase after glittering opportunities—wealth, power, and fleeting joys—unaware of the dangers that lie in wait. These illusions of grandeur often distract us from eternal truths, much like a fish enticed by bait, oblivious to the deadly hook it conceals.

The renowned poet-philosopher Allama Iqbal offers a profound warning

"Ae tair-e-lahooti, us rizq se maut

Jis rizq se aati ho parwaaz mein

(O heavenly bird, death is better

than sustenance That hinders the flight of your spirit toward greatness.)

Iqbal's words remind us of the perils of indulging in transient gains at the cost of spiritual elevation. The sustenance we often chase—be it material wealth or fleeting pleasure—can diminish our ability to soar toward higher purposes.

#### The Tale of the Hook

In the serene depths of a river, a young fish notices a tempting morsel of meat dangling on the surface. Her instincts urge her to seize the opportunity. Just as she prepares to bite, an old, wise fish intercepts her path and warns: "Do not be deceived by appearances. That meat hides a hook. Bite it, and you'll be pulled from the water and meet a grim end. The fisherman's trap will seal your fate.'

The young fish dismisses the warning, convinced it's an exaggeration. She reasons, "The waters are

calm, and there's no sign of danger. The old fish clings to superstitions.

But the moment she bites the bait, the hidden hook pierces her flesh. She struggles in vain as the fisherman reels her in. What she had dismissed as mere stories unfolds before her eyes—the hook, the knife, the boiling oil, and the waiting mouths.

#### A Reflection on Human Lives

This tale mirrors our own lives. The bait represents the fleeting pleasures of this world—wealth, fame, power—seducing us with the illusion of fulfillment. The hook symbolizes the consequences of succumbing to these temptations, often hidden until it's too late.

The wise old fish is akin to the Prophets and sages who guide humanity, warning of the perils of worldly attachments and urging us to focus on eternal truths. Their wisdom is a beacon in a world overshadowed by materialism.

Iqbal captures this wisdom in another timeless verse:

"Gohar-e-murad milta hai faqat khudi ke saahil se,

Ye ma'ali jazira tere hi andar chhupa hai.

(The pearl of destiny lies on the shores of selfhood: This exalted isle is hidden within

your soul.) True fulfillment, Iqbal suggests,

lies within, not in the external pursuits that often deceive us. The Illusions of Modernity

In today's world, we often prioritize tangible evidence over intangible truths. The advancements of science and reason have led many to dismiss faith and spirituality as outdated. Like the skeptical young fish, we view the warnings of ancient

Now I Am In

**Festive Mood** 

By: Bipul Chandra Kalita

A lizard catches a flying fly in its

festive mood

While a rally of ants is trying to

pinch my laziness;

My ill health reviews its position

to enable me

To fetch buckets of water

To water me and my garden

With profound desires

To place me in my original posi-

tion!

Now I am in festive mood,

readying myself to be an actor...

Will discover a strong voices for

youthful rallies.

Broadening my heart and mind,

To unmask all silent killers of

work-culture:



wisdom as irrelevant in modern

Yet the reality remains: death is inevitable. No amount of progress can shield us from the impermanence of life. Iqbal beautifully emphasizes this truth:

'Maut Ko Samjhay Hain Ghafil Ikhtetaam-e-Zindagi, Hai Ye Shaam-e-Zindagi, Subha Dawaam-e-Zindagi."

(The imprudent ones consider death as the end of life;

This apparent evening of life is the morning of perpetual life!)

In this verse, Allama Iqbal invites us to reconsider the way we view death and the journey of life. The "imprudent ones" refers to those who perceive death merely as the final end of existence. This limited understanding fails to grasp the deeper, eternal truth that life is not confined to the physical realm we

Iqbal compares life to a cycle of day and night, where what we perceive as the evening — a symbol of decline, death, or the end of life is actually part of a greater, ongoing process. The "apparent evening" represents the conclusion of the material world, but it is also the threshold of a new beginning: the "morning of perpetual life." This morning, according to Iqbal, is not confined to the limitations of time

and space but signifies the eternal

life that transcends physical death. Through this poetic insight, Iqbal emphasizes that death should not be feared or seen as an end but as a transition into a more enduring, spiritual existence. The illusions of modernity often blind us to this eternal truth, and through his verse, Iqbal urges us to look beyond the ephemeral nature of worldly existence and embrace the infinite possibilities of life beyond.

#### **The Eternal Choice**

The fisherman's bait is not an act of cruelty but a reflection of natural order. Similarly, the challenges we face in life are tests of our choices. The Prophets, like the wise old fish, have fulfilled their duty by guiding us. Whether we heed their advice or dismiss it depends on us.

Iqbal urges us to rise above medi-

ocrity through his profound cou-

"Apne Mann Mein Doob Kar Pa Ja Suragh-E-Zindagi, Tu Agar Mera Nahin Banta Na

Bann, Apna To Bann. "Pani Pani Kar Gyi Mujh Ko Qa-

landar Ki Ye Baat,

Tu Jhuka Jab Ghair Ke Agay, Na Mann Tera Na Tann."

"Delve into your soul and there seek our life's buried tracks; Will you not be mine? then be not

mine, be your own right!" "The hermit's saying left me in

You forfeit body and soul alike, once you bow to another's might!"

In these verses, Iqbal speaks to the core of human existence, urging us to look within for the true purpose of our lives. The first couplet encourages self-exploration: to dive deep into our own soul to discover the hidden path of life.

The "buried tracks" symbolize the innate truths that lie within each of us, waiting to be uncovered. Iqbal's message is clear: true fulfillment comes not from seeking external sources of validation but from aligning ourselves with our authentic inner selves.

The second part of the couplet emphasizes the power of personal choice. Iqbal asserts that even if someone chooses not to align with him, they should not lose themselves in the process. "Be your own right" calls for self-empowerment and authenticity. This is a call to not depend on anyone for one's true self, but to forge one's own path.

In the second couplet, Iqbal evokes the mystic wisdom of the Qalandar (a term used for a wandering, ascetic mystic). The words

"Pani Pani Kar Gyi Mujh Ko Qalandar Ki Ye Baat" refer to the disillusionment that struck Igbal after hearing the Qalandar's teachings. These teachings suggest that true freedom and spiritual greatness come when one is free from the influence of external forces, particularly when one refuses to bow to anyone other than the Divine. "You forfeit body and soul alike if once you cringe to another's might" reflects the idea that surrendering to worldly power compromises the integrity of both body and soul.

Through these verses, Iqbal calls us to rise above the mundane, to pursue spiritual self-realization, and to maintain integrity in the face of external pressures. It is through this inner strength and unwavering selfawareness that we transcend the challenges of life and find our true purpose. The choice is eternal whether we succumb to the world's distractions or seek to align with our higher calling is the eternal test of

#### **Bottom Line: Embracing Time**less Wisdom

Time is fleeting. Just as the fish cannot return to the water once caught, we cannot revisit this life once it ends. Let us not waste our precious moments chasing illusions. Instead, let us embrace the wisdom of the Prophets and poets, preparing ourselves for the eternal journey that lies ahead.

For while the hook is inevitable, how we choose to swim in the river of life-heedless or aware-is entirely up to us. (The author is a columnist, motivational speaker, and Associate Editor of Weekly Education Quill. He can be reached at akhoon.aubaid@gmail.com)

# **Moon - The Symbol** of Beauty

By: Bareen Hilal

O silver orb in velvet skies, A beacon where the dreamer flies. Your light a song, so soft, serene, A timeless muse, night's gentle queen.

Scarred yet whole, you softly glow A tale of beauty, scars bestow. Eternal watcher, calm and wise, You hold the secrets of the skies.



### Mother

**By: Baharul Islam** 

The name is so tasty so sweet She is everything She is the shelter in storm My mother is my heart In crual times-She automatically comes and carries Comfort and inspire.

Mother is the ocean of life Light of heart River of love and affection She is the coldest With her warmth everywhere She is the only friend When there's enemies everywhere.

My mom is my favourite Everyone of the world Comes for selfish interest But only she Toils for my best Ready to give everything I need...

The youth in me will rescue its

possessor from ailing thoughts

To win the race

To keep my head high

Without feeling loneliness in the

journey to be undertaken!

Now I am in festive mood,

readying myself to be a warrior...

Be my sincere audience, O' my

adorable friends!

Wash, warm and dress me with

your sharp observations;

Love, peace and humanity will

help me paint a beautiful world

In children's smile, voice, eye-

balls and humanly desires!

Now I am in festive mood,

readying myself for the solemn

# The Plague: Camus' metaphor for life

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

lbert Camus's 'The Plague' has been one of the most profound explorations of the human condition in modern literature, as this incredibly thought-provoking work depicts a devastating outbreak of bubonic plague in the Algerian city of Oran, which, beyond narrating the deadly epidemic in itself, has turned out to be a complex metaphor for life itself. In its portrayal of the plague's effects on the individual and the larger population, Camus succeeds in using the plague as a symbol to represent the randomness and inaction via which humans' lives and existence are dictated.

The Plague stands as one such philosophical meditation over suffering and death and the absurd within life concern of perpetual actuality within the broad trajectory of Camus' work. Instead of providing comfort or definitive answers, the novel throws readers into life's inherent meaninglessness while discussing how people react to this

The city of Oran, which at first seems to be a place of dull routine and unremarkable existence, is suddenly struck by an outbreak of the plague, throwing its inhabitants into chaos. The plague is an anonymous and impersonal force which has been sweeping over the city, leaving death and suffering in its wake. It came so unexpectedly that it appears to have taken an uncontrollable and unpredictable force.

That's exactly what life itself is; the people of Oran are no different from all human beings, living under the illusion of controlling their lives. This illusion was broken by the sudden outbreak of the plague. The first reaction of the city, as shown through the eyes of the characters, is denial and disbelief. The situation's seriousness is denied until it is just too undeniable. This is somewhat similar to how man denies the inevitability of death and suffering, putting aside the hard truths of existence for comfort and routine. It is in this sense that Camus

uses the development of the plague to metaphorize human life. Just as how the plague lavishly consumed Oran, so does life seem uncertain, impermanent, and painful. The arbitrary process with which the disease infects its victims old, rich and poor, faithful and an atheisthighlights the indifferent character of existence. No one knows when or how life is going to end, and the plague reminds everybody in a vivid manner that suffering does not matter. This is a theme of randomness or, as Camus says, "the absurd," that stands as the central element of the novel's comprehension.

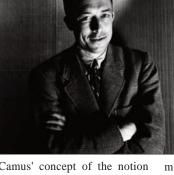
According to Camus, life is ultimately meaningless, and it is from this recognition that absurdity follows. Human beings, with their needs for meaning, order, and purpose, face an indifferent universe. He has to confront an existential condition. where suffering and death are destined but purposeless in the

Dr. Bernard Rieux is the protagonist and narrator of The Plague. Rieux is a doctor, a man of reason and scientific knowledge, forced to face the powerlessness associated with the ravaging of the plague. The whole book reflects Rieux as he stands for the philosophical approach to the absurd that Camus adopted: acknowledgement of the futility of life but resistance to despair. His response to the epidemic was not a surrender to it but action. He works hard not because he does not believe he can win the plague eventually. but because he believes he owes it to himself and others to fight

Then Rieux's actions become the human impulse to resist chaos and the meaninglessness of existence in taking action no matter the outcome. This rebellion against the absurd is, for Camus, essential to humanity. For since it can hardly ever, in the struggle against meaninglessness, be said of humanity to emerge triumphant, it is by resistance, by dignified and purposeful persistence, even in suffering, that meaning is cre-

Perhaps one of the most crucial other characters is Jean Tarrou, who represents yet another philosophical response to the plague. He's an outsider, a man alien to Oran, but as far as the city, he becomes in the grip of it and fully involved in the process of fighting against that deadly disease. Here, the discussion of the plague at that time and its reflection has turned out to be wider through broader existential perspectives: "To him, plague has shown itself as nothing so foreign as a condition which one can have for or against; it is rather the reflection of Man itself."

Tarrou's philosophy bases itself on the concept of solidarity; this being the belief that humanity can find meaning in their life through collective action and mutual support. Knowing that this plague will never be eradicated and that suffering will continue. Tarrou chooses to act based on a responsibility to others. His attitude fits well in



Camus' concept of the notion that people have to continue to rebel against the absurd, although they may believe that the final victory is impossible. Tarrou's decision to provide for other people, no matter how it may become meaningless later on, has become an act of rebellion against the indifference the world showed things.

Father Paneloux here embodies a more traditional religious form of reaction to the plague. First of all, Father Paneloux interprets this outbreak of plague as being in terms of divine judgment, judging God over these sinful peoples in Oran. He exhorts that it is the way to make amends for what they sinned and atone for their wrongdoing. That conception finds roots in the principle that pains hold a meaning, while their destruction represents nothing less than a catastrophe. But as the plague rages on and suffering builds up, the trial reaches its limits for Paneloux.

One can at least mention the poor child tortured to death over his pains and so unambiguously innocent that it goes so far as casting doubt on his God's justice and benevolence. It is a moment of crisis and forces Paneloux to reformulate his vision of suffering. Eventually, he gives a second, this time much less confident sermon, as if the plague might be inscrutable for the human mind. The story of the breakdown of Paneloux's faith shows Camus' attack on traditional religious interpretations of suffering. Though religion can give one solace and make sense of suffering, at such times when suffering is rampant and meaningless, the answers from religion only seem hollow. The theme that relates to soli-

darity or the significance of human interaction when there is suffering forms the most important subject matter in The Plague. In reality, it is quite valid to say that the isolation brought about by the quarantined setting gives meaning to the struggles of its characters when fighting as a collective against the epidemic. When Rieux and Tarrou join the battle against the plague with the other volunteers, a form of com-



nity is established not by religious belief or political ideology but by a sense of humanity

Paradoxically, it is through bringing people together in a common cause that the plague makes manifest human solidarity. There will always be some human ability to put meaning into the relationships with one another and into their ability to support one another and tolerate suffering together, even in an ultimately meaningless world.

The metaphorical weight of the plague also depends upon its cyclical nature. The plague comes and goes just as the cycles of life and death, happiness and sadness. This reminds me that life is short and that death. in all its capricious randomness and inevitability, awaits us always. Camus insists there is no profound purpose behind the plague's coming and going- it just does. This recurring pattern of pain and dying, he reminds us, follows the model of man himself, where happiness gives way to unhappiness, and vice versa, for no discernible pur-

It is, finally, a deep reflection on the absurdity of life and on human reaction to that absurdity, as the plague works out to be a stark metaphor for the existential struggle to give meaning to a world without meaning. Through characters such as Rieux, Tarrou, and Paneloux, Camus develops different forms of response to suffering and death, each reflecting a different plane of the human condition.

Through Rieux's stoic commitment to action, Tarrou's emphasis on solidarity, and Paneloux's crisis of faith, the various ways individuals come to terms with the absurd are illuminated.

Camus does not offer easy answers but provokes one to think about his or her reactions to the absurdity and suffering of life. And it is in a world where plague is always real that one finds meaning in human resiliency, solidarity, and revolt, even while the universe itself seems indifferent. (The author can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

CM has ignited a new era of progress in Assam

Himanta's leadership is guiding

Assam to prosperity: Krishnendu Paul

Khel Maharan 2.0

inaugurated at Jagiroad

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, Dec 14: Assam minister Piivak Henerika en Friden in

ister Pijush Hazarika on Friday inaugurated the 14th Khel Maharan, organised by the Sports and Youth Welfare Department of the state government with the aim of giving a platform to sports talents in rural

The Khel Maharan was organ-

Notably, there are various sports

Several players from 23 num-

bers of GP under Jagiroad Assem-

bly constituency participated in

competitions held over the two

ised at Neli Makaria ground in Ja-

giroad on 13 and 14 December.

days of the Khel Maharan.

# **MLA Lawrence Islary distributes** relief cheques in Kokrajhar

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2024



HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, Dec 14: Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Lawrence Islary on Saturday distributed cheques under various welfare schemes at the Bodofa Cultural Complex in Kokrajhar's Chandmari area.

The cheques were distributed as a part of the "12 Days of Development" initiative launched by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The cheques were distributed to 331 beneficiaries, offering seed capital to bolster their entrepreneurial endeavors under the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) scheme.

In addition, 'No Dues Certificates' were also distributed under the Assam Microfinance Incentive and Relief Scheme to 119 Category-III Phase-II borrowers from Kokrajhar district.

Besides this, a financial assis-

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Dec 14: The Chief Executive Mem-

ber (CEM) of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC),

Pramod Boro, inaugurated the newly constructed aca-

demic building for the Department of Botany at Kokra-

The event was attended by faculty members, stu-

The state-of-the-art facility features advanced class-

jhar Science College on Saturday.

dents, and local public representatives.

PM Shree foundation day

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Dec 14: Kendriya

Vidyalaya Missamari celebrated its

PM Shree foundation day with a

grand and vibrant ceremony, featur-

ing various cultural activities and

educational programs on Saturday.

lighting of the lamp by the chief

guest of the event Swati Bhambore,

principal APS Missamari in pres-

ence of principal of the school, fac-

ulties and other dignitaries marking

the beginning of the auspicious oc-

accorded warm welcome and in his

welcome speech principal of the

school spoke on the significance of

the event and expressed his grati-

tude towards all concerned for ex-

tending their selfless contribution

making the institution a reliable ed-

ucational institution for the students

of the greater Missmari area.

The chief guest of the event was

casion.

The program began with the

tance was also extended to 4,586

individuals affected by various

Addressing the gathering, Is-

lary lauded the visionary leader-

ship of Sarma, stating that these

initiatives signify a robust step to-

wards fostering development and

providing timely support to the

tament to the Assam Govern-

ment's resolve to promote

inclusive development and create

sustainable opportunities for all

and expressed hope that this will

empower individuals and fami-

lies, paving the way for economic

stability and growth in Kokra-

The event witnessed the pres-

ence of key dignitaries, including

ADC Kabita Deka, Nitya Binod

Warie, senior officials of the dis-

trict administration, and other key

**CEM of BTR inaugurates** 

academic building in Kokrajhar

KV Missamari celebrates Nagaon district Mahila Samiti's

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Dec 14: The triennial

conference of the Nagaon District

Mahila Samiti took place on Saturday

at its office in Amulapatty of Nagaon

district. The conference commenced

with the hoisting of the flag by the or-

ganisation's working president, Bibha

attended the event, including Mansi

Dutta, president of the Tezpur District

Mahila Samitis," highlighting the

vital role these organisations play in

empowering women and promoting

Deepa Saikia, a prominent advo-

cate from Nagaon, also spoke at the conference, addressing the topic

"Laws Related to Women and Child

Protection." Saikia stressed the im-

portance of raising awareness about

their welfare," said Dutta.

Mahila Samiti.

Notable women from the district

"The Responsibilities and Duties of

"Such initiatives stood as a tes-

underprivileged.

jhar," he added.

ister Himanta Biswa Sarma's visionary leadership Paul appreciated the Sarma's

leadership during a grand event at the Gandhi Mela ground in Silchar, marking the conclusion of the 12day Vikas Yatra.

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 14: Newly ap-

pointed minister Krishnendu Paul

on Saturday lauded the chief min-

Paul highlighted Assam's strides in self-sufficiency and rural empowerment resonating with the CM's dream of positioning the state among India's top five.

Paul also delivered an impactful speech, emphasising the state's focus on boosting local fish and dairy production. "Our goal is to make Assam self-

reliant in fish and dairy, paving the way to becoming an exporter in these sectors," he said, reflecting the state's commitment to rural development under CM Sarma's leadership. He also announced district-level

review meetings to monitor infrastructure projects, particularly road development, and applauded the government's robust disaster response mechanisms.

He further credited Sarma for initiatives like the ₹46.62 crore Mega DBT 2024 scheme, benefiting over 1.2 lakh individuals, in-

rooms and modern laboratories, designed to enhance

During his speech, CEM Pramod Boro emphasised

the BTC's commitment to promoting quality education

and improving infrastructure for students in the region.

He noted that the new building will elevate the educa-

tional standards at Kokrajhar Science College, provid-

ing students with better learning opportunities and

Territorial Region is dedicated to fostering sustainable

demic building for the Department of Botany at Kokra-

jhar Science College today. Equipped with

state-of-the-art classrooms and laboratories, this new

facility will significantly enhance our students' learning

experience and the educational standards of the col-

Lawrence Islary, college principal Dr RN Sinha, faculty

members, students, and dignitaries from the region, all

of whom expressed optimism about the positive impact

laws concerning women and children

and encouraged the Mahila Samitis to

actively promote this knowledge

During the conference, five distin-

guished women who have contributed

to the Nagaon district Mahila Samiti

were recognised and felicitated. The

honourees included Apara Phukan,

Ratnamala Saikia, Indu Bora, Lak-

shimi Bora, and Anu Bora Hazarika.

As per an official statement, the

conference concluded with the elec-

tion of a new executive committee for

the Nagaon district Mahila Samiti for

the upcoming term. Indu Bora was

elected as the president, Bibha

Phukan as the working president, and

Pranati Sarma and Shanya Devi as

The conference began with the

hoisting of the flag by the working president of the organisation, Bibha

within the community.

of the new facility on science education and research.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by MLA

development in various sectors, including education.

He also stated that the government of the Bodoland

"I am delighted to inaugurate the newly built aca-

academic and research experiences for students.

supporting their academic pursuits.

lege." CEM Boro added.

triennial conference concludes



cluding farmers, fishers, and live-

Later, Udharbond MLA Mihir Kanti Shome praised the chief minister's transformative governance.

"Himanta Biswa Sarma has ignited a new era of progress in Assam. His visionary approach ensures that every corner of the state reaps the benefits of growth and development," said Shome.

Shome also lauded Paul for his dedication to empowering local initiatives.

MLA Dipayan Chakraborty (Silchar) and MLA Nihar Ranjan Das (Dholai) echoed similar sentiments. "Assam is on its way to becoming a model state under CM leadership," Chakraborty, while Das highlighted the government's focus on rural sustainability and economic uplift-

Cachar district commissioner Mridul Yadav, in his welcome speech, emphasised the signifi-

Inter-school art competition held in Diphu

cance of collaborative governance, underscoring the unified efforts of state leaders to achieve Assam's growth vision.

The event concluded with a resounding commitment from leaders and dignitaries to fulfill Himanta Biswa Sarma's transformative vision for Assam, signaling a brighter, selfreliant future for the state.

This is stated in a press release issued from Regional office of Information & Public Relations

various sports including boxing, football, volleyball, kabaddi and cycling. The program was attended by Morigaon district superintendent of Police Hemant Kumar Das, Jagiroad co-district commissioner

areas of the state.

Biman Das, additional commissioner Sangeeta Barthakur, Morigaon district sports officer and secretary Chandan Talukdar, district physical education officer Seemanta Baishya and others. Himanta inspects Lachit

# Moidam development project at Hollangapar

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 14: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma visited the Moidam of Lachit Borphukan were he also inspected the progress of development project at Hollongapar in Jorhat district, said an official statement.

During his visit, the chief minister reviewed the progress of works under the second phase of the Moidam development project and also directed the officials to ensure the timely completion of all construction activities.

He further took note of the progress of the collection centre, auditorium, an indoor stadium and other facilities.

"The Moidam and Cultural Complex are expected to be open by 2025," the official statement quoted Sarma as saying. Additionally, Sarma also inspected the progress of the railway flyover near Jorhat Medical College.

"With 88 per cent of the ₹ 57.3 crore project is completed, the flyover is set to be open for the public by February 2025," the statement added. On the occasion, Sarma also announced that the Baruah Chariali Flyover in Jorhat is expected to be ready by December 2025. The chief minister also visited Jorhat Medical College and Hospital where he held a meeting and discussed a range of issues.

During his visit, finance minister Ajanta Neog, PHE minister Jayanta Mallabaruah, MLAs Hitendra Nath Goswami, Bhabendra Nath Bharali, Rupjyoti Kurmi and host of other senior government officers were present.

of the foot-paths and unauthorised roadside shops.

Initially, the team consists of five men and four women who will closely monitor the illegal en-

#### and Siddhartha Swargary of class Nong'eh Tisso of class IX of III of Carry's Vision School of Ed-Aturkimi Academy received conucation won the second and third solation prizes.

Elite Society (YES) of Karbi Anglong with the theme of environmental conservation has organised an inter-school art competition for the school of Diphu town, where more than 200 students from 22 schools participated.

The art competition was organised at Girls HS School, here in collaboration with Sankalp – Hub for empowerment of women under Beti Bachao, Beit Padhao programme, powered by Euro Kids, Diphu and presented by Arni Keme Productions. Groups and organisations like Hongjai, Abolon Tent House; Malong Offset and

Engjai and Engjai Memorial have also supported the initiative.

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Dec 14: The Youthful The competition under junior category between class 1 to 5 and senior category between from class

In junior category Shruti Doloi of class – V of Aturkimi Academy bagged the first prize, followed by Bhonrika Terangpi of class - IV prizes respectively.

Badison Tisso of class – IV of Little Kids School; Deeptashu Kro of class V and Yashika Terangpi of class IV of Aturkimi Academy bagged the consolation prizes.

In the senior category, Monjir Katharpi of class – VIII and Nayana Pator of class IX of Badan Memorial HS School bagged the first and second prizes respectively and Tejashree Terangpi of class -VIII of Carry's Vision School of Education bagged the third prize. Tanmoi Mahanta of class IX of Badan Memorial HS School and

The prizes were given away by YES president, Rangsina Tokbi and secretary, Birton Engjai; Romali Teronpi, project officer of Beti Bachao, Beit Padhao and judge Deben Timung.

### CEM of NCHAC provides Minister Brahma distributes microfinance financial assistance

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: Chief Executive Member of North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) Debolal Garsola provided financial assistance to beneficiaries whose properties were aster, said an official statement on Saturday.

The programme was held a Haflong Government College Auditorium Hall.

Self Help groups (SHGs) and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) were also benefitted with financial assistance in-order to help them boost their enterprises.

"A total amount of ₹ 9, 25, 55, 083 is being distributed to as many as 3012 beneficiaries as financial assistance to those who had property loss during last disaster under veterinary, agriculture, fishery including house damages," the statement added. Under the Seed capital provision to ASRLM and ASULM SHG women, as many as 151 beneficiaries from Dima Hasao are benefitted. This scheme give special assistance to SHG members in terms of 'Seed Capital Support' wherein financial support up to ₹ 40, 000/- per member is provided to enable SHG women to involve themselves in food processing to procure small tools, equipment and raw materials.

"Eventually, their business volume will be scaled up and they will be formalized by way of credit support from bank, giving technical support, providing licensing and registration, extending market linkages," the statement quoted the district commissioner Simanta Kumar Das

# incentives to beneficiaries in Baksa

**HT Correspondent** 

KOKRAJHAR, Dec 14: Aasam minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, ceremonially distributed 'No-Dues Certificates' to 225 women beneficiaries of Baksa district under the Microfinance Incentive destroyed by storm or flood during the last dis- and Relief Scheme at a programme held at the Mushalpur HS School playground on Saturday.

Additionally, financial assistance was also extended to eight flood-affected families and 97 women beneficiaries under the Seed Capital Scheme of the state government.

Addressing the gathering, minister Brahma praised the 12 Days of Development initiative spearheaded by the chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, emphasising its pivotal role in the development of the state.

Speaking about the Microfinance Incentive and Relief Scheme, the minister highlighted that the issuance of No-Dues Certificates will empower the women beneficiaries to access loans from banks, fostering financial independence and economic growth.

"The state government, under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, is dedicated to launching welfare schemes that transform the lives of the people of Assam," He further emphasised that the government not only makes

promises but ensures their delivery, citing flagship schemes such as Orunodoi as examples of its commitment to the welfare of the

Baksa District Commissioner (DC) Gautam Das presented an overview of the beneficiaries and their inclusion in the govern-

The event was graced by several dignitaries, including speaker of the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly (BTCLA) Katiram Boro, member of Council Legislative Assembly (MCLA) Mantu Boro, BTC executive member Rakesh Brahma, MCLA Ghanashyam Das and EM Gautam Das.

### Special team formed to monitor encroachment of footpaths in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Dec 14: The Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation (DMC) has formed a special team named "DMC Enforcement Squad" to monitor encroachment

Recently, DMC has been conducting eviction drive to clear unauthorised shops which are mushrooming in the footpaths and

### Raise awareness about the importance of saving energy

# 'National Energy Conservation Day' observed in NFR

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 14: 'Na-

tional Energy Conservation Day' was observed by the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) with a week-long program which started on December 8 and concluded on Saturday.

The main objective of this event was to raise awareness about the importance of energy and the need for its con-

A large number of officers and staff participated in the Energy Conservation Week, engaging in various activities throughout NFR staff counseling on the urgency of enconservation was ergy conducted at different field

Throughout the week, numerous programs and activities related to energy conservation were organised, including leaflet distribution,



art and quiz competitions, poster and banner displays, and Nukkad Natak perform-

These initiatives aimed to create awareness among both staff and the general public regarding the significance of energy conservation. Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, the general manager of Northeast Frontier Railway, held discussions with officials and staff at headquarters, emphasising the importance of energy con-

As part of the observance, a Nukkad Natak was performed near the NF Railway Headquarters complex on December 13, 2024, attended by railway officials and the public to promote energy conservation awareness.

During this week, public awareness walks featuring banners and slogans to prevent energy wastage were organized at various locations across NFR posters with high visibility were displayed at railway premises, and leaflets containing energy conservation tips were distributed among railway staff and the public.

# BTC govt celebrates fourth anniversary HT Bureau KOKRAJHAR, Dec 14: The celebra-

tion of the fourth anniversary of the UPPL-led UPPL-BJP alliance government in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) commenced on Saturday with a two-day program spanning across all BTR districts.

In Kokrajhar, the celebration took place across VCDC, block level, government offices, and educational institutions, featuring a series of well-organised

Officials from various government offices, including district officials, BDOs, TCLCC chairpersons, VCDC chairpersons, members, and public representatives participated, discussing various program implementations and schemes that have fostered significant sustainable development in the region.

Notably, the UPPL-led BTR government was formed on December 15, 2020, under the dynamic leadership of Pramod Boro, chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region. Throughout this four-year period, the government has launched numerous missions and visions aimed at the welfare and development of the region, playing a pivotal role in social



In Udalguri, the fourth anniversary will be celebrated centrally at Bhergaon on Sunday with a vibrant program planned. Preparations and arrangements for the event were reported to be nearly completed. The celebration aims to emphasise peace, progress, and prosperity within the Bodoland region, and it is expected to draw a large gathering from across the districts, including officials from various government departments and developmental agencies.

Pramod Boro will officiate as the chief guest at the festivities, attended by several dignitaries, including Assam's cabinet minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma.

Boro highlighted that the fourth year of the BTR government has fostered integration among the communities. He expressed gratitude to the citizens of the Bodoland region for their continued cooperation and support during this successful year of governance, emphasising the government's focus on sustainable peace, harmony, and integrity across

"The BTR government is gearing up to celebrate four glorious years of its governance tomorrow. I extend a warm welcome to all to join us in this celebration of peace, progress, and prosperity in the BTR," Boro stated.

### 3 students die Arunachal school overhead water tank collapses

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ITANAGAR, Dec 14: Three students of a private school were killed and three others injured when an overhead water tank collapsed and fell on them in Arunachal Pradesh's Naharlagun on Saturday, police said.

The students were playing at the St Alphonsa School in Model Village when the tank collapsed injuring six students, Naharlagun Superintendent of Police Mihin Gambo said.

"All the injured were rushed to the Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHMS), Naharlagun, where three were declared dead. A post-mortem is currently underway," the SP said.

The deceased are class 9 students while the injured belong to class 6 and 7, police said.

The police have detained the school principal, owner, and four other staff members for questioning.

"Preliminary investigations suggest that the water tank may have exceeded its capacity. However, we are probing the matter further to determine the exact cause," the SP added. (PTI)

# Manipur Police seize 5.87 kg of brown sugar IMPHAL, Dec 14: Manipur Po-

lice seized 5.87 kg of brown sugar from Senapati district, an officer said on Saturday

Based on intelligence inputs, police raided a house in Chiphaodai village on Thursday and found the drugs in 150 soap cases, the officer

Four persons were arrested in connection with the illegal drugs and a case has been registered for further investigation.

The police also destroyed 10 acres of illegal poppy cultivation in Molham village in Kamjong district on Thursday.

Two poppy cultivators of Leikoiching village were arrested. An FIR has been registered for further investigation, the officer Order to be implemented during the ongoing party organisational election process

# Youths below 45 years can become mandal presidents in Tripura

AGARTALA, Dec 14: BJP activists, who are below 45 years of age, would be eligible for 'Mandal' presidents in Tripura as the party's central leadership instructed the state unit to bring new faces to strengthen the organisation in assembly segments, a saffron camp leader said on Saturday.

Those who have already completed two terms as 'Mandal' presidents are unlikely to get another chance to lead the party at local levels, he said.

"The party's central leadership has instructed the state unit to bring new faces whose age is below 45 years at the 'Mandal' level. The move is aimed at preparing the young generation to lead the party for a long time. We will



organisational election process," BJP's state general secretary Bhagaban Das told PTI. Those who have already com-

Tripura, Meghalaya CMs likely to attend

investment road show in Mumbai

MDoNER, along with Tripura CM

Manik Saha, and Meghalaya CM

Key officials, including Chan-

chal Kumar, secretary, MDoNER,

and Monalisa Dash, joint secretary,

MDoNER, will also attend, along

with senior representatives from

B2G meetings, offering a unique

opportunity for potential investors

to interact directly with state rep-

resentatives and explore invest-

ment opportunities across multiple

sectors. This event is being organ-

ized in partnership with the State

The Road show will feature

various Northeastern states

Conrad K Sangma.

idents will be "barred from contesting the election for the post this

"This is aimed at bringing new

states, FICCI (Industry Partner),

The Mumbai Roadshow marks

the sixth event in the ongoing se-

ries, showcasing presentations

from the eight North Eastern

states— Arunachal Pradesh,

Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mi-

zoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and

Tripura. These states will highlight

a diverse range of investment op-

portunities in key sectors, includ-

ing agri-food processing and allied

sectors, IT & ITES, entertainment

& sports, energy, infrastructure and

logistics, tourism & hospitality, ed-

ucation & skill development,

healthcare etc.—all critical to driv-

ing economic growth in the region.

Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Ben-

galuru, as well as the state seminar

at Gujarat, have generated signifi-

cant interest from potential in-

Building on these efforts,

MDoNER also held a signing and

exchange of MoUs event for the

North East Investors Summit on

March 6 at Vigyan Bhawan, New

Delhi, facilitating discussions be-

to hold football trials in Dimapur

Previous roadshows in Mumbai,

and Invest India (Investment Facil-

itation Partner).

## National integration tour flagged-off in Arunachal

Rajeep Roy are expected to join its

core committee meeting on Sun-

Chief minister Manik Saha, BJP

state president Rajib Bhattacharjee

and senior party leaders will also

"Organisational matters, includ-

ing membership drive and election

at 'Mandal' levels, are scheduled

to be discussed in the meeting," he

be present in the meeting.

Sunday, he said.

ITANAGAR, Dec 14: General Officer Commanding 3 Corps Lt Gen Abhijit S Pendharkar on Saturday flagged-off a national integration tour from Arunachal Pradesh's Likabali Military Station in Lower Siang district.

The religious and pilgrimage tour under Operation Sadbhavna by the Spear Corps aims to promote unity, harmony and national integration, an army official said.

In all, 20 pilgrims are undertaking the journey from Tuting in Upper Siang district to Tawang in Tawang district

Defence PRO Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said the initiative also aims to foster cultural and religious understanding by connecting people diverse regions across Arunachal Pradesh.

The tour will cover the serene and spiritually significant places from Tuting to Tawang allowing pilgrims to experience the rich cultural and religious heritage of the state, he said.

The official said the initiative is the Army's commitment to nationbuilding particularly in remote areas by promoting communal harmony and strengthening ties with the local people. (PTI)

# Meghalaya finds second place with National Energy Conservation award



GUWAHATI, Dec 14: The state

of Meghalaya has been honoured for the second consecutive year, securing 2nd place in the Group-D category for the prestigious National Energy Conservation Award for its efforts in promoting energy efficiency, reducing energy consumption and promoting sustainability. The award was organised by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, Ministry of Power recognizing the state of Meghalaya's commitment to achieving significant environmental impact through energy-saving initiatives.

In the ceremony attended by distinguished guests, vice president Jagdeep Dhankhar, and , Ministry of Power MoS Shripad Naik presented the awards to the states recognized for their exemplary contributions towards energy efficiency. In his address, the Vice President commended all the states for their exceptional contributions to national energy conservation goals and their unwavering commitment to sustainability.

Meghalaya power minister Abu Taher Mondal said that the government has initiated several energysaving measures, including efforts such as reducing energy usage in manufacturing, investing in renewable energy, adopting energy-efficient technologies, and notifying policies related to energy efficiency, some of which are in the final stages of notification. These initiatives have contributed to a reduction in energy consumption, aligning with the government's long-term goal of achieving carbon neutrality.

He thanked Chief Minister Sangma for his unwavering support to the power dept. While recognising the efforts of the consumer in taking up various energy conservation steps, he stated that the award is based on the indicators specified under the State En-

ergy Efficiency Index, along with policies and activities related to energy conservation implemented across various sectors, such as industry, transport, municipalities, buildings, cross sector and

Furthermore, the power minister highlighted that the government had notified the Meghalaya Energy Conservation Regulation 2017, which aims to promote the use of BEE star-rated appliances in public procurement and bans the use of incandescent lamps and inefficient magnetic-wire chokes in tube lights. The government has constituted a state-level steering committee for the identification of key pillars of energy transition at the state level and to provide policy guidance and recommendations to achieve state-specific energy transition goal. The government also launched the Meghalaya Electric Vehicle Policy 2021, which envisions 15% of the state's motor vehicles being powered by electric batteries by 2025.

Meghalaya power department commissioner and secretary Sanjay Goyal said that the recognition is a testament to the state's unwavering commitment to fostering a sustainable and resilient power infrastructure. The objective is not only to meet the energy requirements of the community but also to establish a foundation for enhanced service reliability and sustainable energy for overall progress in the region. He mentioned that a Demand Side Management Cell has also been established in MePDCL (Meghalaya Power Distribution Corporation Ltd) with the assistance of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, New Delhi, to formulate a suitable business model for adopting DSM activities. MePDCL has also taken various steps to reduce T&D losses, and presently the percent-

# Security beefed up before Shreya Ghośhal concert in Agartala

ber 16.

HT Correspondent AGARTALA, Dec 14: In anticipation of Shreya Ghoshal's highly awaited live concert in Agartala, Tripura Police have ramped up security measures across the city. Over 1,000 security personnel, including members of the Tripura State Rifles (TSR), Tripura Police, and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), have been deployed to ensure the event's smooth execu-

The West District Police, under the leadership of Superintendent of Police Kiran Kumar, has taken meticulous steps to secure the venue and surrounding areas. Speaking to the media, SP Kiran Kumar outlined the elaborate security plan, emphasizing the use of advanced surveillance and a multilayered approach.

'We have reinforced the arrangements with the deployment

of drones for crowd management and stationed both uniformed officers and plainclothes personnel for comprehensive monitoring," SP Kumar stated.

To manage the anticipated gathering of around 40,000 attendees, the deployment includes 700 TSR personnel, 50 CRPF officers, and a significant number of Tripura Police staff. Authorities have also issued advisories for parking and emergency routes, ensuring smooth traffic flow with designated and alternative pathways. Additionally, entry passes have been distributed to attendees to enhance security and streamline access to the venue.

The concert is scheduled to conclude by 10 PM, and SP Kumar reassured the public that all necessary precautions have been implemented to prevent any unto-

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Dec 14: Tripura

Chief Minister Manik Saha and

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad

Sangma is likely to attend the

Northeast Trade and Investment

Road show in Mumbai on Decem-

The Ministry of development of north eastern region (MDoNER) is

set to host the Northeast Trade and

Investment Roadshow in Mumbai

on December 16, starting at 3:30

pm at The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel,

will be addressed by Jyotiraditya

According to a report, the event

HT Correspondent DIMAPUR, Dec 14: Bhaichung Bhutia Football Schools (BBFS) Residential Academy, in collaboration with EnJogo, will conduct trials for selection of players at Khelo India Centre in Greenwood School Dimapur on December 20.

These trials are specifically designed for U13 to U17 young football talents for joining the prestigious BBFS Residential Academy. Open to players born between 2009

and 2016, the trials provide a platform for aspiring footballers to showcase their skills and potentially embark on a journey toward professional football. With the BBFS Residential Academy as the backbone of this initiative, the

selected players will have access to world-class training facilities, experienced coaches, and comprehensive development programs designed to maximize their potential.

Nurturing athletic skills and personal

growth, the academy serves as a springboard for players to eventually earn a spot in the Indian national team.

Indian football legend Bhaichung Bhutia said, "We believe that football is a sport that should be accessible to every young talent in the country, regardless of where they come from. Through BBFS and EnJogo, we provide training and a platform for athletes to develop their game and potentially represent India at the highest level," a press release said on Saturday.

Organised by BBFS and powered by EnJogo, this initiative, India's first fullstack sports learning platform, represents a significant step in building a stronger football ecosystem in India.

The trials in Dimapur will a significant opportunity for the youth across the region to demonstrate their potential and be part of a programme that could lead them to professional success and a future in the Indian national

# Bhaichung Bhutia Football Schools Tourist police for visitor safety in Tripura: CM



HT Correspondent AGARTALA, Dec 14: Tripura Chief Minister

Manik Saha on Saturday announced that the state government is considering the introduction of Tourist Police to ensure the safety of tourists and informed that the number of domestic and foreign tourists visiting the state have significantly increased.

Saha said this while speaking at a tour and travel operators' meet organized by the Department of Tourism and the Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) at the Gitanjali Guest House, Agartala.

Highlighting the pivotal role of tour and travel operators in advancing the tourism sector, Saha said, "There is immense potential for employment and investment in this sector.

This is the first time such initiatives are being undertaken. After Prime Minister Modi assumed office in 2014, the Act East Policy was introduced, leading to significant improvements in the communication system, including National Highways, Railways, and Airways. Earlier, we had only one National Highway, but now work is underway on additional highways. The previous government never considered such developments. Communication has vastly improved, and we want the people of India to learn about Tripura. Through your efforts, everyone will know about Tripura's tourism potential.'

Saha emphasized that tourists assess the law and order situation first, and Tripura has made significant strides in this regard, with peace prevailing in the state.

"Whenever a problem arises, we address it immediately. We are also planning to introduce Tourist Police so that tourists do not face any issues. Former Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly is now our Tripura Tourism Brand Ambassador. We are working on infrastructure development with funding from the Asian Development Bank. Homestays have been launched in Dumboor, and we are developing other tourist destinations. Four islands in Dumboor are being developed for tourists. The number of domestic and foreign tourists has significantly increased," he added.

# Medical college in Meghalaya empanelled under Ayushman Bharat State Health Agency Meghalaya team conducted comprehensive training program

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 14: The PA Sangma

International Medical College and Hospital (PIMC) has achieved a significant milestone by being empanelled under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). The hospital facilities under this scheme have been operational since December 13, 2024. A letter from the National Health Authority, Government of India, confirmed that "after going through all the steps for hospital empanelment," PIMC has been deemed eligible for inclusion under AB PM-JAY.

As part of the implementation process, a team from the State Health Agency Meghalaya conducted a comprehensive training program at PIMC, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM). This program focused on utilizing the Beneficiary Identification System (BIS), Transaction Management System (TMS), Medical Documentation, Claims and Adjudication, and Grievance Management under the AB PM-JAY. Doctors, nurses, and technical staff from PIMC actively par-



ticipated in the training session to ensure seamless delivery of the scheme's benefits to beneficiaries.

Following the training, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between PA Sangma International Medical College and Hospital under the State Nodal Agency-Meghalaya, and Reliance General Insurance Company Ltd. This collaboration is pivotal for the effective implementation of

the AB PM-JAY and the Meghalaya Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS) in the

Mehjabeen Rahman, principal secretary of USTM, expressed her enthusiasm about this development. She stated, "PIMC has been authorized to register Meghalaya's residents under the MHIS-PM JAY Scheme, enabling them to access extensive healthcare benefits provided by the State and Central Governments. Notably, Meghalaya stands out as the only state in India where patients can avail of Outpatient Department (OPD) services worth up to ₹ 30,000 for free under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme.'

The training program was conducted by a distinguished team of officials, including:Skhemjingmut Law, IT Manager, MHIS & PMJAY; Natus Ladia, Monitoring and Control Officer, MHIS; Daniel G. Marbaniang, District Program Manager, MHIS & PMJAY; JopskhenLyngwa, HR Manager, MHIS; Brandon BazeleyRymbai, IEC &Enrollment Manager; Anupam Chandra Marak, Claims Manager; Dr. Hawapaka Suting, Medical Officer, MHIS; and Sarat Mallicee, State Project Manager, Reliance General Insurance Company

This empanelment marks a significant step towards enhancing healthcare access and affordability for the people of Meghalaya. PIMC is committed to ensuring that the benefits of this landmark initiative reach every eligible individual in the state.

# Bangladeshi national apprehended in Shillong

SHILLONG, Dec 14: Based on specific intelligence, troops of Border Security Force (BSF) from Sector HO. Jowai, apprehended a Bangladeshi national near Anjali Petrol pump in Shillong, a BSF said recently in a state-

The individual has been identified as a Bangladesh national identified as Munna Islam, 20 years, s/o- Babul Hussain, a resident of Kashpur, Senpara, Sonargaon police station, Narayanganj district, Bangladesh, the BSF also

He admitted to crossing the Indo-Bangladesh border in August 2024, after the political unrest in Bangladesh to seek better job opportunities in India. He was handed over to Kench's Trace Beat House, Police station, Shillong, after a medical examination for further necessary legal action, the BSF added.

In a separate operation carried out in Baghmara under South Garo Hills and Dawki under East Khasi Hills, troops of BSF Meghalaya foiled a smuggling attempt by seizing contraband items, valued at Rs. 3.74 lakh, which included items such as fish, vacuum flasks, blankets, garlic, biri and miscellaneous edible items. These goods were intended to be smuggled into Bangladesh via the international border, the BSF further said. All seized items have been handed over to the Customs Office for further investigation and appropriate legal action. (NNN)

### Sikkim CM launches initiative to boost healthcare for elderly

GANGTOK, Dec 14: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Saturday launched the National Programme for Health Care of Elderly (NPHCE) aimed at catering to the needs of senior citizens in the state. The key initiatives under the programme include the establishment of a 20-bed geriatric ward at STNM Hospital and 10-bed wards in all the district hospitals, specialised OPDs, and the distribution of mobility aids like spectacles, hearing aids, and wheelchairs, an official said.

"This programme ensures a holistic approach to address the needs of Sikkim's elderly and retired population and help them lead healthier, happier and more fulfilling lives," the chief minister said after launching the health initiative at a function at his official residence Mintokgang. (PTI)

# 'Dilli Chalo' march: Tear gas, water cannon used against farmers by Haryana security personnel

curity personnel fired teargas shells and used a water cannon to disperse a group of protesting farmers from heading towards Delhi at the Shambhu border point on Saturday.

A few farmers who were injured and taken to a nearby hospital in ambulances stationed at the protest site, officials said.

The action came after a 'jatha' (group) of 101 farmers, who resumed their foot march to Delhi shortly after 12 noon on Saturday from the Shambhu protest site on the Punjab-Haryana border, reached the barricades put up by the Haryana security personnel.

The farmers are pressing the Centre for various demands, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price for

Earlier, Ambala Deputy Commissioner Parth Gupta and Ambala Superintendent of Police S S Bhoria engaged in talks with some protesting farmers for over half an hour, trying to convince them to get permission from Delhi for going towards the national capital.

However, the farmers were adamant on going to Delhi and urged the security personnel to proceed. Soon after walking for a few metres, the group was stopped at the barricading by Haryana security personnel, including paramilitary forces

"We want to go ahead in a peaceful manner. Our voices should not be crushed like this. More than half of the country's population are connected with agriculture, their voice cannot be su-

BHOPAL, Dec 14: A purported

suicide note recovered after the

deaths of a businessman and his

wife who hanged themselves in

Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district

has led to a slugfest between the

In the purported suicide note that

surfaced on social media, business-

man Manoj Parmar urged Rahul

Gandhi and other Congress leaders

not to leave his children alone and

accused the Enforcement Direc-

torate (ED) and BJP leaders of ha-

Parmar and his wife were party

supporters, and the ED harassed

them over their political leanings.

The couple's children had gifted

their piggybank to Gandhi during

Sub-divisional officer of police

(SDOP) Akash Amalkar said the

suicide note received by the police

He said the family members of

the deceased couple were still in

mourning, so the police have not recorded their statements.

cannot reveal more about the sui-

cide note as the investigation is un-

Talking to PTI, Amalkar said he

Parmar and his wife Neha were

found hanging in their home in

Ashta town of Sehore district on

the President of India, Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi and the Leader

of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul

In a note, which appears to be

Asked about the mention of

typed and printed, Parmar has

urged Gandhi to take care of his

Gandhi and Congress leaders in the

suicide note, the party's state presi-

dent, Jitu Patwari, told PTI, "Con-

The suicide note is addressed to

Friday morning.

Gandhi and others.

was in the form of an application.

his "Bharat Jodo (Nyaya) Yatra".

The Congress has claimed that

Congress and the ruling BJP.

MP businessman-wife death: Suicide note

mentions harassment by ED, BJP leaders



to move back, Bhoria referred to the

apex court, saying a high-powered com-

mittee constituted by it would talk to the

protesting farmers and make recom-

do peaceful agitation. They should

adopt the Gandhian way of protests be-

cause their grievances are being looked

into," a bench of Justices Surya Kant

and Punjab government representatives

to immediately meet Jagjit Singh Dalle-

wal, who is observing a fast unto death.

Gupta told the protesters that the matter

was sub-judice and the next date of

hearing has been fixed for December

This is the third attempt by the

Ambala Deputy Commissioner Parth

The bench had directed the Centre

and Ujjal Bhuyan had said on Friday.

"Farmers should not get violent and

mendations to the court.

pressed," a farmer leader argued with the Haryana officials on the other side

of the barricades "We are marching on foot in a peaceful manner, therefore, we should be allowed to proceed. We want government should listen to the problems of farmers and labourers. We want to go to Delhi in a peaceful manner," the leader said.

Ambala's Superintendent of Police S S Bhoria told the farmers that they should take permission from the authorities concerned if they intend to protest

"We will ourselves help you reach there," he said.

The spot where you are standing in protest, according to the Supreme Court order of July 24, directions were issued to maintain status quo at Shambhu border so that no untoward incident occurs, Bhoria told them.

Appealing to the protesting farmers

why I visited there yesterday.'

harass leaders so that they join the

Several leaders joined the BJP

after being harassed by the ED and

other investigative agencies, he

In a post on X on Saturday, for-

mer Madhya Pradesh chief minister

Kamal Nath claimed that Parmar

committed suicide with his wife be-

cause he was harassed by the BJP

that during our leader Rahul

Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, his

children had supported the yatra by

gifting him a piggy bank," he wrote

and shared a news report about this

Nath said the deceased's suicide

He said the whole case was more

about wiping out an entire family

than harassing a businessman to the

point of suicide for political rea-

Minister Mohan Yadav to get the

case investigated as per law and en-

sure strict action against the cul-

Madhya Pradesh BJP's media in-

charge Ashish Agrawal had on Fri-

day condemned the Congress's

Nath, in his post, urged Chief

note mentions harassment by the

ED and pressure to join the BJP.

case and suicide note.

"The deceased's only crime was

government and ED officials.

but were not allowed to proceed by security personnel in Haryana.

tempts on December 6 and December 8

The farmers under the banner of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) have been pressing for various demands, including a legal guarantee of MSP. They have also been pressing the Centre to initiate talks with them to address their issues.

The Ambala district administration has already clamped a prohibitory order under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) that bans unlawful assembly of five or more people in the district.

Earlier in the day, the Haryana government suspended mobile internet and bulk SMS services in 12 villages in Ambala till December 17.

The order to suspend mobile internet in Dangdehri, Lehgarh, Manakpur, Dadiyana, Bari Ghel, Choti Ghel, Lharsa, Kalu Majra, Devi Nagar (Hira Nagar, Naresh Vihar), Saddopur, Sultanpur and Kakru villages in Ambala was issued to prevent any disturbance of peace and public order.

Meanwhile, farmer leader Dallewal's fast unto death at the Khanauri border point entered the 19th day on Saturday. Doctors have already recommended his hospitalisation, saying because of the prolonged fast, he has turned weak.

However, the protesting farmers have formed a security ring around Dallewal so that the state authorities could not remove him from the protest site. (PTI)

# Bihar PSC exam paper leaks 'state-sponsored', alleges Tejashwi



PATNA, Dec 14: RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav has charged Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with "maintaining silence" over alleged irregularities in a PSC examination, claiming that recent question paper "leaks" in such competitive tests were "state-sponsored".

In a video statement late on Friday, the leader of the opposition in the assembly also accused Kumar of "failing" to communicate with job aspirants who staged protests over the alleged paper leak in the 70th Integrated Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) 2024, conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission.

Kumar's "reluctance to communicate with students who were baton-charged by the police and slapped by an official of the Patna district" showed that the JD(U) supremo is a "tired man and unable to govern Bihar", Tejashwi claimed.

This government has failed in conducting any examination in the state without paper leaks ...whether it is for class 10th, 12th. police constable recruitment exams or BPSC tests, questions papers are leaked before the examinations start. This government is least bothered about the welfare of students and youths," the RJD leader alleged.

"I must say that these question paper leaks are state-sponsored. Why did the CM and two deputy CMs maintain silence over the issue? Those (aspirants) who protested against irregularities in the exam were batoncharged, slapped by an official of Patna and also sent to jail. It seems that bureaucrats are running the government in the state. This is not the government of the people," Yadav claimed. The youths of Bihar will "show a mirror to NDA leaders" in the 2025 assembly polls, he said.

"If we come to power after the 2025 assembly polls in the state, we will take care of students and youths. We will make arrangements for their (job aspirants) travel and stay during competitive exams. People are fed up with the NDA government in the state," the RJD leader alleged.

Rumours of a leak of question paper of the Bihar Public Service Commission preliminary examination erupted at an examination centre on Friday, prompting the commission to warn of police action against those involved in the "conspiracy".

Around 300-400 aspirants boycotted BPSC's 70th Integrated Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) 2024 held at the Bapu examination centre at Kumhrar in

Patna, alleging that the question paper was leaked on social media even before the examination started.

Chaos had prevailed at the centre where an additional examination superintendent, identified as Ram Iqbal Singh, died of cardiac arrest and a female candidate fell unconscious on Friday.

Patna District Magistrate Chandrashekhar Singh reached the examination centre upon hearing about the commotion.

A large crowd gathered outside the centre and news channels ran video footage of the DM slapping one of the unruly bystanders and ordering police personnel to round up all those who were indulging in mischief.

The DM clarified, "It was never my intention to slap or hurt any aspirant There was a slight delay in the distribution of question booklets in one or two examination halls at the centre."

"An aspirant was slapped by an official in Patna on Friday when the former was protesting against the alleged delay in the distribution of the BPSC exam question paper. It was highly condemnable," Yadav claimed.

He also asked, Why question papers were distributed almost an hour after the scheduled time? This is sheer injustice with the students.

As far as the PSC preliminary examination, held on Friday, is concerned, BPSC chairman Parmar Ravi Manubhai claimed that the test was held in a free and fair manner in more than 900 centres, where close to five lakh candidates appeared.

"However, in one centre in Patna, some of the candidates snatched question papers from the invigilators and stormed out of the examination hall screaming that the paper had been leaked.

"Snatching question papers from invigilators and showing those to outsiders is tantamount to looting public property. Police action will be initiated against those who seem to have acted as a part of a conspiracy... we are examining CCTV footage to identify them," he added.

The RJD leader accused the CM of spending ₹ 104 crore for his publicity on social media in the name of the Mahila-Samvad' yatra which is scheduled to start on Sunday.

He also alleged, "₹ 114 crore will be spent on snacks and other things during the CM's yatra from the government treasury this is organised just to improve the image of the state government and the CM." (PTI)

### protesting farmers to march towards the national capital from the Shambhu bor-Priyanka slams govt for not providing relief package to Wayanad, says it's playing politics

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Congress MP will take care of them. Which is Privanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday accused the Centre of denying assistance to landslides-Patwari alleged that the Parmar affected people of Wayanad due to politics and couple's death was not a case of asserted that there should be no discrimination suicide but a state-sponsored murin times of natural disasters. der, as the ED was being used to

Her remarks came after MPs from Kerala, including Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi, staged a protest in Parliament premises Saturday, demanding a relief package from the Centre for landslides-hit Wayanad.

Staging their demonstration in front of the steps of the Makar Dwar, the MPs raised slogans calling for "justice for Wayanad". They also held a banner with "Justice for Wayanad, provide relief package for Wayanad" written

Speaking with reporters, Priyanka Gandhi said, "We are very disturbed by the fact that the government is refusing to give a special package to Wayanad. We have gone to the home minister, we have written to the prime minister and to everyone possible, to declare that this as a calamity of a severe nature and

to give a special package." Similar large-scale destruction took place in Himachal Pradesh where the Congress is in power and there also they have been demandvides assistance, she said

"In Wayanad, the whole country has seen the devastation, the pain and suffering of the people and yet just because of politics, the central government, in both cases, is refusing to give what is due to the victims," she said.

They are citizens of India. There should be no discrimination in times of natural disasters. in times of pain, in times of suffering of any kind. That is the time when the central government, the PM should be the custodians of every Indian citizen's life and every Indian citizen's livelihood," the Congress general secretary said, flanked by the protesting Kerala

"That is the time they are supposed to set politics aside and give the assistance required. We are actually deeply disappointed because we expected that highlighting this issue, going to them explaining the kind of pain and suffering (that has taken place)... the PM himself has seen. "We thought out of humanity and compassion what is due to the victims of Wayanad would be given to them," Priyanka

She said the MPs are still hoping the government will have compassion and humanity and do what needs to be done because this is

### ing for the longest time that the Centre proa matter that is above politics. (PTI) After poll fight, patch up talks: NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar's mother bats for Sharad-Ajit unity

gress Party (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar's mother Sunanda has emphasised the need for party factions led by veteran politician Sharad Pawar and Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar to come together as voices for unity emerged from both rival camps.

allegations about the suicide. Sunanda Pawar on Friday said "Doing politics over death is the old vulture-like character of Conshe is just echoing the sentiments of the people of Maharashtra and party gressmen! The suicide of anyone is workers when she speaks about the sad, but Congressmen misuse it need for rival factions to unite, only to further their personal interweeks after the ruling NCP led by ests. Before making baseless allegations, both Singh and Patwari Ajit Pawar and opposition NCP and Congressmen should know the (Sharadchandra Pawar) bitterly fought against each other in assemcase history," Agrawal said in a bly polls. A united family is a

erations of the Pawar household have staved together through thick and thin all these years.

The NCP split in July last year after Ajit Pawar joined the Eknath Shinde government. The Election Commission of India later gave him the party name and 'clock' symbol, while Sharad Pawar's faction was christened NCP (Sharadchandra

The two factions have since been bitter rivals, the acrimony marked by stinging statements against each other and peaking with duels in Lok Sabha and assembly polls for Baramati, the family's turf for over half

Speaking to reporters, Sunanda Pawar said deputy CM Ajit, his son Parth and her son Rohit had all come together to wish the former Union agriculture minister when he turned 84 on Thursday. The celebrations were held at Sharad Pawar's 6 Janpath residence in New Delhi.

Asserting that she did not see anything political in this show of unity from the family, Sunanda Pawar said, "As far as sentiments of party workers are concerned, they are right in their belief that if the party stays united instead of remaining bifurcated, it will have its strength all over the state. I respect these feelings of party workers."

She was responding to media queries about the general feeling among party workers of the need for a united NCP.

"Party workers are important for the party, and the leadership should understand their sentiments," she asserted, though she added that she had nothing to do with politics and had been working in the social field all these years.

"Except for taking part in the poll campaign, I keep away from politics. So it is purely the decision of Ajit dada and Pawar saheh and their parties on what step needs to be taken (for unification). I am sure both will take the right decision,' she said when asked if the two lead-

"A united family is a strength, and the way people feel the family should once again come together, I too feel the same," Sunanda Pawar added. (PTI)

### ENGINEERING, PROCUREMENT, CONSTRUCTION & COMMISSION ING AND ELECTRIFICATION WORKS Tender Notice No.: Dy.CEE/CON/RE

ON/06/2024; Dated: 05-12-2024. I ender are invited by the undersigned for ne following work; Tender No.: EL-C-RE MLG-06-24-25; Name of work Appointment of Authority Engineer fo roviding project management services fo Engineering, Procurement, Construction and Commissioning of 25 kV, 50 Hz, Single Phase, AC Electrification work including FOCS and ROCS in Dhansiri-Pherim New Line Section in connection with New ine Project of Dimapur-Kohima Project o N. F. Railway including works of supply erection, modification, testing and commissioning of TSS, SCADA for th section and electrical general work of CLS (44 RKM/57 TKM). Tender Value ₹3,28,500/-; Date & time of submissi tender at 15:00 hrs. and opening at 15:30 hrs. on 03-01-2025. For complete nformation with the tender document o bove e-tender will be available websit ww.ireps.gov.in

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#### **ENGINEERING WORKS** IN PANDU

ender Notice No.: 37 of 2024; dtd 11-12-2024. E-Tender are invited by the ndersigned for the following work; Tende No.: DENGHY-29-2024; Name of work At Pandu: Dy. CMM/Pandu's office comple (a) Construction and repair to road ar frainage system. (b) Replacement of wo out/leaky roofings (CGI/AC Sheets) of of industrial flooring, false ceiling raking system etc. (c) Construction of scrap bir evelopment of scrap yards including other ncillary development work (Re-tende ender Value : ₹ 6,88,29,131.70/-; Earne Money ₹4,94,200/-: Tender No.: DENGH 30-2024; Name of work : At Pandu East ugmentation water filtration and suppl facility (Re-Tender). Tender Value ₹2,30,06,919.97/-; Earnest Money ₹2.65.000/-: Date & time of closing of abo nders at 13:00 hrs. on 03-01-2025. Fo details please visit in websit

Divisional Engineer/GHY, Maliga MORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

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# gress is a party of the public. We Centre revises air pollution control plan for Delhi-NCR, tightens curbs

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR air quality has issued a revised plan to tackle winter pollution, asking states to implement stricter measures when the air quality deteriorates and making it mandatory for schools to shift to hybrid learning on days with severe air pollution.

Poor air quality, driven by unfavourable weather conditions, usually persists for long periods during winter, from November to January.

During this time, Delhi frequently enforces restrictions under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which categorises air quality into four stages: Stage I (Poor) with AQI between 201 and 300, Stage II (Very Poor) between 301 and 400, Stage III (Severe) between 401 and 450, and Stage IV (Severe Plus) for AQI above 450.

According to the revised plan, inter-state buses from NCR states, except those EVs and those running CNG or BS-VI diesel, will not be allowed to enter Delhi under Stage II. This provision ear-



lier came into effect under Stage

Resident welfare associations will also be required to provide electric heaters to staff involved in sanitation, gardening, and other services, in addition to security staff, to prevent open burning of biomass or solid waste during win-

Persons with disabilities are exempt from restrictions imposed on BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel

and Gautam Budh Nagar under Stage III. The Delhi government has been directed to ban diesel medium goods vehicles (MGVs) with BS-IV or older standards, except those carrying essential goods or services, within the city under Stage

Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad,

Similarly, non-essential diesel light commercial vehicles (LCVs)

of BS-IV or older standards, registered outside Delhi, will not be allowed to enter the city. Previously, such restrictions applied only to BS-III vehicles.

The panel has also mandated that schools and colleges in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, and Gautam Budh Nagar shift classes up to Class V to hybrid mode (both online and offline) under Stage III. Students and parents will have the option to choose online education wherever it is available.

Under Stage IV, which is invoked when the AQI crosses the 450 mark, schools in Delhi and NCR districts will be required to conduct classes for students from Class VI to IX and XI in the hybrid

The Delhi and NCR state governments have also been directed to stagger timings for public offices and municipal bodies under Stage III. The Centre may decide on similar staggered timings for central government offices in Delhi-NCR. (PTI)

# PDP resolves to 'reinvigorate struggle' for peace with dignity for J-K

SRINAGAR, Dec 14: The PDP on Saturday resolved to "reinvigorate its struggle" for peace with dignity for Jammu and Kashmir, using all democratic and constitutional methods for resolving the "Kashmir issue", including the restoration of the erstwhile state's special status.

The Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) passed a resolution in this connection during its general council meeting chaired by party supremo Mehbooba Mufti.

The party also reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to its foundational principles. "We resolve to reinvigorate our struggle for peace with dignity for the state of Jammu and Kashmir, using all democratic and constitutional methods to resolve the Kashmir issue, including the restoration of the special status that was enjoyed by our people until August 5, 2019, under the Constitution of India," the PDP said in the resolution.

The party also expressed "deep concern over the increasing climate of hatred against Muslims in India" and implored Prime Minister Narendra Modi to leverage his influence to curb violence, dispel false narratives and halt the "targeting of Muslims through what we perceive as judicial overreach".

"We reaffirm our belief in India as a nation that celebrates diversity, mutual respect, and the protection of individual rights and beliefs," the PDP said in the resolution.

The general council also called

for the release of political prisoners. "The meeting demands an immediate process to review the status of political prisoners held in various jails across India. We call for the release of all individuals detained on weak or non-existent charges and advocate for transferring prisoners to Jammu and Kashmir," the PDP said. On the party's performance in the recent assembly elections, the general council acknowledged that while it did not meet expectations, "we are confident that the elected representatives can effectively articulate the concerns, aspirations and opinions of the people".

"PDP urges the Union government and the broader Indian populace about the issues of disempowerment, deprivation and humiliation resulting from the unconstitutional revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's constitutional rights, Article 370," it said. (PTI)

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The VGF scheme, as a financial support mechanism, was introduced in India to encourage PPPs

# Kerala CM writes to PM Modi requesting withdrawal of Centre's decision on Vizhinjam port VGF

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Dec 14: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to reconsider the Centre's decision for the repayment of Viability Gap Fund (VGF) for the Vizhinjam Seaport project by the state in instalments.

He also said the fund be given without any insistence on repayment by the state.

In his open letter, the CM alleged that the Vizhinjam International Seaport project would be the only case in the country where the Government of India has demanded repayment of the VGF assistance provided.

The Vizhinjam Seaport project is structured to avail VGF under the Scheme for Financial Support to Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in infrastructure by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Union Ministry of Finance. The Ministry has approved an amount of ₹ 817.80 crore as VGF for the project.

However, for availing the VGF, the Union Ministry of Finance imposed the condition that the VGF assistance disbursed by the Government of India should be repaid by the Kerala government in Net Present Value (NPV) terms by way of premium (revenue) sharing.

"Needless to say, if the payback is insisted by the union governwould not be a capital grant but would be a loan. This clearly is contrary to the very intent of the scheme," the letter said.

"Though the state government has repeatedly requested the Union Ministry of Finance at various levels to revoke the above condition and release the VGF recommended to the state unconditionally, the request of the state has not been considered favourably," the letter added. As the ₹ 817.80 crore provided by central government is to be repaid on Net Present Value (NPV) basis, this would result in the repayment of ₹ 10,000 to 12.000 crore from the state exchequer in actual terms, computed on projected interest rates and revenue realisation from the port for repayment, CM stated.

The VGF scheme, as a financial support mechanism, was introduced in India to encourage Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in infrastructure projects that are economically justified but not financially viable without additional financial support.

According to the CM, the three primary objectives of VGF are firstly, to encourage private sector participation in infrastructure projects, secondly to promote infrastructure development, and thirdly to reduce the burden on govern-



As per the guidelines of the VGF scheme, the VGF is invariably provided as a grant and not a loan. Nowhere in the guidelines issued by the DEA, repayment of the grant provided to the concession-

aire is envisaged, CM pointed out. To facilitate the commercial viability of the Vizhinjam International Seaport project, apart from the VGF amount of ₹817.80 crore agreed to be provided by the union government, an equal amount is also provided by the state government as VGF to the concessionaire. Apart from the above, the Kerala government is also investing ₹ 4,777.80 crore in the project. The efforts taken by the state govamounts in a project of national importance, despite its limited financial resources, should be given due consideration, CM urged.

The rationale of premium sharing by the concessionaire (from the 15th year of port operations) mentioned in the concession agreement is not to recover the ₹817.20 crore provided by the state government as VGF, but instead to ensure some inflows to the state government, considering its huge investment of ₹ 4,777.80 crore and that revenues arising from the first 15 years of port operation are foregone by the state, CM said. Considering the major investment made by the state (₹ 5,554 crore) and the reernment in investing substantial turns accruing (including savings

on foreign exchange) to the nation as a whole, it is only just and fair that the decision requiring repayment of ₹ 817.80 crore provided by union government as VGF in NPV terms is withdrawn at the earliest, he urged. Citing the example of the Tuticorin Port, the CM pointed out that for the Outer Harbour project of VOC Tuticorin Port, which is structured similarly to the Vizhinjam International Seaport project, the DEA granted inprinciple approval for VGF in November 2023.

However, unlike the Vizhinjam project, no condition for repayment of the VGF was imposed on the Tuticorin project, despite the presence of a revenue-sharing provision with the concessionaire.

The Vizhinjam International Seaport project also deserves similar treatment, considering its substantial contributions to the national economy, including significant additional revenue for the union government, CM said.

Earlier, responding on the matter, the Chief Minister had accused the Centre of continuing with its vindictive stance towards the state.

Even when VGF was allocated for the Kochi Metro, there was no stipulation for repayment and the new criteria set exclusively for Kerala contradict the standard guidelines of the VGF, he had al-

### RG Kar case get bail

# Junior docs, pol parties bring out protest rallies in Kolkata



KOLKATA, Dec 14: A day after two key suspects in the rape and murder of a doctor at the RG Kar hospital got bail, the Left parties and the Congress on Saturday took out protest rallies at various locations in Kolkata, alleging that the CBI has "failed" to deliver justice in the case.

They also alleged that the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal and the BJP-led Centre have a "tacit understanding".

The Congress took out a procession from Rabindra Sadan area to the CBI office at Nizam Palace in southern Kolkata and criticised the central probe agency for its alleged inability to frame charges against the two accused in the case.

During the procession, Congress activists were seen holding the party flags aloft and chanting slogans like 'We demand justice' and Bichar chai Tilottoma (Tilottoma wants justice)'.

The police stopped the Congress activists from entering the Nizam Palace, which led to a scuffle between the protesters and the police personnel. Hundreds of people took part in a rally, organised by the West Bengal Junior Doctors Front (WBJDF), from Karunamayee to another CBI office at CGO Complex in Salt Lake area, covering a distance of one kilometre. Junior doctors' forum organised the march to protest the "delay in framing charges by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)" against all the "conspirators" in the rape and murder of the woman doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9. The parents of the deceased medic also participated in the rally. "We will fight for justice and it is our right," said the mother of the deceased doctor.

The protestors were holding placards which read "If the system has failed, we will make it function to deliver justice". (PTI)

# ED alleges in SC that TN minister Senthil Balaji delaying trial in cash-for-job scam case

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has told the Supreme Court that Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji has deliberately attempted to delay trial court proceedings in the money laundering case related to the cash-for-job scam, in which the top court had granted him bail.

In an affidavit filed on a petition by one of the victims, the ED sought cancellation of bail of Balaji, who was sworn in as a minister by Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi again on September 29 and was assigned the same key portfolios -electricity, non-conventional energy development, prohibition and excise -- he held previously in the MK Stalin-led cabinet.

On Friday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told a bench headed by Justice Oka that the agency needs to file an affidavit in the matter as Balaji has been sabotag-

The bench also comprising Justice Pankaj Mithal allowed the ED to file the affidavit and listed the matter for further hearing on December 18. The top court had granted bail to DMK strongman Balaji on September 26, in the money laundering case after over 15 months, noting there was no possibility of the completion of trial in the near future.

The ED said since release of Balaji from jail, the ongoing examination of prosecution witnesses in the case has been derailed on account of the accused (Balaji) moving applications seeking copies of digital records and seeking change of counsel in the midst of trial.

"That the aforementioned facts unequivocally demonstrate V Senthil Balaji's blatant disregard for the judicial process and his deliberate attempts to delay the trial. Despite this court's directive to expedite the trial, V Senthil Balaji has drawn out the cross examination of PW- 4 (prosecution witness) on one pretext or another for nearly two months," it said.

The anti-money laundering agency said this blatant disregard for the Supreme Court's instructions is a clear attempt to procrastinate and delay the trial proceedings

"In the light of the foregoing, it is amply clear that V Senthil Balaji has violated the direction given by this court by seeking adjournments nonexistent or frivolous grounds or creating hurdles in the early disposal of the cases mentioned above," it said. The investigating agency said some of the key witnesses cited in the prosecution complaint (ED's equivalent of charge sheet) filed by ED are individuals who previously worked under Balaji's supervision during his tenure as transport minister.

"This proximity between V Senthil Balaji and the employees of the transport corporation raises serious concerns about potential influence and impartiality in fair and effective trial now that V Senthil Balaji has reassumed office as a minister," it said. On December 2, the top court had expressed concern over reinstatement of Balaji as cabinet minister in Tamil Nadu just days after it granted bail in the case and agreed to examine a plea raising apprehensions on independence of witnesses in the case. On October 25, the top court in another matter related to Balaji was informed that a petition seeking review of an order of bail to the DMK leader in the case had been

# Degeneration of institutions, individuals assured if no scrutiny, says VP Jagdeep Dhankhar

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Institutions and individuals will degenerate if there is no scrutiny, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Saturday underscoring the importance of expression and dialogue for a democracy to thrive.

.. audit, self-audit is very important. The surest way to bring about degeneration of an individual or an institution, (is to) keep it or the gentleman or gentle lady from scrutiny. You are beyond scrutiny, your degeneration is assured. And therefore, selfaudit, an audit beyond self, is essential," he said. Dhankhar, who faces a no-trust notice from the opposition parties for allegedly being partisan in his role as chairman of Parliament's upper house Rajya Sabha, was speaking at the 50th Foundation Day programme of Indian Post & Telecommunication Accounts and Finance Service (IP&TAFS) here. Communications minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia was also present at the event. As many as 60 MPs from Congress and other opposition parties earlier this week

Dhankhar on Saturday said challenges to institutions often stem from the erosion of meaningful dialogue and authentic expression. "Both outpouring of expression and meaningful dialogue are priceless jewels of democracy. Expression and

submitted the notice, the first such move in the country's his-

portance of core values in any democracy, he said, "Democracy thrives not just on systems, but on core values... It has to be centred on the delicate balance of expression and dialogue. These twin forces, expression and dialogue, shape democratic vitality." Their progress, he said, is measured not by individual positions, but by the broader societal bene-

> "India's democratic journey exemplifies how diversity and vast demographic potential can fuel national progress. As we chart our path forward, we must recognize that democratic health and economic productivity are inseparable partners in national development," he said. The Vice President said ego serves no one and damages most of the person who possesses it. "The ego in us is irrepressible, we have to work very hard to control our ego. Ego serves no one, but damages most the person who possesses it". Furthermore, he said the country is on the cusp

of another industrial revolution and urged the upcoming civil servants to be tech-savvy and facilitators of change. Dhankar said the nation's services need to be more dynamic as they have to adapt to rapid technological and societal challenges while maintaining foundational integrity. "We are at the cusp of no less than another industrial revolution. Digital technologies have invaded us. "Modern civil servants communication complement each other. Harmony between must be tech savvy, facilitators of change, transcending trathe two is the key to success," he said. Underlining the im-

### CBI summons senior IAS officer, grills his drivers in connection with bribery case

BHUBANESWAR, Dec 14: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) summoned senior Odisha cadre IAS officer Bishnupada Sethi and questioned his drivers as part of its investigation into an alleged bribery case, official sources said on Saturday. The two drivers of the IAS officer appeared before the CBI at its Bhubaneswar office here and recorded their statements. The drivers were present inside the CBI officer for about three hours from 10.30 am on Saturday.

"I was asked about activities of sir (Sethi), whom he met and which places he visited on December 7. I told them whatever was known to me. Personally, I have no involvement in any of the matters being probed by the CBI," Nrushingha Satpathy, one of the drivers, told reporters after coming out of the CBI office here. Asked whether he has received any amount of money in his bank account, Satpathy replied in negative.

"I have not received any money from any firm or person," he claimed, adding that he worked as a driver in the ST&SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Department, of which Sethi is the principal secretary.

Sethi also has additional charge as principal secretary of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department. The drivers of the two departments driving Sethi's vehicle were summoned by the CBI, sources said.

In a letter to the IAS officer, CBI inspector Gurjinder Singh on December 10 said, "It is learnt that you are acquainted with some important and relevant facts and circumstances of the instant CBI case, which are required to be ascertained from you.' Sethi was summoned to join the investigation at CBI's Bhubaneswar office on December 11, sources said, adding that

### Six Delhi schools get bomb threat, third incident this week

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: At least six Delhi schools received a bomb threat on Saturday, officials said, marking the third instance of threat emails being sent to schools in the national capital this week. "We received a call about a bomb threat at Delhi Public School, RK Puram, at 6:09 am," a Delhi Fire Services official said.

The fire department, local police, dog squads and bomb detection teams reached the school and launched a search operation, the official said. Five more schools, including Ryan International School in Vasant Kunj and Gyan Bharati School in Saket, received the same email from the same sender, he further said. A police official said nothing suspicious was found after search and inspection in any of the schools. The mails were sent from the "childrenofallah@outlook.com" email id at 1:47 am. According to a source, the email read, "Allah sees your efforts to resist his punishment. But they are futile. For no mortal being can escape the

judgement of Allah. The Prophet Muhammad declares all who go against Allah enemies to the world. We see your attempt to stop us. It will not

# IIT climate assessment report flags flood, drought risk in 11 Bihar, Kerala, Odisha districts

**NEW DELHI, Dec 14:** At least 11 districts, including Patna, Alappuzha and Kendrapara, are at a "very high" risk for both floods and droughts, necessitating immediate intervention, according to a climate risk assessment report compiled by two IITs. The report was released by the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) Guwahati and Mandi, in collaboration with the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), Bengaluru.

According to the report titled "District-Level Climate Risk Assessment for India: Mapping Flood and Drought Risks Using IPCC Framework", 51 districts in India face "very high" flood risk, with 118 more categorised as "high" risk. Vulnerable regions include Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Odisha, and Jammu and Kashmir. The report has flagged that 91 districts were identified with "very high" drought risk and 188 districts faced "high" drought risk, primarily

in Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha and Maharashtra. Alarmingly, 11 districts, including Patna (Bihar), Alappuzha (Kerala) and Kendrapara (Odisha), are at a "very high" risk for both floods and droughts, necessitating immediate interventions, the report said. "India's agrarian society is deeply dependent on the monsoon, making the challenges posed by climate change, such as droughts and excessive rainfall, increasingly critical. This report, a collaboration between DST, SDC, provides a comprehensive risk assessment for over 600 districts, offering invaluable insights for effective mitigation strategies," said Devendra Jalihal, the IIT-Guwahati director. The study integrated climatic hazards, exposure and vulnerability to offer a comprehensive view of district-level risks to aid in disaster risk reduction and highlight the direct impact on people and livelihoods, paving

the way for data-driven adaptation planning. (PTI)

# Future fraught with challenges due to disruptive technologies: Nepal Army Chief

**DEHRADUN, Dec 14:** The future environment for military leaders will be full of challenges due to the emergence of disruptive new technologies, said Nepal Army Chief General Ashok Raj Sigdel as he reviewed the IMA's passing-out parade for the autumn course on Saturday. He called upon the gentlemen cadets passing out of the Indian Military Academy (IMA) to be ready for such challenges and said they can embark on

their exciting new journey with confidence, as they have received the best training available in the field.

'The job ahead is not easy. You will face a future environment that is invariably multi-domain, multitheatre, and multi-sectoral. The challenges will be multi-pronged due to the emergence of disruptive technologies, but you can go forth with confidence because you have

received the best training," General Sigdel said, addressing the cadets. A total of 491 cadets passed out of the IMA on Saturday, including 456 from India and 35 from friendly countries. "Valour will carry you through difficult times, and wisdom will help you

carve out the best path forward," General Sigdel said. As the cadets step into their new roles as military leaders, their endurance will be tested, as they will be required to perform their duties in extreme climatic conditions -- ranging from the highest altitudes to the lowest depths, from the coldest glaciers to the hottest deserts, and from the loneliest jungles to the densest urban centers, he added.

However, their skills and the values of valour and wisdom instilled in them at the IMA will stand them in good stead, General Sigdel said. He praised the cadets for their immaculate turnout and flawless drill, saying it reflected their high level of training. General Sigdel further congratulated the cadets and

wished them the best on their exciting new journey. He said they should serve their respective nations with

> sionalism and integrity. Describing military service as the most honourable career, he said it demands a lifelong pursuit of growth and excellence. General Sigdel also expressed his

the highest degree of profes-

gratitude for being invited to the Passing Out Parade (POP) at the IMA, which has a global reputation for excellence as a military training

A colorful parade and drill were presented by the passing-out cadets at the IMA's drill square, set against the backdrop of the historic Chetwode Building. Towards the end of the ceremony, three helicopters flew over the drill square, showering it with rose petals. The coveted Sword of Honour was awarded by the reviewing officer to Academy Cadet Adjutant Jatin Kumar, and the gold medal was given to Academy Under Officer Pratham Singh. (PTI)

# ZSI scientists discover 5 new species of parasitic wasp

KOLKATA, Dec 14: Scientists of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered five different species of parasitic wasp, an official said. ZSI scientists have identified Ceraphron initium, a new species of parasitic wasp from Nagaland, the official said.

Four other 'parasitoid wasp' species were found in the Western Ghats by another team of ZSI, she said. A parasitic wasp is also known as parasitoid wasp. It is an insect which lays its eggs on or inside a harmful pest insect, where the larvae destroy the host.

Considered important for natural pest control these are beneficial in horticulture and helpful insects. ZSI Director Dhriti Banerjee on Saturday said the two discoveries underscore the vital role of these tiny creatures in maintaining ecological stability. A ZSI team led by Kaomud Tyagi, discovered a species - named Ceraphron initium - during a SERB (Science and Engineering Research Board)-funded field survey in Nagaland.

The Ceraphronidae are sometimes overlooked and labelled as a dark taxonomic group because of their small size (0.8 mm to 1.5



mm) and complex morphology.

In scientific terminology, 'Dark Taxon' is a collection of creatures that were hitherto undiscovered owing to their distinctive and exceedingly enigmatic characteristics. In contrast to more recognizable species, these living forms inhabit settings and exist under circumstances that have long-evaded scientific observation. Highly sophisticated technologies and cutting-edge research methodologies enabled their discovery.

The newly discovered species has various discernible traits, including exceptional wing patterns,

body structure, pigmentation and particularly peculiar male genitalia. These characteristics distinguish it from other documented species members of the Ceraphronidae family. Rigorous morphological analyses, conducted by researchers Amit Kumar Ghosh, Vikas Kumar and A Rameshkumar, confirmed the discovery of this previously unknown species, the ZSI said in the statement.

"We are delighted to make the announcement of our discovery of Ceraphron initium" stated Kaomud Tyagi, scientist at ZSI. In another significant discovery, four new

species were sighted in the Western Ghats by ZSI researchers. A team led by Dr Rajmohana K came across the four new species: Calotelea acuta, C chitraka, C foveata, and C fulva. These Hymenopteran wasps contribute to the ecosystem health by regulating populations of various insect species.

"The discovery serves as evidence of the abundant biodiversity in India and emphasizes the need for ongoing investigation and study in our natural habitats," Banerjee underscored. "This finding underscores the remarkable variety of insect species in India and the essential role that these species fulfil in our ecosystems," the ZSI Director said. "Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of continuous study and conservational endeavours to save our rich natural heritage," she added.

The teams have plans to focus on molecular and bioecological studies of these groups in the future. "There is an urgent need for extensive taxonomical studies on such lesser-known insect groups, as they can have important implications for sustainable agriculture," Banerjee pointed out. (PTI)



# RAJ KAPOOR @100: JUNIOR ARTIST REMEMBERS BRILLIANT AND 'HAPPY-GO-LUCKY' FILMMAKER

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: She worked with Prithviraj Kapoor in 1965 and was a regular on the sets of Raj Kapoor's films and last worked with Kareena Kapoor on her debut film "Refugee". Junior artist Asha Rani Singh says she has fond memories of her connection with filmdom's first family.

Walking down the memory lane, the 78-year-old said she still remembers the time spent on Raj Kapoor's sets, where junior artists were treated with respect and asked for feedback by the showman of Hindi cinema, who she described as a "happy-golucky guy". "Raj sahab was a great human being and valued and respected junior artists a lot. He would often show his songs to us and ask us to give feedback. He would say, 'You all are going to determine whether my films and songs will be successful or not'.

"Before the release of the film, he would show us the movie and ask, 'Tell me honestly what you all think of the song, don't give me a fake compliment. We would be like, 'Sir, what are you saying?' All his films and songs were great," Asha Rani told PTI in an interview.

The junior artist, who worked in the film industry for 55 years, having appeared in both black-and-white and colour films, said she had a "great equation" with Raj Kapoor, who would have turned 100 on Saturday.

"He was a great director; he would extract good work from everyone, be it acting or dance. I was deeply saddened when he passed away. I did wish he could live for some more years." She worked with Raj Kapoor on films like "Prem Rog", "Ram Teri Ganga Maili", "Bobby", "Satyam Shivam Sundaram". RK Studios used to be a great place to work for female artists as they were given separate make-up rooms and bathrooms, she recalled. "At RK Studios, there was a huge ladies room which had a makeup room with 15 to 20 mirrors, and a washroom as well. It was not that this room was meant for just artists (actors) but for all junior artists too. He would take care of all the women on the sets. "The respect that he would give his

actors, the same amount of respect he would give to junior artists as well," Asha Rani said. While they would bring their own food for indoor shoots, outdoor shoots used to be a different affair.

"He would treat all of us so well on outdoor shoots. After the shoot, he would tell us. 'Get ready, I'm going to show you all a movie'. He would feed us well. He was a very happy-go-lucky man." She described Raj Kapoor as a tough task master but one that was approachable in times of crisis.

"I remember we were shooting a song with him, 'Ek Din Bik Jayega Mati Ke Mol' (from 'Dharam Karam') and a few dancer girls were unable to do the steps, there were some retakes. "He came and said, 'You girls don't know how to dance, who sent you here, anyways I will show up how to do it.' He would always be open to teaching us and would never get angry or upset. For everything he would say, 'I'm here to help you, don't be afraid'. He never would say, 'You won't be able to do it'." Asha Rani said she worked

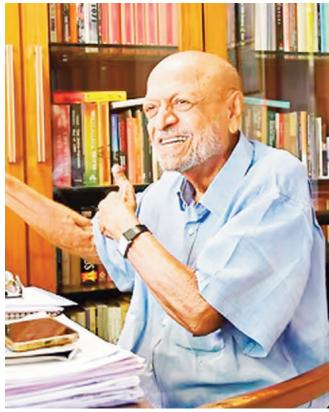
with Raj Kapoor's father Prithviraj Kapoor in a 1965 movie titled "Khakaan", which also starred Mumtaz and Dara Singh.

Of all the movies of Raj Kapoor that she worked on, she considers "Mera Naam Joker" to be her favourite film. "He presented the reality of life in the movie. We were disheartened when the film didn't work," said the junior artist, who was married to late stuntman Surjeet Singh and has four children.

Not just Raj Kapoor, she worked with many members of the Kapoor family including brothers Shammi and Shashi Kapoor, sons Randhir, Rishi and Rajiv Kapoor as well as daughter-in-laws Babita and Neetu Singh.

"I've played Kareena's dadi in her and Abhishek's first movie ('Refugee'). We were on an outdoor shoot for a month in Bhuj. They both never treated me like a junior artist. They would call me, 'Asha Aunty'. I remember Kareena would jokingly tell me, 'Asha ji you worked with all my family members' and I would be like, 'I shall work with your kids as well'." Shashi Kapoor, Asha Rani said, was "jovial and a very good human being'. She also remembers working with Shammi Kapoor in the song 'Husn Chala Kuchh Aisi Chaal' from his movie, "Bluff Mas-

# Filmmaker Shyam Benegal turns 90, says he is working on 2-3 projects



MUMBAI, Dec 14: Turning 90 is a significant milestone but for some like filmmaker Shyam Benegal, it is just another day marked by daily routines and ongoing work commitments.

Benegal heralded the Indian parallel cinema movement in the 1970s and 1980s with a body of work that is known for its realism and social commentary, breaking away from the conventions of mainstream Indian cinema.

The filmmaker, who made path breaking films such as "Ankur", "Nishant", "Manthan", "Bhumika", "Junoon", and "Mandi", turned 90 on Saturday

"We all grow old. I don't do anything great (on my birthday). It may be a special day but I don't celebrate it specifically. I cut a cake at the office with my

team," Benegal told PTI.
Despite the physical
challenges that come with
age, including frequent
hospital visits for dialysis
three times a week, Benegal is committed to his

passion for filmmaking.
"I'm working on two to
three projects; they are all
different from one another. It's difficult to say
which one I will make.
They are all for the big
screen," said the director,

whose most recent film was the 2023 biographical "Mujib: The Making of a Nation".

December 14 also marks the 100th birthday of Raj Kapoor, the legendary actor and filmmaker, regarded as the greatest showman of Indian cinema.

"He was a brilliant actor; he had a fine mind. I've seen his films, I liked 'Shree 420'," Benegal said about the cinema icon.

He revealed that he did held discussions for a possible collaboration with Raj Kapoor in the past. "There was clearly a (plan) but that was a long time ago," he added.

The Kapoor family celebrated Raj Kapoor's 100th birth anniversary with the RK Film Festival, which was kickstarted on Friday with the premiere of his movies like "Awara", "Shree 420", "Sangam", "Mera Naam Joker", and "Bobby".

spective will showcase ten films by Raj Kapoor, including "Aag," "Barsaat," "Awaara," "Shree 420," "Jagte Raho," "Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai," "Sangam," "Mera Naam Joker," Bobby, and "Ram Teri Ganga Maili", at select PVR INOX theatres in 40 cities. (PTI)

The three-day retro-

# Trisha Krishnan joins the cast of Suriya next movie

**NEW DELHI, Dec 14:** Actor Trisha Krishnan will feature alongside South star Suriya's next movie, the makers have announced.

The movie, which will be directed by RJ Balaji, marks her reunion with Suriya after nearly two decades. They last starred together in the 2005 film "Aaru". "Adding grace, charm, and power to #Suriya45 – welcome aboard, @trishakrishnan! A cinematic treat awaits," production banner Dream Warrior Pictures shared on Instagram on Friday evening.

day evening. Suriya and Trisha also worked on the 2002 film "Mounam Pesiyadhe" and were part of the ensemble cast of Mani Ratnam's 2004 film "Aayutha Ezhuthu".

The film will feature music composed by Sai Abhyankkar and cinematography by G K Vishnu. Krishnan most recently made a cameo appearance in Vijay's "The Greatest of All Time". Her upcoming movies include "Identity" with Tovino Thomas, "Vidaamuyarchi" with Ajith and Ratnam's "Thug Life", headlined by Kamal Haasan.' (PTI)



# Raj Kapoor@100: Riddhima, Ranbir remember the 'big man with blue eyes', their 'doting grandfather'

MUMBAI, Dec 14: To the film industry, he was the 'Showman of Hindi Cinema' but to actor Ranbir Kapoor and jewellery designer Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, Raj Kapoor was a loving grandfather, the big man with blue eyes who used to bribe his grandchildren with caramel toffees in

exchange for kisses on his cheek.

December 14, 2024, marks the birth centenary of Raj Kapoor, an actor, director, and producer whose 40-year career boasts of classics such as "Awara", "Barsaat", "Shree 420", "Mera Naam Joker", "Satyam Shivam Sundaram", and "Ram Teri Ganga Maji!"

Recalling memories of her grandfather, even though they are a bit blurry as he passed away when she was seven, Riddhima said Raj Kapoor was always this affectionate figure who would spoil his grandkids.

"We used to barge into his room and raid his fridge because it was filled with chocolates and other goodies for us. We knew exactly what was kept there and he wouldn't say anything to us. These are the few memories of him that I can never forget," Riddhima, daughter of Raj Kapoor's third child Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Kapoor, told PTI in an interview.

Her younger sibling Ranbir said his memories of his grandfather are of "this big man with blue eyes".

"When we would go to his house, he used to take us to his room where he would hide these caramel toffees in his fridge. He used to make all of us -- Kareena, Karisma, my sister Riddhima, and myself -- stand in a line and ask us to do a 'salaam', sing 'Awara Hoon' from his film 'Awara' and give him a kiss on his cheek.

"And, then we were bribed with caramel toffees. I got to know him more after I started understanding movies and what his contribution (to cinema) was," the actor said during a

session to celebrate Raj Kapoor's 100th birth anniversary at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) last month.

In fact, Raj Kapoor's blue eyes are what has stayed with his other two grandchildren as well.

Karisma Kapoor and Kareena Kapoor Khan, daughters of Raj Kapoor's eldest child Randhir Kapoor and Babita Kapoor, spoke about the distinct blue colour of their grandfather's eyes during an appearance on "The Great Indian Kapil Show".

"Karisma was always his favourite grandchild because her eye colour matched that of Dadaji: The blue eyes. And also she was the first grandchild. So he was very excited," Kareena said on the show.

"The interesting fact is after me, it was Taimur and then Raha, we all have the same eye colour as dadaji," Karisma recalled.

Riddhima said they realised later that Raj Kapoor was much more than their loving grandfather.

"We didn't even realise that our grandfather was a well-known, well-received man and that everybody loved him. We didn't know he was this magnanimous, a superstar and a great filmmaker. We were very young to realise all those things. We only knew him as our doting grandfather."

"leverage" being the first grandson of his generation in the Kapoor family.
"I got a lot of love and attention.
When my mom (Neetu Kapoor) used to fire me or shout at me, I used to call him (Raj Kapoor) up. Then, he used to call up my mom and fire her," he recalled.

Ranbir said he would often use his

Riddhima too remembers manipulating her parents through her grandfather. "Each time, my mother would correct me or my brother, we would call up our grandfather and say, 'Mummy has said this'. He would

then call up our mom and say, 'Please don't do this, don't correct them. Let them do what they want.' So, he used to spoil us, adore us, and pamper us."

Back in the day, Riddhima said she and Ranbir used to spend most of their weekends at the family's iconic bungalow Deonar Cottage in central Mumbai's upmarket suburb Chembur.

"He used to take us to one of his favourite places, Udipi restaurant in Matunga for dosas and idlis. He would also take us to a club in Vashi called Big Splash, a pool which had

water slides.

"He used to even cook for us and he was an amazing chef. Whenever he would travel abroad, he would bring me a tiara and for my brother, Ranbir, he would bring a suit... He was always so warm, kind, and loving," she added.

Ranbir has a vivid memory of Raj Kapoor's funeral when the entire Chembur Road was chock-a-block with people. The actor-filmmaker

died on June 2, 1988, of complications related to asthma at the age of 63. "He passed away when I was six. I didn't know what death was, but we were at Deonar Cottage. All the children were playing upstairs, we were looking down at the garden, and we could just see a sea of people.

"I've never seen so many people in my life. I really understood that day, 'Okay, this man has some standing, has some value. He's done something. That's why so many people have come to pay respects to him'," he

When it comes to their grandfather's films, they have a list of their favourites too.

"Shree 420" (1955) and "Jagte

"Shree 420" (1955) and "Jagte Raho" (1956) are two of Ranbir's choices.

"I love the story of a vagabond in 'Shree 420', somebody who has stars in his eyes, very hopeful, and how he makes it, how he deals with fame."

For Riddhima, it's "Sangam"

(1964), followed by "Awara" (1951) and "Shree 420" (1955).

"I also liked S'Mera Naam Joker', we would be like, 'Dada ji is a joker!'. It's that kind of a film that you can watch over and over again... Just RAJthe other day, I watched 'Mera Naam Joker' with Samara (her daughter) and told her that 'you have to see your great-grandfather'. It grandfather'. It brought back so many memories.' It is said that the

women in the

Kapoor family didn't work in movies before Karisma who ventured into acting in the 90s with "Prem Qaidi" in 1991. Karisma in an old interview said that her grandfather didn't oppose her acting ambitions but cautioned her about it not being a "bed of roses". "He always used to say, 'Lolo (Karisma's nickname) baby, I know you will become (an actor). But I just want to say that if you become an actor, be the best, otherwise don't".



# 1ST T20I: UNDER-FIRE HARMANPREET'S INDIA FACE GRITT

NAVI MUMBAI, Dec 14: afloat.

Her poor leadership under constant scanner, a beleaguered Indian captain Harmanpreet Kaur will need to quickly pick up pieces from the Australia series debacle as hosts take on West Indies in the opening game of the three-match WT20I series starting here on Sunday.

India have won each of their last eight T20Is against the West Indies in the shortest format since November 2019.

But to maintain this dominating run, India will have to dig deep from rapidly depleting reservoirs of both resources and confidence to keep the ship

It has not been a smooth ride for the Indian skipper whose questionable selection calls during the Australia ODI series left everyone wondering as to how long the national selectors will persist with her despite Smriti Mandhana well and truly ready to take over the mantle.

This is India's first T20 series after the inglorious T20 World Cup exit where the only consolation was a hard-earned win against Pakistan.

India after that won an ODI series against New Zealand at home and were blanked by

Australia during the subsequent 50 over series Down Under.

While Harmanpreet's own batting form has been better than many, it is her unimaginative leadership that is causing a lot of problems as the team is still playing archaic brand of cricket across both white ball

The profligate Shafali Verma has been ignored by the selectors once again even though her chances of doing well in T20Is in Indian conditions is way better where she can employ her cross batted game.

First-up, India will need a quick turnaround from their

forgettable ODI tour of Australia which ended in a 0-3 rout with the visitors being thoroughly outplayed in all depart-

Having lost the final ODI in Perth last Wednesday, Kaur and her side will not got enough time to rest and recover as they have made it to the DY Patil Stadium here for the series

The packed schedule three T20Is with a gap of one day each — will further test the fitness and morale of the team that is low on confidence and without their preferred players in Pooja Vastrakar, Shreyanka

Patil, Yastika Bhatia, Priya Punia and most importantly, Verma.

The biggest challenge for the Indian camp would be to deal with the absence of Verma country's second highest rungetter in the format in 2024 with 531 runs in 20 matches at 33.18 with a strike rate of 126.73.

Verma was excluded from the ODI tour of Australia on the basis of her performances in the 50-overs format, but being ignored for a format in which she has been the second best batter this year is incomprehen-

Verma's absence forced the team to push Richa Ghosh, a proven performer in lowerorder when quick runs are needed, to open the innings as her replacement Punia also suffered an injury.

Similarly, Indian selectors looked away from fast bowler Arundhati Reddy, who recorded the second-best fig-ures of 10-2-26-4 for any Indian in ODIs in Australia just three days ago.

Reddy also was India's jointhighest wicket-taker in the T20 World Cup a few months ago, in which the team failed to go past the first round.

Mandhana has been India's most successful batter with 570 runs in 20 matches at 38, but these have come at an ordinary strike take of 118.25.

Kaur, who hit two fifties in her last two T20I innings, will be crucial in the middle-order once again given Jemimah Rodrigues has had a forgettable year, with only 219 runs at 27.37 with a strike rate of 132.72 and a fifty to show in 15

Like India, West Indies too haven't made a major dent in big events but they have recorded wins in nine out of their 13 T20Is this year. (PTI)

# Australian openers start well, reach 28/0 on rain-curtailed day one

BRISBANE, Dec 14: Local hero Usman Khawaja and young Nathan McSweeney displayed sound defensive technique against Jasprit Bumrah but persistent rain played havoc with the opening day of the third Test, allowing only 13.2 overs of play in which Australia scored 28 for no loss against India, here Saturday.

The gloomy weather didn't allow any action after the raincurtailed first session. The weather in Brisbane indicates a start-stop game throughout the next four days.

Khawaja (19 batting, 47 balls) and McSweeney (4 batting, 33 balls) traded aggression with caution but the senior left-hander still got a couple of boundaries when Mohammed Siraj pitched it short.

While India skipper Rohit Sharma would be happy that Australia didn't score way too many runs, his bowlers did not force the opposition openers to play more deliveries. A lot of deliveries were left from length.

Just when it seemed that Indian attack was getting into its groove, heavens opened up, putting brakes on the bowling momen-

Bumrah (0/8 in 6 overs) bowled his least potent opening spell of the series so far.

Despite overcast conditions and enough bounce on offer, he pitched it up but there was very



didn't bowl too many wicket-taking deliveries in that six-over first spell while Siraj (0/13 in 4 overs) was guilty of occasionally pitch-

In case of Bumrah, he rightly

little hint of swing on offer due to high humidity and only on few occasions he was able to square up Khawaja while coming round

The lines that they bowled, drifted towards the leg-side more often than not.

With not many probing questions asked, the first 25 minutes before the steady drizzle stopped proceedings saw Australia reach

While McSweeney defended the angles well. (PTI)

dourly, Khawaja did pull Siraj for a boundary before the break and added one more after play resumed.

Before the first break, even Bumrah pitched more deliveries back of length, allowing the batters to leave them easily, trusting the bounce of the surface.

Siraj was removed after a three-over initial spell. It was Akash Deep (0/2 in 3.2 overs), who looked good first up, keeping the ball on the off-stump channel with his stock delivery that would dart in to put batters in uncomfortable positions.

During the hour's play, the highlight was how Khawaja dealt with Bumrah's first spell.

He defended well by dropping his bottom hand and trying to play as late as possible.

The balls that went past Khawaja's outside edge weren't about being getting beaten but rather, he kept the bat close to his body, allowing the ball to deviate past the willow. He only played deliveries that were bowled into his body.

He knew that if they can manage Bumrah's first spell which is generally between six to eight overs, they can dominate other bowlers.

The second rain break came just when Akash an, Siraj had started pitching the ball further up, using

# **SMAT Final: In-form** Mumbai wary of Madhya Pradesh's all-round solidity

periphery, it looks like a cakewalk for in-form Mumbai but they will be quietly worried over Madhya Pradesh's ability to be the disruptor when they meet in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy final here on Sun-

Mumbai's tag of favourites is printed largely on the back of their awesome batting unit, capable of setting or chasing tall targets with consummate ease.

In a line-up that has skipper Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, Shivam Dube and Prithvi Shaw, a reborn Ajinkya Rahane is leading their charge with the bat.

Rahane is the top run-getter in this edition of the SMAT with 432 runs from eight matches at a strike-rate of 170 with five fifties.

Shreyas, at No.3, has ensured that the frenetic start that Rahane has often given is not wasted with brisk knocks of his own. The right-hander has so far

amassed 329 runs from eight matches while striking at 189. Their efforts have masked the rather underwhelming outings of Prithvi Shaw and Suryakumar Yadav. While their batting is in a far more secured space, Mumbai's inconsistent frontline bowlers will have to be on the money against Madhya Pradesh.

Even while restricting Baroda to medium pace. (PTI)

**BENGALURU, Dec 14:** On the a below-par 158 for seven in the semifinal, Mohit Avasthi, Shardul Thakur and Dube were profligate. Spinners Tanush Kotian,

Suryansh Shedge and Atharva Ankolekar kept the opposition on a tight leash. That Madhya Pradesh under captain Rajat Patidar can exploit that weakness will be a point of

worry for Mumbai, looking to add a second title after 2022. Patidar too was confident about his team's chances. "I think it's important to know our strengths. We are not thinking that we are playing against a form team like Mum-

bai. "We are treating it as any other cricket match, and whoever will play their best will win," said Patidar after beating Delhi in the semifinal here Friday. Patidar himself is the third high-

est run-getter in this tournament with 347 runs with four fifties, while maintaining a strike-rate of 183. He will have to play the lead role for MP to land their maiden SMAT title, as their best effort remains a final appearance in the 2010-11 season.

The ₹ 23.75 crore worth allrounder Venkatesh Iyer too has given MP stability in the lower middle-order (210 runs, SR: 162) with handy knocks and taking six crucial wickets with his utility

# Salary cap becomes barrier for PSL teams in signing high profile unsold players in IPL auction

istan Cricket Board (PCB) and the franchise owners in the Pakistan Super League are facing a catch-22 situation over signing on some of the high profile overseas players who went unsold in the Indian Premier League auction recently.

PSL 10, to be held between April 8 to May 19, is clashing with the IPL this time and teams are keen to sign players such as

who did not find takers in IPL commitments as the window

A team source told PTI while the six franchise owners were keen to rope in some of the high profile players available after the IPL auction, the salary ceiling of USD 200,000 for players in the PSL players draft had made the situation difficult.

Big names like David Warner. Kane Williamson, Steve Smith, Jonny Bairstow. Adil Rashid etc

from April to May is reserved for

"But the problem is that the players draft scheduled on January 11 time is running out to find a formula to sign on high profile players and also ensure a sense of disparity doesn't develop among players in the PSL," said a source. He explained that the PCB and franchise owners were aware that it was unlikely most of

USD 200,000.

The PSL's new CEO, Salman Naseer has even suggested that the franchise owners directly talk to the players' agents so that the PCB is not involved in negotia-

The source said some of the franchise owners were reluctant to pay players anything above the salary cap for the PSL and also fear that even if a franchise signs the high profile players unsold in on a high profile player directly

the IPL would sign for under at a higher salary it could lead to ers specially the local ones in the league.

Another franchise source said that some of the agents of those players unsold in the IPL had already made contact with some franchises inquiring about potential deals.

"Some franchises are also opposing bypassing the draft and insist that all major players

# **New Zealand waste** good start, finish at 315-9 on Day 1 of 3rd test against England

HAMILTON ZEALAND), Dec 14: New Zealand steadily squandered a good start, slumping from 172-2 to 231-7 before rallying to 315-9 at stumps Saturday on the first day of

Mitchell Santner hit the last ball of the day for six to reach his fourth test half century and was 50 not out while Will O'Rourke had vet to score. The New Zealand tail added 76 runs in the last eight overs of the day to bring some balance back into the game after the failure of the middle order.

the third test against England.

After a 105-run opening partnership between Tom Latham and Will Young, New Zealand enjoyed the rare experience of holding the upper hand over England in a series which so far has been onesided in favor of the tourists.

England holds an unassailable 2-0 lead, winning the first test in four days by eight wickets and the second in three days by 323 runs. In those seven days, New Zealand only occasionally had a dominant

But England won the toss and chose to bowl and by lunch New Zealand was 93-0

At that point it appeared England captain Ben Stokes might have misread or over-estimated the conditions when he decided to send New Zealand in. The pitch at Seddon Park had a slight green hue and warm conditions and puffy clouds seemed to offer the promise the ball would swing.

Instead, there was a firm brown surface under a thin cover of grass and the day warmed quickly, burning off the overcast so that the ball neither seamed or swung to any great extent.

(NEW platform for the New Zealand innings when they put on 105 for the first wicket, the Kiwis' best opening partnership in 28 tests.

Young was selected in place of Devon Conway whose wife has just given birth to their first child. There already was a clamor for his selection as Conway had made only 21 runs in four innings in the first two tests of this series and Young was Player of the Series and averaged almost 50 when New Zealand swept India 3-0 at home in October and early No-

Young played with boldness from the start Saturday and was 42 not out at lunch including 40 runs from boundaries. At 42 he surpassed 1,000 runs in test cricket and became the first New Zealander since Stephen Fleming to achieve that milestone without making a test century.

Rachin Ravindra made 18 with four well-hit boundaries and seemed set when he played loosely at a wide ball from Brydon Carse and was caught by Ben Duckett in the gully. There was an anxious pause when the television umpire checked for a no ball but there was no reprieve for Ravindra and this time no bad news for Carse who bowled Williamson with a no-ball in the second test.

Kane Williamson reached 44 with every sign of authority on his home pitch on which he averages

Then he clamped down on a ball from Matthew Potts which bounced back onto his stumps and he tried vainly to kick it away.

Potts marked his return in place of the rested Chris Woakes with figures of 3-75 and the prized wicket of Williamson. (AP)

# Assam govt not taking initiative to identify sporting talents: Bhogeswar Baruah

SIVASAGAR, Dec 14: Assam's first Arjuna Awardee sprinter Bhogeswar Baruah has criticised the state government's sports policy, saying it is not taking enough initiatives to identify and nurture talent in rural areas.

"It is sad to say that there is no production of sports persons anywhere in Assam. Earlier, we used to organise camps to attract new talents, but it is not happening anymore," Baruah, a gold medallist in 800m at the 1966 Asian Games, told PTI.

The 84-year-old said the government has engaged so many coaches who could be sent to districts to organise such camps and impart training, but such initiatives are not happening. "If there is no coaching, how

will we produce sports persons?

If any sports event takes place,

the kids are just taken there to

participate. If there is no training

or camp, how will our children "If there is any tournament, children are called and taken to participate -- this is Assam's sports policy," Baruah said.

Baruah, who won gold and silver at the Asian Games in 1966 and 1970 respectively, accused the government of encouraging only those who have achieved success on their own.

"Has the government made anyone a sports person? Government is not identifying and picking up talents from the ground. When someone shines, only then the government comes into the picture. That is what is happening nowadays," he said.

Baruah said it has been almost 6 to 7 years that any sports camp has been organised in the state.

"If they (government) were interested, I would have also taken interest. I would have definitely gone to the ground and given tips to the athletes. When the government has no idea, no intention, no aim, what can I do?" he said.

Baruah said earlier 2 to 3 such camps used to be organised annually but questioned why they have stopped.



You go and ask the Director of Sports. They have not organised a camp for so many years! Why is it not happening nowadays?" he remarked.

Baruah claimed he had requested the concerned officials several times to hold sports camps, but there has been no response. "I had even sought equipment saying that we would hold a camp. Give at least one set of

hurdles for doing training. You need 10 hurdles in one line, but we sought five for training purposes. There is no jumper, pole vaulter -- nothing is available," he claimed

Asked if he spoke to the state Sports Minister regarding this, Baruah said due to his age he could not meet him to discuss the matter. Reflecting on the future of sports in Assam, Baruah said:

"I can't say anything. I will say what is right. There has been no camp at all during the tenure of the present government." The Assam government is currently organising the second edi-

tion of 'Khel Maharan', aiming at

identifying and nurturing rural

talent through grassroots-level competitions. "All sports persons are in the villages. We have to search and nurture them. Rural sports is the only way to find real talents, otherwise we won't get it," Baruah said when asked about 'Khel Ma-

In 2021, the Assam government had decided to observe Baruah's birthday September 3 as 'Sports Day'. Baruah heaped praise on Asian Games gold medalist runner

Hima Das and Olympic medalist

boxer Lovlina Borgohain, saying

haran'

their success is largely due to the efforts of their parents. "There is nothing that the government should take credit for," he added. (PTI)

Latham and Young set a sound

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