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- 7 'Ousted PM Sheikh Hasina involved in enforced disappearance'

NATION

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- 9 Maywati urges parties to support ONOE bills

CM accuses Congress of shamelessness for not protesting Modi's Lok Sabha remarks

Himanta alleges Soros links with Assam MP

GUWAHATI, Dec 15: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma alleged on Sunday that an MP from the state has links with US-based billionaire George Soros, amid the BJP's charge against the Congress central leadership of conniving with the investor to destabilise the country.

Sarma, however, did not mention the name or party of the MP.

"An Assam MP also has links with George Soros. I don't want to get into this controversy," Sarma told reporters on the sidelines of a programme, when asked about the Congress-Soros issue.

To a question whether the MP in question had won his election with financial help from the US investor, the CM said, "I cannot comment on it as I have no evidence. Anyway, I am not much interested in this matter."

He added that the journalists themselves can find out about the links between Soros and the state MP. On the Prime Minister's speech in Lok Sabha on Saturday, Sarma said, "(Narendra) Modi ji



has totally exposed the Congress... The fact that the Congress members could sit and hear him out was a big thing, it shows how shameless they are."

Replying to a two-day discussion in the Lok Sabha on "The glorious journey of 75 years of the Constitution of India", the prime minister had on Saturday accused the Congress of repeatedly mutilating the Constitution, having "tasted blood" in its "greed" for power, as he asserted that his government's policies and decisions since 2014 have been aimed at boosting India's strength and unity.

"Modi ji has shown them the mirror... Congress is not saying that he was lying. Whatever Modi ji said, is all in the recorded statement," the CM said.

On the 'one nation, one election' Bill, Sarma said once it is introduced in Parliament, all sides will be able to place their views.

"When the discussion takes place in the Parliament, our people will understand its benefits," he added.

Sarma maintained that when elections are not conducted simultaneously, development becomes slow due to imposition of the model code of conduct at different periods and expenses are also high for holding separate polls.

"It is beneficial for all if elections are held together. It saves money, campaign will be together (for state and Lok Sabha polls). Expenses of political parties will also be saved," he said.

Mentioning of simultaneous elections after Independence, the BJP leader said, "When Congress started to impose President's Rule (in states), dismiss the Assemblies, this situation (of elections at different times) arose. No one could have thought at the time of Independence (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Omar Abdullah tells Congress to stop whinging about EVMs, accept poll results

NEW DELHI, Dec 15: Opening another point of friction with an important ally, Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah has dismissed the Congress party's vehement objection to Electronic Voting Machines, and echoed the BJP's defence -- you can't accept election results when you win, and blame EVMs when you lose.

"When you get a hundred plus members of Parliament using the same EVMs, and you celebrate that as sort of a victory for your party, you can't then a few months later turn around and say... we don't like these EVMs because now the election results aren't going the way we would like them to," Abdullah told PTI in an exclusive interview on Friday.

Told that he sounded suspiciously like a BJP spokesman, Abdullah reacted with "God forbid!" He then added: "No, it's just that... what's right is right."

He said he speaks based on principles rather than with partisan loyalty and cited his support for infrastructure projects like the Cen-



tral Vista as an example of his independent thinking.

"Contrary to what everybody else believes, I think that what's happening with this Central Vista project in Delhi is a damn good thing. I believe constructing a new Parliament building was an excellent idea. We needed a new Parliament building. The old one had outlived its utility," he said. He said parties should not contest elections if they do not trust the voting mechanism.

"If you have problems with the EVMs, then you should be consistent in those problems," he said while replying to a question about whether he thinks that the opposition in general and the Congress, in particular, is barking up the wrong tree by focusing on EVMs.

After its loss in the Haryana and Maharashtra Assembly polls, the Congress has expressed doubts about the EVM's infallibility and the election (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Beneficiaries had to bribe officials for free rice under Congress govt: Tuliram



DIPHU, Dec 15: The Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, alleged on Sunday that beneficiaries had to bribe officials to receive free rice under the previous Congress government.

Ronghang made this statement during a program in which he participated in the Chief Minister's online official distribution of ration cards which was held at the Sarsing Teron (Langkung Habe) Memorial Town Hall.

The CEM informed that each individual in a family would receive 5 kg of rice.

"During the previous Congress government, beneficiaries had to bribe someone to get the rice. However, under the BJP government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made it free. All families under Below Poverty Line (BPL), Above Poverty Line (APL), and Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) categories will receive free rice every month," he added.

He further highlighted that the BJP government has introduced a health scheme where every individual is entitled to medical expenses of up to Rs 5 lakh per year, provided they have an Ayushman Bharat card. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Give up arms or face strong action: Shah to Naxals

JAGDALPUR (CHHATTISGARH), Dec 15: Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday appealed to Naxals to give up arms and join the mainstream, or else they will have to face the strong action of security forces.

He said the rehabilitation of the surrendered Naxals is the responsibility of the government.

Addressing a sporting event -- 'Bastar Olympics' -- in Chhattisgarh's Jagdalpur, Shah also said the country would be free of Maoists by March 2026.

"I appeal to Naxals, please come forward. Give up arms, surrender and join the mainstream. Your rehabilitation is our responsibility," he said. He said if the Maoists do not listen to the appeal of surrender, they will be crushed by the security forces.

"Chhattisgarh Police is committed to fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve to make India Naxal-free by March 31, 2026," he said.

The Union home minister said the Chhattisgarh government's rehabilitation policy is the best in the country.



"If you surrender and join the mainstream, you will contribute for the development of Chhattisgarh and India," he said.

Shah said when the Congress was in power in Chhattisgarh before the BJP assumed charge a year ago, the action against the Maoists became slow. "But after our government came to power in Chhattisgarh, action against the extremists speeded up resulting in killings of 287 Naxals in last one year, arrest of 992 Naxals and surrender of

836 others," he said.

Shah said since the Modi government assumed charge, there has been a 73 per cent reduction in the casualties in security forces and 70 per cent decline in civilians' deaths.

"If Naxalism ends in Bastar (Chhattisgarh), it will attract more tourists than Kashmir due to its natural beauty," he said.

He further said those who know the process of change taking place within the society also know that it is not limited to only 1.5 lakh people participating in the Bastar Olympics.

"Everyone is saying that Bastar is changing. I assure you that when I will come to the 2026 Bastar Olympics, I will say that Bastar has changed," he said, adding that this change has been initiated by the Bastar Olympics.

The Union home minister said this event will write a new saga of development of Bastar in the coming days and will become a strong basis for the complete eradication of Naxalism. He also said many development works are being done, through which Naxalism is being defeated. (PTI)

Peddler arrested after hitting constable, injured while fleeing: Police

GUWAHATI, Dec 15: A suspected peddler, who was nabbed with drugs after he mowed down a constable with his vehicle while escaping police checking, was injured when law enforcers fired at him as he attempted to flee from custody in Assam's Sribhumi district, an officer said on Sunday.

The constable, Ujjal Bora, was killed early on Saturday when a truck hit him as it broke a police barricade and fled away. Policemen on duty at the check-post chased the truck, which later met with an accident. The driver and the handyman of the truck were arrested, and drugs worth over ₹ 4 crore seized (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Want Rajya Sabha to debate Constitution 'if BJP does not disrupt': Derek O'Brien

NEW DELHI, Dec 15: Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha Parliamentary Party Leader Derek O'Brien said on Sunday his party wants the House to run and the debate on the Constitution to be taken up "if the BJP does not disrupt Parliament".

Blaming the ruling BJP for disruptions after the Upper House last week witnessed multiple adjournments and heated exchanges involving the opposition, treasury benches and the Chair, the TMC leader said they wanted people's issues to be discussed.

After the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha is set to take up on Monday a debate on 75 years of the Constitution in the backdrop of a proposed no-trust motion against vice president and Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar by Opposition parties which have submitted a notice for it.

The debate on the Constitution has been the key demand of the opposition for the Winter Session of Parliament.



Multiple adjournments over the Adani row, Soros issue and the no-trust notice had marred the proceedings of the House last week.

Asked about the debate scheduled to be taken in the House for Monday, O'Brien said, "We want Parliament to run, we want to raise (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam govt launches first phase of new ration card distribution

GUWAHATI, Dec 15: The first phase of new ration card distribution in Assam was launched on Sunday, covering 49 newly delimited assembly constituencies.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who inaugurated the distribution from Guwahati, affirmed the government's commitment to working for an inclusive society.

"Today, HCM Dr. @himanbiswa inaugurated the first phase of new ration card distribution in 49 newly designated assembly constituencies, reaffirming the government's commitment to uplifting vulnerable sections of society," the chief minister's office (CMO) said in a post on X.

It said that by December, each beneficiary will receive 5 kg of free rice, ensuring food security for those in need.

"HCM emphasised that the collective support and cooperation will continue to inspire the government's efforts to build a prosperous and inclusive society for all," the CMO added.

Sarma, also in a post on the micro-blogging site, said, "Our Govt is driven by the principles of Antyodaya, where special emphasis is given to the needs of the poor and marginalised."

"Karishma Kashyap is among the 40 divyang brothers & sisters who have been given ration cards today assuring them of free healthcare and foodgrains," he said, sharing a pho-

tograph of the wheelchair-bound beneficiary receiving the ration card.

The chief minister said the distribution of ration cards is part of the government's '12 days of development' initiative, which will benefit 12 lakh people. He said that in Assam, beneficiaries can avail of multiple benefits through ration card, which includes free foodgrains, free healthcare, subsidised LPG, assistance under Orunodoi scheme and fire insurance.

"In this phase of extending ration cards to the people, another ~20 lakh people will be covered, encompassing 2/3rd of the state's population in this social security net," Sarma added. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Atishi claims Centre settling Rohingyas in Delhi; 'false narrative', says Hardeep Puri

NEW DELHI, Dec 15: Delhi chief minister Atishi wrote to Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday, accusing the BJP-led Centre of settling "a large number of illegal Rohingyas" in different parts of the city. With the AAP targeting Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri over his tweets and claiming that settling these refugees here was a "conscious decision" of the BJP-led NDA government, the minister accused AAP of indulging in "politics of diversion, false narratives and half-truths".

In the run-up to the Delhi Assembly polls due in February 2025, the ruling AAP and BJP have been hitting out at one another over the issue of illegal Rohingya and Bangladeshi people staying in the national capital.

The BJP has already complained to the Election Commission about illegal Rohingyas and Bangladeshis registered as voters in Delhi "at the behest of AAP".

Citing two tweets by Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in 2022,



Atishi alleged the Union government has settled a large number of illegal Rohingyas in different parts of the national capital by keeping the people and the government of Delhi in the dark.

"This seems to be going on for the past several years. On August 17, 2022, Union Urban Development Minister Hardeep Puri published two tweets that clearly show that it is a 'conscious decision and policy' of the BJP government to settle these refugees in Delhi," she alleged in the letter to Shah. "From the post of Puri, it seems they were settled into EWS (Economically Backward Class) flats of Bakkarwala. These flats were meant for the poor people (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

The government is working to unlock the potential of our inland waterways: Sonowal

Govt unveils 'Jalvahak' to boost inland waterways

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 15: Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal unveiled a major policy for Cargo Promotion - 'Jalvahak' - incentivising movement of long haul cargo via National Waterways 1 (river Ganga) as well as for National Waterways 2 (river Brahmaputra) and National Waterways 16 (river Barak) here on Sunday.

Sonowal also flagged off cargo ships- MV AAL, MV Homi Bhabha along with MV Trishul with two Dumb Barges Ajay & Dikhu from the GR Jetty.

This marks the beginning of fixed Scheduled Service of Cargo Vessels from Haldia for NW 1 and NW 2.

"The Fixed Day Scheduled Sailing Service will ply vessels between Kolkata - Patna - Varanasi - Patna - Kolkata stretch of NW 1 and between Kolkata and Pandu in Guwahati on NW 2 via Indo Bangladesh Protocol Route (IBPR)," an official statement said.

The Union minister of State for MoPSW, Shantanu Thakur and minister of State for Transportation (Independent Charge), Uttar Pradesh Government, Daya Shankar Singh also joined the significant occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Sonowal, said, "Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, the Government has made a concerted effort to realise the tremendous potential of our rich network of



inland waterways".

The Union minister said that with its advantage of being an economical, ecologically sound and efficient mode of transportation, adding, "We want to boost cargo movement via waterways, to decongest the railways and roadways. Jalvahak scheme incentivises long haul cargo on NW1, NW2 & NW16, and provides an opportunity for the trade interests to explore movement of cargo via waterways with positive economic value proposition."

"Further, the regular scheduled freight service, which began from Kolkata, will ensure that the cargo is transported and delivered within a stipulated time frame. This will also generate confidence among our users about the readiness of national waterways for regular movement of cargo in an efficient, economical and environmentally responsible mode of transportation. By empowering our

vessel operators with this incentive scheme and encouraging our business enterprises with safe and timely delivery of cargo in a cost effective manner, this adds meaningfully to the Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji's vision of transformation via transportation as India sails towards becoming a Viksit Bharat".

As per the statement, the first vessel - MV Trishul with two Dumb Barges Ajay and Dikhu - is carrying 1500 tonnes of cement from GR Jetty in Kolkata to Pandu in Guwahati via Indo Bangladesh Protocol Route (IBPR). The second vessel - MV Aai - is carrying 1000 tonnes of Gypsum to Patna while the third vessel - MV Homi Bhabha - is carrying 200 tonnes of coal to Varanasi.

The cargo promotion scheme provides direct incentive to the cargo owners to transport their goods via inland waterways for a distance of more than 300 kms. This is a joint effort by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWA), the nodal agency of waterways development in the country, as well as by the Inland & Coastal Shipping Limited (ICSL), a fully owned subsidiary of the Shipping Corporation of India Limited (SCIL).

"The 'Jalvahak' scheme encourages to reduce logistics costs, decongest road and railways, and adapting to a sustainable mode of transportation," the statement added. It further said that the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



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Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam



Programme for 16 December

Baksa District • Mushalpur HS School Playground, Mushalpur • 11:30 AM Chief Guest → Shri Jayanta Mallabaruah Minister, Public Health Engineering etc., Assam	Goalpara District • District Industries Centre Field, Goalpara • 11:00 AM Chief Guest → Shri Ashok Singhal Minister, Health and Family Welfare etc., Assam	Darrang District • Gandhi Maidan, Mangaldoi • 11:00 AM Chief Guest → Shri Keshab Mahanta Minister, Revenue and Disaster Management etc., Assam	Majuli District • Sri Sri Uttar Kamalabari Satra Sankardev Krishti Sangha Open Auditorium • 12 Noon Chief Guest → Dr Ranaj Pegu Minister, Education etc., Assam
Bongaigaon District • Playground near Bongaigaon HS School (EM), North Bongaigaon • 10:00 AM Chief Guest → Shri Urkhao Gwra Brahma Minister, Handloom, Textiles and Sericulture etc., Assam	Charaideo District • Bhagwati Prasad Baruah Memorial Higher Secondary School Playground • 11:00 AM Chief Guest → Shri Jogen Mohan Minister, Transport etc., Assam	Sribhumi District • Nilmoni H S School Playground, Sribhumi • 12 Noon Chief Guest → Shri Kaushik Rai Minister, Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs etc., Assam	Hailakandi District • Dr Shashi Bhushan Institute of Education, Boalpar, Hailakandi • 12 Noon Chief Guest → Shri Krishnendu Paul Minister, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary etc., Assam
Tinsukia District • Industrial Training Institute Playground, Borguri, Tinsukia • 11:00 AM Chief Guest → Shri Bimal Bora Minister, Industries, Commerce and Public Enterprises etc., Assam			

Schemes

	Baksa District	Darrang District	Goalpara District	Majuli District
Distribution of Scooters under Dr Banikanta Kakati Merit Award of Pragyan Bharati Scheme From next year, only students who have scored 80 percent or above in the Higher Secondary Examination will be given scooters under this scheme	896	2,236	999	296
Distribution of Bicycles to class 9 students under CM's Special Scheme	6,060	8,187	13,625	2,686
Anundoram Barooah Cash Award through DBT to students scoring 75% and above in HSLC examination	648	1,113	501	151

Schemes

	Bongaigaon District	Charaideo District	Hailakandi District	Sribhumi District	Tinsukia District
Ceremonial Distribution of 'No Dues Certificate' under Assam Microfinance Incentive and Relief Scheme, 2021 to Category-III Phase-II Borrowers	729	1,030	583	3,425	1,916
Seed Capital under Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme	124	160	70	173	253
Financial assistance to beneficiaries affected by disasters	-	-	88	236	192

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