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- Kejriwal, Atishi pay homage to Manmohan Singh at his house

Cremation of Dr Manmohan Singh to take place today

Tributes pour in for the former Prime Minister ● Funeral at Nigambodh Ghat: MHA

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were among the top dignitaries who paid homage to former prime minister Manmohan Singh at his residence here on Friday.

Several leaders cutting across party lines, including Union ministers and Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, also paid their tributes to the former two-term prime minister who died on Thursday night.

President Murmu and Vice President Dhankhar visited the residence of Singh and paid their last respects to him and met his wife and other family members.

Prime Minister Modi, who also laid a wreath, described his predecessor's death as a big loss to the nation, asserting that his commitment to the people and for the country's development would al-



ways be respected.

In a video message, Modi recalled Singh's life journey after his family migrated to India following

Partition and noted that he left everything behind but his numerous achievements since then were no mean feat. Singh, the architect

of India's economic reforms and a consensus builder in the rough world of politics, died at AIIMS, Delhi, late on Thursday. He was

Assam Govt announces 7-day mourning

GUWAHATI, Dec 27: The Assam government has declared a seven-day state mourning in honour of former prime minister Manmohan Singh.

The national flag will fly at half mast at all state government establishments and all official entertainment programmes have been cancelled, he said.

The state mourning, beginning from December 26 will last till January 1, 2025.

"As a mark of respect to Dr Manmohan Singh Ji, former Prime Minister of India, Government of Assam will observe a period of 7-day state mourning from 26.12.2024 to 01.01.2025. During this period the national flag will fly at half mast at all state gov-

ernment establishments and all official entertainment programmes are cancelled," chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma posted on X.

The former prime minister was a Rajya Sabha member from Assam for five consecutive terms from 1991 to 2019. His residential address in Guwahati was a rented ground-floor apartment in the house of former Assam chief minister Hiteswar Saikia in the Sarumotia area.

Saikia's son and leader of the opposition in the Assam Assembly Debabrata Saikia said that he is on his way to Delhi from Belgium to pay respects to the former prime minister. (PTI)

92. He is survived by his wife and three daughters.

The Union cabinet at its meeting held under PM Modi also condoled Singh's passing and hailed him as an eminent statesman and a distinguished leader who left an imprint on national life.

During a meeting chaired by

Modi, the cabinet observed a two-minute silence in honour of the departed soul and adopted a Condolence Resolution in the memory of Singh.

"Dr Manmohan Singh has left his imprint on our national life. In his passing away, the Nation has lost an eminent statesman,

renowned economist and a distinguished leader," the resolution read. The government has announced a seven-day State mourning as a mark of respect to the former prime minister. Draped in the Tricolour, Singh's body was brought to his 3, Motilal Nehru Road, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Leopard enters Guwahati house, sparks panic

GUWAHATI, Dec 27: Panic prevailed in the densely populated Kumarpara area of Guwahati city on Friday, after a leopard was found taking shelter inside a house, an official said.

The leopard, suspected to have strayed into the residential area from the nearby hills, was found in the staircase of the house.

Efforts were made to trap the animal by tranquilising it, but the leopard after receiving the first shot escaped from the spot, he said.

The forest department has launched an operation to capture the leopard.

Meanwhile, prohibitory orders were clamped in Kaliabor co-district after a Royal Bengal Tiger strayed from the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, injuring a woman and killing another earlier this week.

The tiger's movement has been spotted in the Kaliabor Tea Estate, Sonarigaon, and Silghat areas.

The prohibitory orders restrict the entry and movement on the new PWD road from Silghat/Rubber Bari via Silghat Kamakhya Temple to Sonarigaon/Kamakhya village, as well as the surrounding tea plantation area, from 4 pm to 9 am. The orders will remain in force until further notice, but is not applicable to police and other security personnel, forest staff, or government officials on duty, according to an official notification. (PTI)

China defends plan to build world's largest dam over Brahmaputra River in Tibet

BEIJING, Dec 27: China on Friday defended its plan to build the world's largest dam on the Brahmaputra River in Tibet, saying the project will not "negatively affect" lower riparian states and that safety issues have been addressed through decades of studies.

Chinese Foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning played down apprehensions about the massive project to dam the Brahmaputra River, which is called Yarlung Zangbo in Tibet. The project estimated to cost around USD 137 billion is located in the ecologically fragile Himalayan region, along a tectonic plate boundary where earthquakes occur frequently.

Mao said China carried out in-depth studies for decades and took

safeguard measures.

China has always been responsible for the development of cross-border rivers, Mao told a media briefing here in response to a question on the concerns related to the dam. She said the hydropower development there has been studied in depth for decades, and safeguard measures have been taken to ensure the project's security and ecological environment protection.

"The project will not negatively affect the lower reaches," she said referring to the concerns in India and Bangladesh which are the lower riparian states.

"China will continue to maintain communication with countries at the lower reaches through existing channels and step up cooperation on



disaster prevention and relief for the benefit of the people by the river," she said.

She said China's hydropower development in the lower reaches of

the Yarlung Zangbo River aims to speed up the development of clean energy and respond to climate change and extreme hydrological disasters. China on Wednesday ap-

proved the construction of the world's largest dam, stated to be the planet's biggest infra project on the Brahmaputra River in Tibet close to the Indian border, raising concerns in India and Bangladesh.

The hydropower project will be built in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River, the Tibetan name for the Brahmaputra River, an official statement here said.

The dam will be built at a huge gorge in the Himalayan reaches where the Brahmaputra River makes a huge U-turn to flow into Arunachal Pradesh and then to Bangladesh. Mao said China's hydropower development in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River aims to speed up the development of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Eight killed, over 20 injured in Punjab's Bathinda bus accident

BATHINDA (PUNJAB), Dec 27: Eight people were killed and more than 20 injured on Friday, when a bus crashed through the railing of a bridge and plunged into a drain a few feet below in this Punjab district, police said.

The bus had more than 45 passengers and it fell into the Lasara drain in Jeevan Singhwala village, officials said.

The accident occurred when the bus was on its way to Bathinda from Talwandi Sabo. Locals rushed to the spot immediately to help the passengers, the officials said, adding that eight people, including five women, were killed.

Police and district administration officials launched a rescue operation and rushed the injured people to a hospital. A National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team also reached the spot to provide assistance, the officials said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the incident. "Saddened by the loss of lives in the bus accident in Bathinda, Punjab. Condolences to those who lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon," he said in a post on X. Modi also announced an ex-gratia amount of Rs 2 lakh each from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) for the next of kin of the deceased and Rs 50,000 each for the injured.

According to the officials, the weather in the area was inclement. However, the exact cause of the accident is yet to be ascertained and investigations are on.

The drain in which the bus fell is currently a carrier of sewage water, which made the rescue operations difficult. Bathinda deputy commissioner Showkat Ahmad Parry, who reached the spot to supervise the rescue operations, said medical teams and ambulances were rushed to the spot. While five people were killed on the spot, three succumbed to their injuries in the hospital. More than 20 people were injured in the accident, police said. Bathinda (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

STF apprehends suspected jihadi in Dhubri

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 27: Special Task Force (STF), Assam has apprehended a suspected jihadi from Assam's Dhubri district, said an official statement on Friday.

The jihadi, identified as 36-year-old Shahinur Islam, was arrested during the 'Operation Praghat' against terrorists.

"In connection with that an ongoing investigation under STF PS Case No. 21/2024, the Special Task Force (STF) Assam conducted a successful raid this morning (27th December 2024) at Bandhabpara, Bilashipara under Dhubri District.

During the operation, a wanted anti-national jihadi was apprehended," the statement added.

The STF also recovered various incriminating items such as two books titled Nuriliza, Jana Wazib, one PAN Card, one Aadhaar Card, one Passport and one mobile phone.

In this regard, the police have initiated necessary legal and procedural formalities. "Necessary legal and procedural formalities are being carried out. The STF remains committed to ensuring the safety and security of the state by taking decisive action against anti-national activities," the statement concluded.

Himanta in limelight by pushing BJP's Hindutva agenda in Assam

GUWAHATI, Dec 27: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma further consolidated his position in both state and national politics by pushing the BJP's Hindutva agenda and engaging in intense anti-Congress rhetoric.

From banning the consumption of beef in public and intensifying the fight against child marriage to leading the BJP to significant electoral victories, Sarma's policies kept him in the limelight.

The Assam leg of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in January faced challenges due to the state government's refusal to allow him to offer prayers at the birthplace of Vaishnav saint Srimanta Sankardeva at Batadrava, and also to enter Guwahati city. The Congress leaders and party workers tried to break through barricades and engaged in a scuffle with the police, leading to injuries to senior party leaders and workers.

The chief minister's evident animosity towards Gandhi again came to the fore when Sarma accused the Congress leader of using a 'body double' during the yatra. The CM claimed the 'body double' has been identified and the details will be revealed but failed to produce any proof thereof.

Banning of public consumption of beef in hotels, restaurants and community gatherings in the state by amending an existing law has been viewed as a step by Sarma to further BJP's Hindutva agenda, drawing flak from opposition parties as a "political gimmick" to polarise voters and also an infringement upon people's freedom. The BJP, however, countered by stating that the decision will help to preserve cattle and create a society where the religious sentiments of all communities are respected.

The state cabinet also approved the abolition of 'The



Assam Moslem Marriages and Divorces Registration Act and Rules of 1935', which permitted underage marriages under specific conditions, and the government subsequently tabled the repealing Bill in the assembly.

The chief minister asserted this was done to not only abolish child marriages but to bring registration of Muslim marriages and divorces under a proper system of the government.

The state government also continued to crack the whip on child marriage for the third time in two years with 431 people arrested and 345 cases registered in December. Authorities claimed these drives have led to a considerable decline in maternal and infant mortality rates. The policies adopted by the state government ensured that Sarma remained in the limelight and he was rewarded with election campaign responsibilities during assembly polls in Odisha, Rajasthan, Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Jharkhand. The chief minister also successfully led the NDA in the state to an impressive win in the Lok Sabha polls, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam man stabbed to death in Kota, 2 arrested

KOTA (RAJASTHAN) Dec 27: A man from Assam was stabbed to death in a drunken brawl between roommates here in Transop Nagar, police said on Friday.

Two of the roommates were arrested following the fight in the intervening night of Thursday and Friday, they said.

According to police, four roommates -- Vishavjeet (22) and Inderjeet (21) who were brothers, and Paranjeet (30) and Sidharth -- were having a drinking party in the room they shared. All four of them were from Kamrup district in Assam.

The two brothers were involved in an altercation with Paranjeet. One of them held Paranjeet while the other

allegedly stabbed him with a knife in the back, according to the complaint submitted to the police by Sidharth.

In the altercation, Vishavjeet also sustained a minor injury, Kota city SP Amrita Duhan said. Other occupants of the building rushed Paranjeet to New Medical Hospital where he was soon declared dead.

After the hospital alerted police regarding the incident, Anantpura police rushed to the Emergency where Sidharth narrated the sequence of events. Vishavjeet, who was also treated at the hospital for his injury, was discharged and later arrested by the police. Police kept the body of Paranjeet, who was working as a cook in the city, in the mortuary (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Issued over 1 million nonimmigrant visas to Indians for 2nd year: US embassy

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: The US mission in India on Friday said it issued more than one million nonimmigrant visas for the second year in a row, including a record number of visitor visas, underscoring the huge demand of Indians for travel to the United States for tourism, business, and education," it said in a readout.

The embassy noted that the State Department completed a successful pilot programme to renew H-1B visas in the US States this year.

This allowed many speciality occupation workers from India to renew their visas without leaving the US.

"This pilot program streamlined the renewal process for thousands of applicants, and the Department of State is working to formally establish a US-based renewal program in 2025," it said.

The US mission to India issued tens of thousands of immigrant visas, facilitating legal family reunification and the migration of skilled professionals, according to the readout. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

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Small island developing states were hit the hardest Climate change led to 41 additional days of extreme heat in 2024, says new report

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: The world experienced an average of 41 more days of extreme heat in 2024 due to climate change, a new report said on Friday. According to the European climate agency Copernicus, 2024 is set to end as the warmest year on record and the first year with a global average temperature 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

A yearly review report by two groups of climate scientists -- World Weather Attribution (WWA) and Climate Central -- said the world saw an average of 41 more days of dangerous heat in 2024.

Small island developing states were hit the hardest, with their people experiencing over 130 additional hot days.

The scientists identified 219 ex-

treme weather events in 2024 and studied 29 of them. They found that climate change contributed to at least 3,700 deaths and displaced millions in 26 extreme weather events.

"It is likely the total number of people killed in extreme weather events intensified by climate change this year is in the tens or hundreds of thousands," the report said. The floods in Sudan, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad were the deadliest event studied by the group, with at least 2,000 people killed.

The study found that if global warming reached two degrees Celsius, which could happen as early as the 2040s or 2050s, these regions might face similar heavy rainfall events every year.



Friederike Otto, lead of WWA and senior lecturer in climate science at the Imperial College, London, said, "The impacts of fossil fuel warming have never been clearer or more devastating than in

2024. We are living in a dangerous new era."

"We know exactly what we need to do to stop things from getting worse -- stop burning fossil fuels. The top resolution for 2025 must

be transitioning away from fossil fuels, which will make the world a safer and more stable place," he added. The year 2024 is expected to end with a global average temperature at least 1.55 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, according to Copernicus.

However, a permanent breach of the 1.5-degree Celsius limit specified in the Paris Agreement refers to long-term warming over a 20- or 30-year period.

That said, experts feel that the world is now entering a phase where temperatures will be consistently above this threshold.

The average global temperature has already risen by 1.3 degrees Celsius compared to the 1850-1900 average, driven by the rapid buildup of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

UltraTech is the leading cement company in India with an installed capacity of 156.66 MTPA of grey cement

UltraTech to acquire minority stake in Star Cement from promoters in ₹ 851-cr deal

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, Dec 27: Leading cement producer UltraTech Cement on Friday said it will acquire a minority stake of 8.69 per cent from the promoters of Meghalaya-based Star Cement in a deal worth up to ₹ 851 crore.

UltraTech Cement will pick up stakes from Rajendra Chamaria and his family's holdings, part of the promoter group, sources told PTI. Only the Chamaria family is selling its stake in the company, while other promoters who control Century Ply remain committed and are not divesting any shares, the sources said.

Rajendra Chamaria, when asked for comments, did not deny the development but refrained from divulging further details.

"The Chamarias are gradually selling out and have approached co-promoters like Sajjan Bhajanka and Sanjay Agarwal. Currently, the Chamarias' holdings are estimated to be around 13-14 per cent. Any new investor will not have a board seat," the sources close to the development said.

According to the latest shareholding data, the total stake of all promoter shareholders with the surname Chamaria stands at 11.25 per cent. The development comes three days after the Aditya Birla group firm completed the acquisition of a controlling stake in India Cements Ltd, turning the south-based company into its subsidiary.

The firm is expanding its capacity through acquisitions and capacity enhancement as it faces competition from billionaire Gautam Adani-led Adani Group's Ambuja cement, which is the second



largest player and is also scaling up its capacity. Both the players are snapping up small cement players to consolidate their positions and achieve their targeted growth ahead of time.

Star Cement has an installed capacity of 7.7 MTPA (million tonnes per annum) with a presence in the markets of north-eastern India and is expanding in eastern markets of West Bengal and Bihar. It is the largest cement brand in north-east India.

Star Cement has recently announced plans to execute a two-million-tonne greenfield plant in Silchar, Assam, and has outlined a long-term roadmap to reach a capacity of 15 million tonnes.

According to UltraTech Cement, some promoter and promoter group entities of Star Cement "propose to sell their equity holding in Star Cement and have approached the company for the same".

"The board of directors of the company at its meeting held today considered the proposal and approved making an investment to

acquire non-controlling minority stake up to 3.70 crores equity shares of Star Cement at a price not exceeding ₹ 235/- per share, excluding STT, stamp duty and other levies," it said.

Over the cost of acquisition or the price at which shares are acquired, UltraTech said it will "not exceed ₹ 851 crore".

Shares of Star Cement were trading at ₹ 238.80 on the BSE, up 3.94 per cent after the announcement. It has settled at ₹ 229.75 per scrip on Thursday. Based on that UltraTech has offered a premium of 2.3 per cent.

Star Cement's peak share price in the last 52 weeks was at ₹ 255.95 on May 22, 2024, and low at ₹ 169.80 on January 18, 2024. The promoter Bhajanka family and the promoters group own 66.47 per cent shareholding in Star Cement, which was incorporated in November 2001. Star Cement had a turnover of ₹ 2,910.66 crore in FY24 and its profit after tax stood at ₹ 295 crore.

The Meghalaya-based cement

maker has seven plants and a total workforce of 4,000. The company aims to achieve a manufacturing capacity of 25 MTPA capacity by 2030, according to information available on its portal.

It has cement manufacturing units at Lumshong town in Meghalaya, Sonapur near Guwahati and at Mohitnagar near Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Moreover, it has three grinding units

UltraTech is the leading cement company in India with an installed capacity of 156.66 MTPA of grey cement. To maintain its lead in the sector, the Aditya Birla group flagship firm plans to have 200 MTPA capacity by FY27. In 2024 it acquired India Cements Ltd and is in process of acquisition of Kesoram Industries' cement business.

Adani Cements, a lateral entrant in the sector, completed the acquisitions of Saurashtra-based Sanghi Industries as well as Penna Industries, and has recently announced the acquisition of CK Birla group firm Orient Cement as part of its inorganic growth strategy.

Besides, it has snapped up small players facilities as My Home and its subsidiary ACC has also acquired Asian Concretes and Cements. These acquisitions and expansions helped Adani Cement to cross a 100 MTPA (million tonnes per annum) capacity with a pan-India presence in 2024, within two years of entry in the sector with 70 MTPA acquired capacity from Swiss firm Holcim.

Shares of UltraTech Cement Ltd were trading at Rs 11,492.40 on BSE, up 0.31 per cent from the previous close. (PTI)

ICICI Prudential Life launches 'ICICI Pru Wish' for women

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 27: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched 'ICICI Pru Wish', the first health product in the life insurance industry specifically designed for women. ICICI Pru Wish instantly pays out up to 100% of the health cover amount on diagnosis of critical illnesses like breast, cervical, uterine cancers and heart ailments to name a few, an official statement said.

Importantly, the premium amount remains constant for a period of 30 years, enabling customers to plan their funds outflow in a better manner, it further stated. Another notable feature of this product is the premium holiday i.e. the customer has the option to not pay premiums for a period of 12 months anytime during the premium payment tenure.

Notably, the product also offers customers the option to take cover related to maternity complications and newborn congenital illnesses. Amit Palta, chief product and distribution officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "ICICI Pru Wish is the first health product in the life insurance industry specifically designed to cater to the health needs of women. The lump sum payout on diagnosis of a critical illness gives them financial strength to face such difficult situations", said speaking on the occasion.

Lime Jhatka win prestigious startup award

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 27: The co-founders of Lime Jhatka, Ritesh Agarwal and Vikram Sharma, were honoured with the Startup Award at an event celebrating New Age Startups in Indore, Madhya Pradesh recently. The recognition was presented by the honourable minister of civil aviation, Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu. The journey of Lime Jhatka began with a personal mission. Ritesh and Vikram, hailing from small towns in Bengal, wanted to provide a healthier alternative to traditional sodas. They launched Lime Jhatka just before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to an official statement, the pandemic brought unexpected challenges, including market closures and rising costs. However, the duo persisted and restructured their strategy, focusing on ethnic Indian drinks and targeting the eastern states. Their efforts paid off, with Lime Jhatka achieving record-breaking sales and a growing presence in new markets. "Lime Jhatka's unique blend of Indian spices and herbs sets it apart in the competitive soft drinks segment. The brand has earned the trust and loyalty of consumers, with repeat orders exceeding 60% even in newly launched markets," the statement said.

CAD moderates marginally to 1.2 pc of GDP in Q2: RBI data

MUMBAI, Dec 27: India's current account deficit (CAD) moderated marginally to USD 11.2 billion or 1.2 per cent of GDP year-on-year in the July-September quarter of 2024-25, according to Reserve Bank data released on Friday.

The CAD, an indicator of the country's external payment scenario, was USD 11.3 billion or 1.3 per cent of GDP during the second quarter of 2023-24. "India's current account deficit (CAD) moderated marginally to USD 11.2 billion (1.2 per cent of GDP) in Q2 2024-25 from USD 11.3 billion (1.3 per cent of GDP) in Q2-2023-24," the RBI said. During April-September 2024 (H1 2024-25), the current account deficit was USD 21.4 billion or 1.2 per cent of GDP compared to USD 20.2 billion (1.2 per cent of GDP) in the year-ago period.

Merchandise trade deficit increased to USD 75.3 billion in the second quarter of 2024-25 from



USD 64.5 billion in the comparable period of 2023-24, as per the RBI's data on Balance of Payments. Net services receipts increased to USD 44.5 billion in Q2 2024-25 from USD 39.9 billion a year ago. Services exports have risen, on a year-on-year basis, across major categories like computer services, business services, travel services

and transportation services.

Further, private transfer receipts, mainly representing remittances by Indians employed overseas, rose to USD 31.9 billion in the July-September quarter in 2024-25 from USD 28.1 billion in the second quarter of 2023-24, the data showed. In the financial account, the RBI said net foreign direct in-

vestment recorded an outflow of USD 2.2 billion in Q2 2024-25 compared to USD 0.8 billion outflow in the corresponding period of 2023-24. Net inflows under foreign portfolio investment increased to USD 19.9 billion in Q2 2024-25 from USD 4.9 billion a year ago. During April-September 2024, the RBI data showed that net invisibles receipts at USD 119.0 billion were higher in H1 2024-25 against USD 101 billion a year ago, primarily on account of higher net services receipts.

Also, net FDI inflows at USD 4.4 billion in H1:2024-25 was higher than USD 3.9 billion in H1:2023-24. FPI recorded net inflows of USD 20.8 billion in H1:2024-25 compared to net inflows of USD 20.7 billion a year ago. In H1 2024-25, there was an accretion of USD 23.8 billion to the foreign exchange reserves (on a BoP basis), the RBI said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Climate change led to 41 additional

greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change, says global emissions must peak by 2025 and reduce by 43 per cent by 2030 and 57 per cent by 2035 compared to 2019 levels to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

However, according to the latest UN data, current policies will take global warming to around 3 degrees Celsius by 2100. Even the full implementation of all Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) or national climate plans will likely lead to just a 5.9 per cent emission reduction by 2030 compared to 2019 levels, according to the synthesis report of countries' NDCs. Fossil fuels – coal, oil, and gas – are the largest contributors to climate change, accounting for over 75 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions.

However, the world is struggling to transition away from fossil fuels rapidly enough to prevent breaching the 1.5-degree Celsius goal due to a combination of political, economic, technological, and social challenges. The transition to clean energy sources is particularly difficult for poor countries in the Global South due to dependence on fossil fuels for jobs and cheap energy, lack of funding and technology, weak power grids, and limited expertise. (PTI)

Issued over 1 million nonimmigrant

These immigrant visa holders became permanent residents upon their arrival, adding to the already rich and sizable Indian diaspora community in the US, it said. The US mission to India also provided more than 24,000 passports and other consular services to American citizens living and travelling in India, it noted. A new version of the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) debuted in 2024, making it easier for the embassy and consulates to contact American citizens during emergencies and send them safety and security alerts, the embassy added.

It said increase in processing of thousands of interview waiver-eligible nonimmigrant visa applications each week made it quicker and easier than ever for Indians to renew their nonimmigrant visas. "By streamlining operations and utilizing global consular resources, the US mission has been able to redirect its own resources to focus on in-person interviews, reducing wait times for all applicants," it said.

The mission also provided details about visas issued to Indian students.

"More Indian students than ever before now have U.S. student visas. In 2024, India became the top sender of international students for the first time since the 2008/2009 academic year with more than 331,000 students overall studying in the US," it said. It further added that India also remained the largest sender of international graduate students in the US for the second year.

Indian graduate student numbers increased by 19 per cent to reach almost 200,000 students, according to the details. "Many exchange visitors will now be able to remain in the United States and not need to return home for two years after completing their programmes in the US, offering them more opportunities to further their careers and education," the embassy said. (PTI)

Cremation of Dr Manmohan Singh to

residence -- the sprawling bungalow in Lutyens' Delhi that served as his retirement abode for the last over 10 years ever since he relinquished charge as prime minister. Several leaders paid their last respects to the former prime minister in the presence of his wife Gursharan Kaur and other family members. Singh would be cremated on Saturday and his final journey will commence from the AICC headquarters on Saturday. Congress general secretary K C Venugopal said.

The last rites of Singh will be conducted at 11:45 am Saturday at the Nigambodh Ghat crematorium here with State honours. The Union Home Ministry said. "It has been decided by the Government that State funeral will be accorded to Dr. Manmohan Singh. The funeral will take place at 11:45 AM on 28th December, 2024 at Nigambodh Ghat, New Delhi," the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said in a communication on Friday.

Modi said Singh's life would always serve as a lesson for the future generations on how someone can rise above deprivation and struggles to attain the heights of success. Noting that he served in various capacities in the government, the prime minister said Singh put the country on a new economic path as finance minister in the government headed by P V. Narasimha Rao.

"As prime minister, his contribution to the country's development and progress will always be remembered," he added. Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, and BJP president J P Nadda also paid their tributes to Singh. Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin, Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Himachal Pradesh chief minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu and Telangana chief minister Revanth Reddy also came to Delhi to pay their last respects to the former prime minister. Delhi chief Minister Atishi, former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav also paid their last respects to Singh. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat and general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale condole his passing, saying his contributions to Bharat would always be remembered.

Born to Gurmukh Singh and Amrit Kaur on September 26, 1932 in Gah village of the Punjab province of undivided India (now Pakistan), Singh passed his matriculation examination in 1948. His family migrated to Amritsar after Partition in 1948 after living shortly in Haldwani.

Singh completed his intermediate and graduation in economics from the Hindu College here before moving out of the city to pursue higher studies in Panjab University's Hoshiarpur campus. His academic career took him from Punjab to the University of Cambridge, UK, where he earned a First Class Honours degree in Economics. Singh followed this with a DPhil in Economics from Nuffield College of Oxford University.

Singh's half-brother Surjit Singh Kohli said the former prime minister had deep affection for his grandmother, who raised him following his mother's death when he was very young. After migrating to India, the Singh family settled in a small rented house in Amritsar till he graduated. A few years ago, Singh attended the convocation-cum-alumni meet of the Hindu College in Amritsar as chief guest and interacted with the staff like an ordinary person, reminiscing old memories, retired Hindu College professor Rajinder Loomba said.

Raj Kumar (71), an Amritsar resident, told PTI Videos that Singh used to live in Petha Wala Bazaar near the Golden Temple. The house where the Singh family lived is in a dilapidated state now, Kumar said. Some locals recalled Singh as someone who always took pains for Amritsar, saying the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government he headed sanctioned several projects for the holy city. His passing also witnessed people from various fields sharing their anecdotes about him. The social media was flooded with pictures that people posted along with the former prime minister and shared their memories with fondness and nostalgia. (PTI)

China defends plan to build world's

clean energy and respond to climate change and extreme hydrological disasters. The total investment in the dam could exceed one trillion yuan (USD 137 billion), which would dwarf any other single infrastructure project on the planet, including China's own Three Gorges Dam which is regarded as the largest in the world, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Thursday.

China has already operationalised the USD 1.5 billion Zam Hydropower Station, the largest in Tibet in 2015. The Brahmaputra dam was part of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) and National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 adopted by Plenum, a key policy body of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2020. Concerns arose in India as the dam besides empowering China to control the water flow could enable Beijing to release large amounts of water flooding border areas in times of hostilities because of its size and scale. India too is building a dam over Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh.

India and China established the Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) in 2006 to discuss various issues related to trans-border rivers under which China provides India with hydrological information on the Brahmaputra and Sutlej Rivers during the flood seasons. (PTI)

Assam man stabbed to death

for post-mortem and informed his family about the incident. Based on Sidharth's complaint, a murder case was lodged against the two brothers. Inderjeet was held from bypass Jhalawar road, where he was allegedly trying to flee Kota, the SP said. The two accused are being interrogated and they would be produced before a court on Saturday, she added. The two brothers and Paranjeet had come to Kota for work six months ago and were sharing a rented room in Transport Nagar in Kota. (PTI)

Himanta in limelight by pushing

emerging victorious in 11 of the 14 parliamentary constituencies while Congress's Gaurav Gogoi wrested the Jorhat seat from BJP and Rakibul Hussain defeated AIUDF leader Badruddin Ajmal by a record margin of over 10 lakh votes. The BJP and its allies also emerged victorious in the by-elections to four assembly constituencies, vacated by members who were elected to the Lok Sabha, with the ruling party successfully breaching the minority stronghold Samaguri, held for over 25 years by the Congress. The implementation of the Citizen Amendment Act (CAA) in March this year appears to have had no impact in the state with only one person, originally from Bangladesh receiving citizenship so far.

Meanwhile, the Centre unlocked the biometrics of over 9 lakh people from Assam who were affected during the National Register of Citizens (NRC) process for issuing Aadhaar cards. The state cabinet, however, decided on the linking of Aadhaar cards with NRC, stating that all applicants will get the unique identity card only if they had applied for NRC. The signing of the tripartite peace agreement with the pro-talks faction of ULFA heralded some hope for lasting peace, although there were misgivings about its fruitfulness as no breakthrough was made regarding dialogue with ULFA(I) led by Paresh Barua.

Although insurgency-related violence dipped over the years, sporadic incidents such as ULFA(I) claiming to have planted "bomb-like objects" during Independence Day and the arrest of militants from a few Upper Assam districts were reported. Security concerns in Assam remained high with the arrest of suspected terrorists, including some Bangladeshis and Rohingyas, who were using the state as a corridor to either go to Delhi or Kashmir.

The situation in neighbouring Bangladesh following the deposition of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and alleged atrocities on minorities in that country also led to concerns in Assam, which shares a 263-km-long border, with the state police beefing up security along the bordering districts.

The recent visit of Sarma to Bhutan, however, opened up new vistas for strengthening economic ties with the Himalayan country. The state was also rocked by the online trading scam which came to the fore in August this year when investors, who had put in huge sums of money in 29-year-old Deepankar Barman's company, complained that he had not paid them the due returns and his office has been closed since August 21. Assam's annual floods continued to wreak havoc, affecting over 50 lakh people, inundating vast tracts of land, claiming the lives of wildlife and livestock and damaging infrastructure. (PTI)

Eight killed, over 20 injured

Urban MLA Jagroop Singh Gill visited the civil hospital here, where the injured were taken. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, in a post on X, said a team of the state administration reached the spot after the accident and the injured were rushed to a hospital.

"I pray to God for peace to the departed souls and a speedy recovery of the injured passengers," Mann said. Former Punjab chief minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Amarinder Singh, in a post on X, said: "Deeply saddened by the tragic bus accident in Bathinda, that has claimed 8 lives and injured 26."

"My heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims. May they find strength in this difficult time and I pray for the quick recovery of all injured." (PTI)

Higher education has transformative role in enriching human resources: Governor

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 27: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya said that higher education has transformative role in shaping individuals, society and the nation and the university like Tezpur University should lead the way in using the reformed human resources towards Viksit Bharat, an official statement said on Friday.

Addressing the 22nd convocation of Tezpur University in Napaam, the Governor said, "Higher education is not merely a means to enhance an individual's knowledge and skills; it is also a powerful instrument for the overall development of society and the nation."

"This academic achievement is a result of your hard work, dedication, and unwavering faith in your goals. I am confident that all of you will continue to contribute to the growth of your family, society, and nation through your knowledge and skills," Acharya stated.

The Governor lauded Tezpur University for setting exemplary standards in education, research, innovation and social service.

He highlighted its role in fostering social awareness and providing quality education, which has earned the institution a distinctive

identity.

The Governor further termed the graduates the greatest assets said that with determination and courage, even the most challenging obstacles can be overcome. As the torchbearers of change, the graduates must remain vigilant and nurture a sense of national loyalty.

He further urged the students to embrace the rapid changes in the domains of knowledge, science, and technology, saying, "To remain relevant in the 21st-century world, you must nurture a continuous desire to learn. Your responsibility extends beyond building a successful life for yourselves which includes contributing significantly to nation-building and societal development."

The Governor encouraged the graduates to work towards creating a harmonious society that ensures dignity for every individual, particularly the underprivileged and marginalized.

He remarked, "Only through such actions can India emerge as a developed, strong, and prosperous nation." During the convocation, the Governor also paid heartfelt tributes to former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who passed away on December 26, 2024.

Assam mourns the loss of former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh

CM Sarma lauds Dr Singh's pivotal role in transforming India's economy

HT Bureau
KOKRAJHAR/GUWAHATI, Dec 27: Assam is mourning following the passing of Dr Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister and a towering figure in Indian politics and economic reforms.

Dr Singh breathed his last on Thursday at 9:15 PM at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi, after suffering a sudden health crisis.

He served as India's 13th Prime Minister from 2004 to 2014, was renowned for his pivotal role in liberalising the Indian economy during his tenure as Finance Minister in the 1990s. A visionary economist and a statesman of unmatched integrity, his contributions have left an indelible mark on the nation's history.

Dr Manmohan Singh shared a special bond with Assam, having represented the state in the Rajya Sabha for an unprecedented 28 years, starting in 1991.

His tenure as a representative of Assam brought attention and resources to the state, which he frequently visited during his time in office.

In 2012, Dr Singh visited Kokrajhar in the Bodoland Territorial Council meeting people from various communities and addressing their concerns.

Prominent leaders from Assam and across the nation have expressed their condolences and paid tribute to Dr Singh.

Pramod Boro, chief executive member (CEM) of the Bodoland Territorial Region and President of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), called him a leader whose "legacy as a statesman and economist will inspire generations to come."

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also extended his heartfelt condolences, reminiscing about Dr Singh's humility and intellectual brilliance.

"I have had the privilege of knowing Dr Manmohan Singh Ji since 1991. In all my interactions, his simplicity and decency, combined with his intellectual prowess, always stood out," Dr. Sarma stated.

He lauded Dr Singh's pivotal role in transforming India's economy and ending decades of regressive policies.

Meanwhile, All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) also expressed profound sorrow and extended heartfelt condolences on the passing of Dr Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India and a towering figure in Indian politics.

In a statement, ABSU president Dipen Boro and general secretary Khanindra Basumatary highlighted Dr Singh's immense contributions to the nation, stating, "Dr Manmohan Singh was a remarkable statesman who played a pivotal role in strengthening and shaping the Indian economy during his tenure. His dedication to public service, humility, and commitment to the betterment of the nation will always be remembered."

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya condoled the demise of former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, an official statement said on Friday.

In his condolence message, Acharya termed Dr Manmohan Singh's death a great loss to the nation who spearheaded India's economic reforms scripting a new height in economic management.

"As a public representative he contributed

immensely to the general welfare of the people at large. He served the country with deep commitment, love and compassion. Assam was very close to his heart, as he represented Assam for 28 years," the Governor said.

"I convey my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members and pray to God to be with the bereaved family members in this testing time. May his soul rest in peace", the Governor added.

Our Sivasagar correspondent adds: The Sivasagar Doulmukh Chariyal Byabasayee Santha held a condolence meeting at Swahid Khasgar Talukdar Market to mourn the death of former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

Local leaders, including journalist Sonesh Deka, trader association president Anil Gupta, and educationist Jyoti Dutta, paid tribute to Dr Singh recalling his contributions to Assam, especially in funding infrastructure like the indoor stadium at Government High Secondary School.

At Rajiv Bhawan, a condolence meeting was organised by the Congress, where leaders such as Lakhi Handique, Manjeer Gogoi and Monoranjan Borgohain spoke about Dr Singh's economic reforms and his amiable personality.

The meetings were attended by several Congress workers and local residents, reflecting on Dr Singh's lasting impact on India's economic growth.



Tezpur Literary Festival concludes



HT Bureau
TEZPUR, Dec 27: The three-day Tezpur Literary Festival (TLF) concluded recently, with a vibrant finale at NERIWALM, bringing together literature, storytelling, and cultural heritage in a celebration of creativity and community. The festival attracted intellectuals, authors, artists and literature enthusiasts from across the region.

The concluding day began with the session "Catalysts of Change: Pioneering Progress in the Socio-Economic Landscape," featuring Neelam Dutta and Puspadhar Das.

Moderated by Pankaj Das, the discussion explored ways to foster entrepreneurship in

Assam, revolutionise agriculture with innovative practices, and promote Assamese cuisine as a global cultural and economic asset.

The speakers called on the youth to lead in reimagining agriculture and cuisine as pillars of sustainable progress.

Renowned author and translator Mitra Phukan conducted a "Workshop on Translation", moderated by Dr Rajlakshmi Basumatary. She highlighted the creative possibilities and challenges of literary translation, emphasising the need to preserve cultural and emotional nuances.

"In translation, we are translating not just words, but cultures and stories," she remarked.

Former Indian volleyball captain Abhijit Bhattacharya was felicitated online during the session. He shared insights into the success of the Brahmaputra Volleyball League and announced the upcoming Super League in Tezpur on January 23, 2025.

The "Versified Hues" multilingual poetry and prose session, moderated by Himanshu Raj Borah, celebrated linguistic diversity with poetic recitations in English, Assamese, Hindi, Bengali and Sadi.

A festival highlight, the Galpalkatha storytelling session, featured Atanu Bhattacharya and Mitali De narrating Gulzar's "Dhuwa" and the Bengali tale "Heera Besibole Oha Manuh Jon", accompanied by Raktim Goswami's guitar melodies.

The festival concluded with a grand valedictory session, graced by Assamese actor and voice artist Kapil Bora as the chief guest.

Bora reminisced about filming his first movie at the NERIWALM venue and spoke on the role of books and literature in fuelling creativity. He distributed prizes to quiz winners and contributors, while TLF's advisors and sponsors were felicitated.

Coordinator Pankaj Das delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks, marking the end of the festival. The Tezpur Literary Festival was lauded as a resounding success, celebrating the power of literature to connect people, languages, and traditions while inspiring creativity and community growth.

AWU introduces Humanoid Robot to teach English



HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Dec 27: Assam Women's University (AWU) has launched an innovative initiative using a humanoid robot named "Maya" to teach English at peripheral schools in the Kowriah area.

The humanoid robot is specifically designed to make language learning interactive and enjoyable.

Highlighting the significance of the initiative, Prof Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar, vice-chancellor of AWU said, "This is the first start-up on campus. This initiative reflects the university's dedication towards applying technology in the field of education to overcome challenges in teaching and learning, particularly in areas with limited access to quality resources. It's a step toward reimagining education for a better future."

The robot was developed by Prakash Jyoti Das, faculty of computer science and technology and said that it is equipped with AI-driven teaching capabilities designed to make learning interactive and effective.

Vice-Chancellor Rajkonwar described it as the university's first start-up and a significant step toward transforming education in resource-limited areas.

Head of English Department, Dr Prashanta Puzari has announced the plans to expand the initiative, aiming to inspire educational excellence across more schools.

The project has been widely lauded by parents and educators as a pioneering effort in Northeast India.

Day-long event held on Science Conference Project

HT Correspondent
HOWRAGHAT, Dec 27: The Assam Council of Science, Technology and Environment, in collaboration with Aryabhata Science Centre and the National Children's Science Conference, hosted a day-long event on Children's Science Conference project on science research under National Discovery Mission at Howraghat Nagar Girls Higher Secondary School on Friday.

The conference, focusing on "Traditional Knowledge Methods for Sustainable Development," featured projects from class IX to XII students to from 16 government and provincialised schools.

The event aimed to nurture scientific thinking among students and highlight sustainable development through traditional knowledge.

A total of thirty projects were presented in the event, with all participants receiving certificates.

The event was inaugurated by Karuna Kanta Boro, retired senior teacher of Ok-Kereng High School.

It was attended by dignitaries such as principal of Howraghat English Medium High School, Mukhtal Das; senior teacher of Rajapathar High School Lalita Bardoloi; senior teacher of Howraghat Nagar Girls High School, Krishna Rajbanshi and district coordinator of Aryabhata Science Center Karbi Anglong District, Bhavananda as distinguished guests.

HT Correspondent
MORIGAON, Dec 27: The two-day Nath-Jugi Sahitya Sanmilan-2024 began at Morigaon Bihutoli ground on Friday, aiming to promote Nath-Jugi literature.

The event commenced with the hoisting of the organisation's flag by the president of district committee Lakhajyoti Nath, followed by the flag-raising of Sahitya Sanskriti by vice president Balen Ch Barua.

The ceremony included a 'smriti tarpan' by the reception committee president Basanta Kr Nath and ceremonial lamp lighting by educationist Punaram Nath. In conjunction with the event, a 'health mela' was inaugurated by Dr Arun Kr Nath, joint director of health, Morigaon.

The food hall was inaugurated by Mayong College's Samir Kr Nath and Minalini Devi.

A poetry recitation event was inaugurated by Dr Jayanta Kr Nath with Dr Utpal Nath of Mayong College conducting the session.

The cultural segment included folk song and dance performances from artists of Darrang and Kokrajhar, inaugurated by district officer Angshuman Dutta. The program will conclude on Saturday with various cultural performances.

Two-day Nath-Jugi Sahitya Sanmilan kicks off in Morigaon

HT Correspondent
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Governor reviews government schemes in Jamugurihat

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, Dec 27: Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya reviewed government schemes in Jamugurihat on Friday, as a part of his 3 day visit in Sonitpur district.

After attending the convocation at Tezpur University, the Governor toured the Kanyaka Bahumukhi Krishi Farm, where he was felicitated by the Kanyaka family.

He planted a sapling at the farm's namghar and toured various facilities including the nursery, fish farm, dairy farm, poultry farm, and piggery.

The Governor later visited Moronakuri village, where he experienced Assamese culture and cuisine, including traditional

dishes like chungu pitha and til pitha. He interacted with villagers, farmers and children and took stock of ongoing government schemes such as the JJM project and Adarsha Anganwadi center.

He further had a brief interaction with the teachers of Ghiladhari LP School.

The Governor's visit highlighted the state's efforts in community development and the implementation of government welfare schemes.

The governor was accompanied by Kumud Devi, the first lady of the state, Sootea MLA Padma Hazarika, district commissioner of Sonitpur Ankur Bharali, SP, Sonitpur Barun Purkayastha, ADCs besides other officials during the entire tour.

Brother appeals to public to find his missing brother and sister-in-law

HT Correspondent
BOKAJAN, Dec 27: The brother of a couple, who had gone missing since November 2, has urged public to inform police if they find any leads about them.

The missing couple has been identified as Pontu Buragohain and Bobita Buragohain, both residents of Vopong Terang village in Karbi Anglong's Sukhanjan.

As per family members, first Pontu went missing in Kerala where he used to work and subsequently his wife - Bobita Buragohain - also disappeared from the house leaving behind a 14 month old baby.

Following this, the family members launched a search hunt for both in Bokajan as well as in Kerala. However, they failed to collect any information about them.

Upon failing in their attempts, the family eventually knocked the door of police station and lodged a missing complaint.

Nowgong college professor honoured for research excellence in Lichenology

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Dec 27: Dr Farista Yasmin, an associate Professor in the Department of Botany at Nowgong College has been honoured with the prestigious title of 'Fellow for the year 2024' by the Indian Lichenological Society in Lucknow.

She was felicitated and honoured for her exceptional contributions to the field of lichenology.

Dr Yasmin has made significant discoveries, including the identification of two new species of lichens from Assam and the documentation of 628 lichen species.

Notably, she has also recorded 105 species of lichens, one of which is a new addition to India's lichenological records.

Her research has set new milestones in the study of lichens, marking a major achievement in the scientific community.

Distinguished guests, including Dr Mukut Goswami a prominent physician and donor of the Dulal Chandra Goswami Memorial Research Award, attended the event.

Dr Goswami praised Dr Yasmin's remarkable work and congratulated her for bringing distinction to both the college and the state.

The ceremony was attended by



Dr Yasmin's students, colleagues and well-wishers, along with online participation from eminent personalities such as Dr Sanjiva Nayaka, chief scientist at the National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow and Dr Jagannath Vishwakarma, senior scientist at the University of Bristol.

In addition to Dr Yasmin's felicitation, the event featured the release of the Department of Botany's annual newsletter, "Green Leaf."

Another highlight of the ceremony was the recognition of Deepjyoti Deka, a former student of the department, for clearing the Combined Assam Public Service Commission examination.

The administration of Nowgong College has expressed immense pride in her accomplishment, acknowledging the global recognition she has brought to the institution.

Nagaon Police seize drugs worth over ₹3 crores

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Dec 27: In a major drug bust, Nagaon police seized a large consignment of narcotics valued at over ₹3 crores.

The drugs were discovered on Thursday hidden in a vehicle, which had been kept under police custody at Nagaon Sadar police station after being seized during an anti-drug operation at Anand Nagar in Nagaon town.

The operation followed the arrest of a drug peddler, Anzar Hussain, on December 6. Although initial attempts to seize the drugs were unsuccessful, as Hussain reportedly set them on fire inside his toilet, the police later seized a vehicle (registration number AS 01 AX2621) from his residence.

The police conducted a thorough search of the vehicle in the presence of a magistrate and uncovered 44 packets of drugs concealed in a secret chamber. The estimated market value of the seized drugs is over ₹3 crores.

Further investigations are ongoing, and authorities are continuing their efforts to dismantle the local drug network.

Rotary Clubs host musical event to promote awareness on organ donation



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 27: In an extraordinary blend of music and social awareness, six Rotary Clubs (RC) of Guwahati recently hosted a musical event to promote awareness on organ donation.

The six Rotary Clubs, known as RC Guwahati, RC Gauhati South, RC Guwahati Metro, RC Gauhati West, RC Guwahati Luit, and RC Guwahati Icons, hosted Musicologies - Sangeet se Sanjivani, a spectacular event celebrating the life-saving importance of organ donation and the timeless legacy of music.

The event marked the birth centenary of legendary singer Mohammed Rafi.

It was held in association with Zublee Foundation and IFRM 3240 Guwahati Symphony.

The Assam Tribune partnered as the Print Media Sponsor, with support from esteemed organisations like Subham, SBI, DY365, and Gupshup.

The day began with an Organ-O-Walk rally from Lataasil playground which flagged off by Bornali Sharma, secretary of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Assam.

Over 300 participants carried banners advocating organ donation, followed by an energetic Zumba session led by Ms Hasina of Gold Gym.

The event served as a platform for powerful video messages on organ donation and Rotary Clubs' community initiatives. In a special message, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma complimented the initiative for raising awareness for the life saving practice of Organ donation.

The combined efforts of the six Rotary Clubs and their partners ensured the programme's success, leaving the audience both entertained and inspired to support organ donation.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country. - John F Kennedy

Architect of India's economic reforms

On June 21, 1991, the 70-year-old Congress veteran P V Narasimha Rao took oath as the Prime Minister of a minority government amidst massive political uncertainty over its survival. The Congress had got only 232 seats against the usual majority of 272 in the Lok Sabha elections in 1991 out of the total strength of 543. The next 34 days from June 21 to July 24, the day, P V Narasimha Rao's first budget was presented by the Finance Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, had all the elements of a high octane political and economic thriller which can be made use of by an ace director to make a top-class eco-political film. The soft-spoken Rao, the former chief minister of Andhra Pradesh who knew 17 languages, created history by pioneering the economic reforms through his first budget and the new industrial policy presented on the same day July 24. In full collaboration with the economist and finance minister Dr Manmohan Singh. Those who had the opportunity to observe the developments from close quarters in those tumultuous days, saw how resolutely, Prime Minister Rao protected his finance minister from all attacks by his senior Congress colleagues and led the senior bureaucrats to go ahead with the reforms programme despite continuous feedback from the Congress seniors that Rao was deviating from Nehruvian policies.

The Rao government had the benefit of a qualified team of senior bureaucrats who worked till late night in fine-tuning the explosive new ideas of the Prime Minister and the finance minister. On D-Day, July 24, the Prime Minister was quite nervous in the morning. But Singh's 1991 budget unshackled India's economy, significantly enhancing the economic prospects for hundreds of millions of Indians. Dr Singh, often hailed as the architect of modern India's economic reforms, also championed environmental conservation and climate action during his decade-long tenure as prime minister (2004-2014). He was a brilliant economist with a great vision of what India could be, combined with a fine sense of what was possible politically... the liberalisation and reforms he undertook with the support of Prime Minister Rao laid the foundations of the modern Indian economy. Under his leadership, India launched the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), passed the landmark Forest Rights Act (FRA) to protect the rights of tribal communities and established the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to safeguard the environment through swift legal action.

For centuries, India's tribal communities were sidelined from decisions about their own land. The UPA-1 government under Singh flipped that script. His government passed the Forest Rights Act in 2006, handing back the control of forests to the people who lived in and protected them. Unassuming, erudite, soft-spoken and a consensus builder, Singh died at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Thursday. He was 92. The Congress leader, who steered India for 10 years from 2004 to 2014 and helped set up the country's economic framework as finance minister. Dr Singh, admired for his sharp intellect, innate modesty, and personal integrity - qualities rarely found in politics, will be remembered as one of the greatest political leaders not only in India but also globally.

Dr Manmohan Singh: The architect of Indian economy

On December 26, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, announced his passing. Dr Singh, who had been in frail health for months, succumbed to age-related complications after losing consciousness at his residence earlier that evening

By: Dipak Kurmi

Dr. Manmohan Singh, India's former Prime Minister and the architect of the nation's economic liberalization, passed away at the age of 92. His demise marks the end of an era, leaving behind an indelible legacy of economic transformation, political astuteness, and unparalleled statesmanship. A luminary of modern India, Dr. Singh's contributions spanned over five decades, encompassing roles as an economist, reformer, and leader who profoundly influenced the trajectory of the nation.

On December 26, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, announced his passing. Dr. Singh, who had been in frail health for months, succumbed to age-related complications after losing consciousness at his residence earlier that evening. Despite resuscitative measures, he was declared dead at 9:51 PM. His death has left the nation in mourning, with tributes pouring in from political leaders, intellectuals, and citizens across the country.

Dr. Singh's life was a testament to the transformative power of vision and perseverance. Born in 1932, his academic journey began at Panjab University and culminated at Oxford University, where he earned a D.Phil in Economics. An illustrious career in academia and bureaucracy followed, with pivotal roles such as Chief Economic Advisor, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, and Secretary-General of the South Commission in Geneva. His intellectual rigor and economic expertise laid the foundation for his most significant contribution to India's history—the economic reforms of 1991.

The Architect of Economic Liberalization

As Finance Minister in Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's government, Dr. Singh steered India out of an economic abyss. Faced with a severe balance-of-payments crisis, he dismantled the labyrinthine "Control Raj" of permits and licenses, ushering in a new era of economic liberalization. His reforms reduced bureaucratic hurdles, introduced competition, and opened India's doors to foreign investments and global trade. These changes not only stabilized the economy but also set the stage for unprecedented

growth.

Under Dr. Singh's stewardship, India transitioned from the "Hindu rate of growth" of 3.5% annually to a robust growth rate exceeding 7%. This economic renaissance spurred technological advancements, industrialization, and urbanization, lifting millions out of poverty. The reforms also democratized access to consumer goods, making automobiles, electronics, and improved dietary options available to the burgeoning middle class and lower-income groups.

Dr. Singh's vision extended beyond economic metrics. He sought to empower the Indian populace by fostering entrepreneurship, encouraging innovation, and promoting education. His policies reflected a commitment to creating a more equitable society while integrating India into the global economic order.

A Statesman of Unmatched Dignity

As Prime Minister from 2004 to 2014, Dr. Singh led the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government with humility and quiet determination. While Sonia Gandhi managed party dynamics and Pranab Mukherjee handled day-to-day governance, Dr. Singh focused on overarching policy frameworks. His leadership style, marked by restraint and intellect, stood in stark contrast to the theatrics often associated with Indian politics.

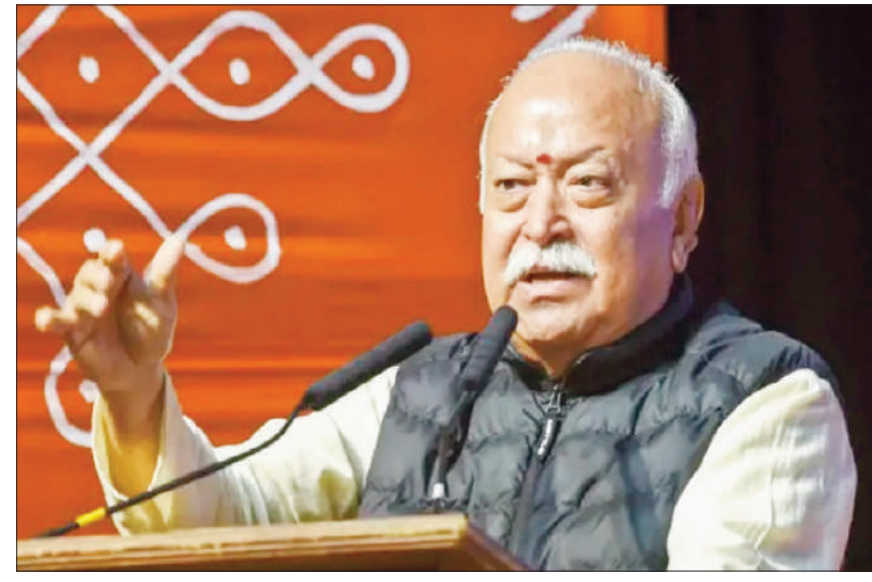
One of Dr. Singh's crowning achievements was the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement, which ended India's decades-long nuclear isolation. Despite vehement opposition from his Leftist allies, he demonstrated remarkable courage and conviction, prioritizing the nation's strategic interests. The deal not only bolstered India's energy security but also elevated its status as a responsible nuclear power on the global stage.

Dr. Singh's tenure was also marked by deft diplomacy. He skillfully navigated India's relationships with neighboring countries and major global powers, turning international challenges into opportunities. Following the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, he galvanized global support against Pakistan's state-sponsored terrorism, isolating Islamabad on the world stage without resorting to military conflict.

The Undervalued Communicator

Political climate in many countries has been altering these days. There have been reasons behind trends that have democratically overthrown incumbent governments. But there have also been chaos and skirmishes and armed rebellions in streets in some countries which ultimately vanquished ruling regimes. Bangladesh, India's neighborhood, was one among those regions that empowered its people to overthrow an elected government, which they call, a popular uprising that converted the country into a radical destination for the Islamists. What followed after the eviction of Sheikh Hasina was heart wrenching and horrendous. Minorities, especially hundreds of Hindus and Buddhists were thrashed, molested, raped and burnt alive. The situation in that country came as a convincing example for the rest of the world that intolerance of the majority can any time turn into an unpredictable violence with its gargantuan dominance on the minorities.

India's case is different. Here, the majority, the Hindus, hold a different philosophy that rests on the pillars of assimilation and acceptance. The majority in India has been extremely magnanimous when it comes to their habit of sharing space for others. But its history has been ridiculously manipulated and concealed of facts by the perpetrators, the historians who could easily mislead and misrepresent it for decades. Invasions, aggressions and the polarization of the Hindus have been consistently depositing emotional insecurity and apathy on them. Their temples and spiritual places were toppled and distorted and they still remain symbols of barbaric aggression causing indelible wounds in their minds. Obviously there had been vigor and valor. But there had also been helplessness and the vacuum it created throughout the journey of independent India was unfathomable. Their resentment was silent, and their approach was conservative and they could easily be polarized in the name of caste, and they could not activate a profound momentum against the partiality they suffered. Leaders at the time of India's independence, after slicing a radical Islamist region out of its landmass, conceived a new India, which was secular in nature and accommodated everybody including those who shamefacedly raised slogans for a particular state in the name of religion. Everybody had a space for survival in India. But Pakistan was the creation of animosity being hatched for years in the name of a religious belief and its intolerance geared up all through the



dark days of freedom struggle slitting the veins of togetherness.

What remained unseen for years were the bruises of the Islamic invasion and the brutal partition of India and the horror it had on the majority. Vulnerability to the extent of distrusting a man at the neighborhood for his being the follower of a different religion was the worst. Ideologically convulsed and irritably intolerant were the beliefs of the conspirators. People representing such beliefs placed their religion beyond the glory of the nation and they strictly believed that their acrimonious behavior and if necessary, their death too, would justify their 'holy' stance - India's division. Though the struggle for freedom was a common cause, there had been this exasperation which emanated from the conflict of identity. Ultimately leading to the vivisection of an inclusive nation that attracted prominent faiths from across the globe, India's ruling regimes from the beginning of its independent journey failed to demonstrably help its major chunk of population witness justice.

Well before India's independence, there had also been thoughts that began to sense urgency for a Hindu unity. The undercurrent of intolerance and distrust in the name of religion remained a reality and probably that was the reason which propelled a thought process for a new organization; an organization that would seek the unity of Hindus and would ultimately lead the country to its

freedom. In 1925 an organization intended to organize the Hindu majority was established which later came to be known as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The formation of RSS had also been the result of the ruthless killing of innocent Hindus by a Muslim mob in the Malabar region of Kerala in 1921. Though banned multiple times, the Sangh enhanced its reach and power all over the country ever since the British left its soil. Growing to the level of forming governments in India, today its eminence, prominence and dominance became unquestionable.

In fact the temples and religious places which were plucked and pillaged during

the external aggression remained inconceivably painful among the majority while laws and lawmaking mechanisms of the country consistently strengthened the Muslim minority from all directions, unpardonably submissive to its collective vote bank. Multiple laws get enacted phenomenally over and over again just to satiate the Muslim interests while disparagement of the majority continued to be disregarded under the regimes led by the Congress for decades. Things began to change in 2014, when Narendra Modi, a present-day incarnation of the Hindutva political ecosystem gained accolades. Ever since, there have been distinct and extraordinary approaches from the regime's side to strengthen the feelings of the majority.

Since 2014, elections across the country

Mohan Bhagwat's bold tutoring - Sign of an internal disquiet?

have reverberated slogans signaling the unity of the Hindus, though the Prime Minister was visibly hesitant to go with the flow until recently. Election results to the Jammu-Kashmir assembly might have shaken his conviction. This time, in Maharashtra, Narendra Modi's "Divided we fall" call had broken the long-standing precedent of a feeble coalition with BJP an underdog. The electorate of the state blessed his party with a commendable victory. The saffron camp's concerns have been intense as Muslim unity has been visibly toppling electoral equations in various pockets.

There have also been attempts to revive the fallen spiritual structures including the Ayodhya through judicial processes. The recent attempts to revive Gyanvapi, Mathura Krishna temple and the controversy erupting from Sambhal began to gain prominence mainly due to the legal interventions of individuals and agencies outside the government and the ecosystem of RSS. There has been a confusion simmering so strong ever since Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS chief came all guns blazing against such movements. His point of warning to those on the forefront of this emancipation spree was to shed such demands of revival. He critiqued them for attempting to viciously break the amiability among religions by disruptively searching for buried debris of temples under mosques. He stretched his hands of friendship ideally by visiting mosques and conversing with Muslim clergymen. But his attempts seemed to have not gone well among the Sangh Parivar. This time his suggestion was to forget and forgive even though moments of horrors and bloodshed from the past are bound to haunt the majority. Quite unusually, Bhagwat's statements brought bitter resentments among sages. Some of whom publicly reprimanded him for confusing people. Jagadguru Ramabhadra charya slammed the RSS Chief for his mandir-masjid remarks. As the year draws to a close, there seems to be an emotional wrestling match evolving between the Sangh and the sages. Does the BJP subscribe to the views of Mohan Bhagwat, or will it go ahead with its unity slogans "batoge to katoge" and "ek hai to safe hai"? Year 2025 is the centenary of the RSS. We need to wait until next year to know how the Sangh Parivar is going to perceive the blistering remarks of its chief. (The author and freelance journalist who can be reached at mr_lalu@30gmail.com)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: M.R.Lalu

Dr Manmohan Singh: A silent reformer

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The story of Dr. Manmohan Singh is one of quiet perseverance, unwavering integrity, and transformative leadership. Throughout his life, he exemplified a unique blend of intellectual brilliance and humility, leaving an indelible mark on India's economic and political landscape. His passing marks the end of an era, but his legacy as a silent reformer endures, offering valuable lessons for generations to come.

Born in the modest village of Gah, now in Pakistan, on September 26, 1932, Dr. Singh experienced the upheavals of Partition firsthand. This early exposure to loss and displacement forged a resilience that defined his character. His academic journey, which took him from Panjab University to the University of Cambridge and later to Oxford, was a testament to his exceptional intellect. Dr. Singh's scholarly pursuits were rooted in economics, a field where he would later make groundbreaking contributions as a policymaker.

Dr. Singh first came to national prominence during the economic crisis of 1991, when India faced a balance of payments crisis that threatened its financial stability. As Finance Minister under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, Dr. Singh was entrusted with the monumental task of rescuing the economy. In what can only be described as a watershed moment, he introduced a series of economic liberalization measures that dismantled decades of protectionism. These reforms opened India's doors to global trade and investment, ushering in a period of unprecedented economic growth. His famous assertion in Parliament—"No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come"—captured the urgency and inevitability of the changes he championed.

The liberalization of the Indian economy under Dr. Singh's stewardship marked a departure from the License Raj, a system that had stifled entrepreneurship and innovation. By eliminating bureaucratic hurdles, encouraging foreign investment, and reducing trade barriers, he laid the foundation for India's transformation into a global economic powerhouse. These reforms were not without controversy; critics argued that they widened income disparities and left some sections of society behind. Yet, Dr. Singh's vision was clear—economic growth was essential for lifting millions out of poverty and securing India's place on the global stage.

In 2004, Dr. Singh assumed the role of Prime Minister, leading a coalition government that required delicate balancing acts to maintain stability. His tenure was characterized by policies aimed at inclusive growth, reflecting his deep concern for the underprivileged. Landmark initiatives such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Right to Information Act empowered millions of Indians, particularly in rural areas. These policies underscored his belief that economic progress must translate into tangible benefits for the marginalized.

Dr. Singh's approach to governance was rooted in consensus-building and quiet diplomacy. In stark contrast to the often confrontational style of contemporary politics, he relied on dialogue and mutual respect to navigate the complexities of coalition poli-



tics. His ability to maintain composure under pressure earned him respect across the political spectrum. This was particularly evident in his handling of the Indo-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement, a landmark deal that not only strengthened India's energy security but also cemented its position as a responsible global power.

Despite his achievements, Dr. Singh's tenure as Prime Minister was not without challenges. Allegations of corruption and

Born in the modest village of Gah, now in Pakistan, on September 26, 1932, Dr. Singh experienced the upheavals of Partition firsthand. This early exposure to loss and displacement forged a resilience that defined his character

policy paralysis during his second term tarnished the public perception of his government. Critics accused him of being overly reticent and failing to assert himself against vested interests within his coalition. Yet, even his harshest detractors acknowledged his personal integrity. Dr. Singh's reputation as a leader who placed national interest above all else remained intact, a rarity in an era of increasing political opportunism.

One of Dr. Singh's most defining qualities was his humility. He was a leader who never sought the spotlight, preferring instead to let his work speak for itself. This humility extended to his interactions with colleagues, opponents, and the public. He often described himself as an "accidental politician," a phrase that belied his profound understanding of governance and policy. For Dr. Singh, leadership was not about rhetoric or personal aggrandizement; it was about service to the nation.

Dr. Singh's legacy is multifaceted. As an economist, he redefined India's economic trajectory, proving that bold reforms could coexist with social responsibility. As a

statesman, he demonstrated the power of quiet diplomacy, earning the respect of global leaders. As a Prime Minister, he prioritized the welfare of ordinary citizens, ensuring that the benefits of growth reached the most vulnerable sections of society. But perhaps his greatest contribution was his unwavering commitment to ethical governance.

In an age of hyper-partisanship and political grandstanding, Dr. Singh's measured approach to leadership stands out as a beacon of hope. He showed that effective governance does not require theatrics but rather a deep understanding of issues, a clear vision, and a steadfast commitment to the greater good. His calm demeanor and thoughtful decision-making were a welcome antidote to the often chaotic nature of Indian politics.

Dr. Singh's life was a journey of service, guided by principles of honesty, compassion, and intellectual rigor. His contributions to India's growth and development are immense, but his legacy extends beyond policies and reforms. He leaves behind an example of leadership that is as relevant today as it was during his time in office. At a time when the world faces complex challenges, from economic inequality to climate change, the values Dr. Singh espoused—integrity, humility, and a focus on long-term solutions—offer invaluable lessons.

As India mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished leaders, it is also an opportunity to reflect on the principles that defined his life. Dr. Singh's journey from a small village in Panjab to the highest echelons of power is a testament to the transformative power of education, perseverance, and a commitment to excellence. His story is a reminder that true leadership lies not in words but in deeds, not in power but in purpose.

Dr. Manmohan Singh was more than a reformer; he was a visionary who shaped the destiny of a nation with quiet determination and unshakable resolve. His legacy will continue to inspire future generations, reminding them that even in the most challenging of times, progress is possible when guided by integrity and a clear vision. As we bid farewell to this extraordinary leader, we carry forward his dream of a more prosperous, equitable, and compassionate India. (The Writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-magazine SAMPROTIK who can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

Career in Meditation

By: **Ranjan K Baruah**

We should know that according to archaeologists, meditation dates back to 5,000 BCE, and the practice itself has ties in ancient Egypt and China, Judaism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism. Additionally estimates suggest that between 200 and 500 million people practice meditation worldwide. There is no doubt that meditation can help reduce stress, blood pressure and anxiety, promote emotional health, enhance self-awareness and improve sleep.

We are discussing meditation and how we can choose it as a career path for ourselves. It is an earliest practice that involves fo-

cus on one's concentration on the present moment. Rooted in religious, yogic, and secular traditions across cultures, meditation has been practiced for thousands of years. Today, it is embraced worldwide, transcending its spiritual origins to become a universal mechanism for personal well-being and mental health.

The most recognized definition of meditation generally describes it as a practice where an individual uses techniques such as mindfulness, focused attention, or concentrated thought to train the mind and achieve a state of mental clarity, emotional calmness, and physical relaxation.

There are diverse types of meditation, each offering unique

approaches to achieving calm, clarity, and balance. Research underscores its ability to reduce stress, improve focus and emotional balance, alleviating anxiety and depression, and enhance sleep quality. It also contributes to better physical health, including lowering blood pressure and managing pain.

Technology has further expanded access to meditation, with apps and online platforms enabling individuals to practice anywhere and anytime. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the significant benefits of meditation, particularly mindfulness meditation. WHO's discussions on stress management underscore the importance of learning coping

mechanisms, such as meditation, to support mental and physical well-being.

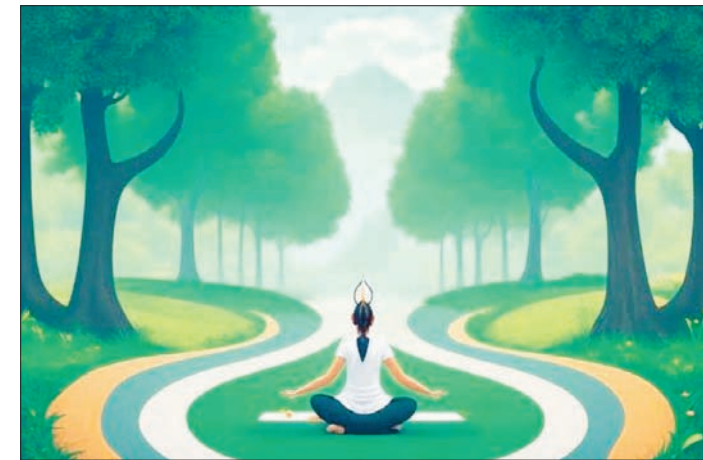
The WHO acknowledges the mental health benefits of practices like yoga, which often incorporate meditative elements. To raise awareness about meditation and its benefits, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21 December as World Meditation Day, recalling the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

There are courses related to meditation in different parts of India which cover a range of meditation techniques, including mindfulness, Vedic Japa, Vipassana, Kundalini, and more. These

courses can be suitable for those who want to teach meditation or deepen their own practice. Courses are available for beginners who want to deepen their practice and learn about the relationship between the mind and meditation.

One may choose the course for self or to impart training to others. We have already seen the mental stress amongst people due to work pressure and other issues. Meditation can be one of the best tools to keep balance in life and get rid of many mind issues. There are demands for experts in educational institutions, corporate to impart meditation.

One may not get a direct job in the government sector but they



may work with the government and get engaged in many other ways for which apart from becoming an expert in meditation they must have other skills. Patience, good communication skills are a must apart from other skills. (The write is a Career

Mentor and Skill Trainer and currently the Advisor, Skill Employment and Entrepreneurship Department of Bodoland Territorial Council and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 8473943734

NIACL Assistant Recruitment 2025 – 500 Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 01/01/2025

The New India Assurance Company Ltd. (NIACL) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 500 Assistant posts in Class III cadre. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Assistant
No of posts: 500 posts

No of posts in Assam: 6 posts
Category-wise vacancy:

UR: 260
SC: 91
ST: 51
OBC: 48
EWS: 10

Pay scale: Rs.22405-1305(1)-23710-1425(2)-26560-1605(5)-34585-1855(2)-38295-2260(3)-45075-2345(2)-49765-2500(5)-62265

Eligibility Criteria of NIACL Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidates age must be between 21 to 30 years as on 1st December 2024.

Age Relaxation: Category-wise age relaxation is as follows

SC/ ST: 5 years
OBC-NCL: 3 years
PwBD: 10 years

Educational Qualification: A candidate must possess the minimum qualification of Graduation in any discipline from a recognized University or any equivalent qualification recognized as such by the Central Government. The candidate should have passed in English as one of the subjects at SSC / HSC / Intermediate / Graduation level. Candidate should possess certificate in proof of passing the qualifying examination as on 01/12/2024.

Language Proficiency: Knowledge of Reading, Writing and Speaking of Regional Language of the State / UT against the vacancies for which a candidate wishes to apply, is essential. To ascertain the candidate's familiarity with the Regional Language of the State / UT, a language test will be conducted before final selection. Candidates not found to be proficient in the Regional Language Test would be disqualified.

Application Fee (Non-Refundable):

SC/ ST / PwBD: Rs. 100/- (Intimation charge only)
Others: Rs. 850/- (Application fee including intimation charges)
Payment mode: Debit Cards (RuPay/Visa/MasterCard/Maestro), Credit Cards, Internet Banking, IMPS, Cash Cards/ Mobile Wallets

How to Apply for NIACL Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy through online mode by visiting official NIACL Recruitment Portal. Candidates may follow below mentioned steps to apply for NIACL Assistant Vacancy.

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .
Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process by clicking "Register Now".
Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.
Next, pay the application fee as per your category and submit the form.
At the end, take a print out of the application form .

Important Dates of NIACL Recruitment 2025

Starting date to apply online & fee payment: 17th December 2024
Closing date to apply online & fee payment: 1st January 2025
Tier I Online Examination (Preliminary Exam): 27th January 2025
Tier II Online Examination (Main Exam): 2nd March 2025
Download of Call Letters: 7 days prior to the date of each examination.

Selection Process of New India Assurance Assistant Recruitment

The selection process of New India Assurance Assistant Recruitment consists of following stages -

Tier I : Preliminary Examination

Preliminary Examination consisting of Objective Tests for 100 marks will be conducted online. This would consist of 3 sections (with separate timings of 20 minutes for each section) as follows:

| Section/s | Max. Marks |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Test of English Language | 30 |
| Test of Reasoning | 35 |
| Test of Numerical Ability | 35 |

Exam centres in Assam: Dibrugarh, Guwahati, Jorhat, Silchar and Tezpur

Tier II: Main Examination

The Main Examination for 250 marks, would be of tentatively 2 hours duration (separate time for each test / section or composite time) and will consist of 5 sections as follows with 40 questions each.

| Section/s | Max. Marks |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Test of Reasoning | 50 |
| Test of English Language | 50 |
| Test of General Awareness | 50 |
| Test of Numerical Ability | 50 |
| Computer Knowledge | 50 |

Exam centre in Assam: Guwahati

Tier III: Regional Language Test

Candidates shortlisted in the online Main Examination will subsequently be called for Regional Language Test to be conducted by the Company, at select centres. Candidates applying for vacancy under State / UT other than their domiciled State / UT, have to appear and qualify the Regional Language Test in the language of State / UT for which they have applied.

The Regional Language Test will be of qualifying nature only. No Scores will be allotted for the same.

The scores obtained by the candidates in the Online Main Examination will be considered while arriving at the Final Ranking subject to their qualifying the Regional Language Test. Candidate should be sufficiently high in the Merit List to be shortlisted for subsequent Recruitment process.

Assam Cancer Care Foundation Recruitment – 56 Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 05/01/2025

Assam Cancer Care Foundation (ACCF) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 56 District Coordinator, Dentist and Staff Nurse posts under Assam Cancer Care Foundation (ACCF). Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

1. District Coordinator

No of post: 11 posts

Educational Qualification: Masters in Social Work with 1 year of experience in health sector. OR Any Graduate with 3 years of experience in health sector.

Experience: 1-3 years in health sector.

Job Location: Tinsukia, Nagaon, Goalpara, Sree Bhumi, Majuli, Dhubri, Morigan, Dima Hasao, Nalbari, Baksa and Dhemajai.

2. Dentist

No of post: 14 posts

Educational Qualification: Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) from a recognized university with minimum 1 year of experience.

Experience: 1 year.

Job Location: Nagoan, Goalpara, Golaghat, Dhubri, Biswanath, Chirang, Dima Hasao, Charaideo, Sree Bhumi, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Bongaigaon, Nalbari and Hojai.

3. Staff Nurse

No of post: 31 posts

Educational Qualification: GNM

Job Location: Tinsukia, Nagaon, Goalpara, Sreebhumi, Majuli, Dhubri, Biswanath, Morigan, Chirang, Dima Hasao, Hojai, Golaghat, Karup Rural, Nalbari, Bongaigaon and Baksa.

How to Apply for Assam Cancer Care Foundation Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy through online mode by visiting official Recruitment Portal. Candidates may follow below mentioned steps to apply for ACCF Recruitment.

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .

Click on the "Online Application Form" and fill your all personal and educational details.

Next, upload your CV/ Resume.

At the end, submit the form.

Important Dates of Assam Cancer Care Foundation Vacancy

Starting date of submission of online application: 25th December 2024
Last date of submission of online application: 5th January 2025 up to 6.00 PM

SBI Clerk Recruitment 2025 – 13735 Junior Associate Posts, Online Apply

Last date: 7/01/2025

State Bank of India (SBI) has released the official employment notification for the recruitment of 13735 Junior Associate (Customer Support and Sales) vacancy in clerical cadre in various branches of SBI across the country. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here.

Candidates can apply for vacancies in one State/UT only. Candidates can appear for the test only once under this recruitment project. The candidates applying for vacancies of a particular State/ UT, should be proficient (reading, writing, speaking and understanding) in the specified opted local language of that State/UT.

Name of post: Junior Associate (Customer Support and Sales)

Name of organisation: State Bank of India (SBI)

No of posts: 13735 posts

No of posts @ North Eastern states: 692 posts

| State | No of posts |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Assam | 311 posts |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 66 posts |
| Manipur | 55 posts |
| Meghalaya | 85 posts |
| Mizoram | 40 posts |
| Nagaland | 70 posts |
| Tripura | 65 posts |

Mode of application: Online

Pay Scale: Rs.24050-1340/3-28070-1650/3-33020-2000/4-41020-2340/7-57400-4400/1-61800-2680/1-64480.

Advertisement No.: CRPD/CR/2024-25/24

Helpdesk: In case of any problem in filling up the form, payment of fee/ intimation charges or receipt of Admission/call letter, queries may be made at telephone no. 022-22820427 (between 11:00 AM and 05:00 PM only on Bank working days) or lodge his/her query on <http://cgrs.ibps.in>.

Candidates are advised not to forget to mention 'Recruitment of Junior Associate-2024' in the subject of the email.

Eligibility Criteria of SBI Junior Associate Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidates age should not below 20 years and not above 28 years as on 01.04.2024, i.e. candidates must have been born not earlier than 02.04.1996 and not later than 01.04.2004 (both days inclusive).

Age Relaxation: Category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below

SC/ST: 5 years
OBC: 3 years
PwD (Unreserved): 10 years
PwD (OBC): 13 years
PwD (SC/ST): 15 years

Educational Qualification: Candidates must be a Graduate in any discipline from a recognised University or any equivalent qualification recognised as such by Central Government. Candidates having integrated dual degree (IDD) certificate should ensure that the date of passing the IDD is on or before 31.12.2024.

Final Year Candidates: Those who are in the final year/ semester of their graduation may also apply provisionally subject to the condition that, if provisionally selected, they will have to produce proof of having passed the graduation examination on or before 31.12.2024.

Local Language Proficiency: The candidates applying for vacancies of a particular State/UT, should be proficient (reading, writing, speaking and understanding) in the specified opted local language of that State/UT. Candidates who produce 10th or 12th standard mark sheet/ certificate evidencing having studied the specified opted local language will not be required to undergo the language test.

Application Fee of SBI Clerk 2024

The category wise fee structure for SBI Clerk online application is given below.

| Category | Fee |
|----------|-----------|
| UR | Rs. 750/- |
| OBC/EWS | Rs. 750/- |
| SC/ST | Nil |
| PwD | Nil |

Payment Method: Debit Card, Credit Card, Net Banking or UPI.

How to Apply for SBI Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates can apply online through the SBI Career website <https://bank.sbi/careers> or <https://www.sbi.co.in/careers> starting from 17th December 2024 onwards. To apply online they may follow below mentioned steps.

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .

Click on Online Application Form link .

A new webpage will be opened.

Enter all your personal and educational details as required .

Upload your passport sized photograph and signature and other required documents.

Pay the application fee as per your category and at the end click on submit button .

Don't forget to take a print of submitted application form .

Important Dates of SBI Junior Associate Recruitment 2025

Starting date of online application submission: 17th December 2024
Last date of online application submission: 7th January 2025

Important Web-Links of SBI Vacancy Selection Process of SBI Clerk Recruitment

The selection process of SBI Clerk Recruitment will consist of on-line test (Preliminary & Main exam) and test of specified opted local language.

Phase-I: Preliminary Examination

Online Preliminary Exam consisting of Objective Tests for 100 marks will be conducted online. This test would be of 1-hour duration consisting of 3 Sections as follows:

| Test | No. of Questions | Max. Marks | Duration |
|-------------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| English language | 30 | 30 | 20 Minutes |
| Numerical Ability | 35 | 35 | 20 Minutes |
| Reasoning Ability | 35 | 35 | 20 Minutes |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 60 Minutes |

Each test will have a separate timing as mentioned above. There will be negative marks for wrong answers in the Objective tests. 1/4th of mark assigned for question will be deducted for each wrong answer. No minimum qualifying marks are prescribed for individual test OR for aggregate score. Section wise marks will not be maintained.

Adequate number of candidates in each category as decided by the Bank (approximately 10 times the numbers of vacancies, subject to availability) will be shortlisted for the Main Exam from the list of all candidates arranged in descending order of aggregate marks scored.

Phase - II: Main Examination

Structure of Online SBI Clerk Recruitment Main Exam would be as follows:

| Test | No. of Question | Max. Marks | Duration |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|
| General/ Financial Awareness | 50 | 50 | 35 Minutes |
| General English | 40 | 40 | 35 Minutes |
| Quantitative Aptitude | 50 | 50 | 45 Minutes |
| Reasoning Ability & Computer Aptitude | 50 | 60 | 45 Minutes |
| Total | 190 | 200 | 160 Minutes |

Each test will have a separate timing as mentioned above.

There will be negative marks for wrong answers in the Objective tests. 1/4th of mark assigned for question will be deducted for each wrong answer.

Candidates are required to score a minimum percentage marks on aggregate (For SC/ST/OBC/PwBD/ESM/DESM candidates, 5% relaxation available thereon). Minimum qualifying marks on aggregate will be as decided by the bank. No minimum qualifying marks for individual subject are prescribed. Section wise marks will not be maintained.

Merit list will be drawn State wise, category wise. Candidates qualified in the test (main examination) will be placed according to their aggregate marks in descending order in respective States and Categories.

Test of specified opted local language

Those who qualify for selection and produce 10th or 12th standard mark sheet/ certificate evidencing having studied the specified opted local language will not be subjected to any Language test. In case of others (qualified for selection), specified opted local language test will be conducted after provisional selection but before joining. Candidates who fail to qualify this test will not be offered appointment. Candidates not found proficient in specified opted local language would be disqualified.

Final Selection

The marks obtained in the Preliminary Examination (Phase-I) will not be added for the selection and only the aggregate marks obtained in Main Examination (Phase-II) will be considered for preparation of the final merit list. Provisional selection will be made on the basis of candidate's performance in the test (Main Examination).

Arunachal Guv, CM, DyCM condole Manmohan Singh's death



ITANAGAR, Dec 27: Arunachal Pradesh Lt Gen K T Parnaik (Retd), Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Friday condoled the death of former prime minister Manmohan Singh.

The governor said Singh was a distinguished economist and statesman and was instrumental in liberalising India's economy, propelling the nation towards significant economic growth.

Known for his humility, integrity, and intellectual brilliance, the passing away of Singh marks the end of an era in Indian politics, but his contributions to Arunachal Pradesh, like the Trans-Arunachal Pradesh Highway, the state secretariat building, the Pare and Dibang power projects, and the Itanagar water

and resilient India," Khandu said in a post on X on Friday.

He also said, "Singh's passing marks the end of an era in Indian politics. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members, kin, admirers, and followers. May the departed soul rest in eternal peace. Om Shanti!"

Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also mourned the demise of former prime minister Manmohan Singh.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh ji. A visionary leader, his unparalleled contributions to India's economic reforms and progressive policies will forever be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones during this time of immense loss. May his soul rest in eternal peace," Mein said in a post on X.

Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Nabam Tuki termed Singh as a visionary leader and "greatest economist in the world."

"Manmohan Singh, the visionary leader and greatest Economist of the world, who gave historic special economic and development packages to North Eastern states during his tenure as prime minister will be remembered. May his soul rest in peace," Tuki said in a social media post on Thursday.

Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms, died in Delhi on Thursday night at the age of 92. He was the prime minister during 2004-14. (PTI)

Two injured in gunfight in Manipur

IMPHAL, Dec 27: At least two persons, including a policeman, were injured in a gunfight with armed men in Manipur's Imphal East district on Friday, police said.

Armed men from the hills launched gun-and-bomb attacks in Sanasabi and Thamnokpi villages in the district, to which security forces retaliated, leading to a fierce encounter, a senior police officer said.

Two persons suffered injuries in the gunfight in Sanasabi village. The policeman, identified as 37-year-old K Haridash, suffered bullet injuries on his left shoulder and was rushed to Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences around 3.30 pm, the officer said.

He will undergo a minor surgery, officials at the hospital said.

Another 'village volunteer'



suffered minor injuries on his hands during the gun battle was also taken to a private hospital, where his condition is out of danger. The village volunteers had joined the security forces in the gun battle against the armed men from the hills.

"Armed men from the hill-tops started firing indiscriminately and hurling bombs around 10.45 am at Sanasabi

village and adjacent areas, forcing security personnel to retaliate," the officer said.

Locals ran helter-skelter as the gunfight broke out.

"Armed men also launched attacks at Thamnokpi village around 11.30 am, creating panic among the residents," the officer said.

Security forces, including CRPF personnel, rescued several women, children and elderly

people, who were caught in the crossfire.

More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups in Manipul since May last year.

Meanwhile, unidentified persons left a hand grenade in the compound of the house of a doctor in Chingmeirong area in Imphal West district, another police officer said.

A note stating 'KCP (PWG) last warning' was also found along with the grenade, the officer said, adding that the threat could be related to extortion demands and an investigation is underway.

Banned militant outfit Kangleipak Communist Party (People's War Group) is allegedly involved in extortion across Imphal Valley.

Police later removed the grenade from the spot. (PTI)

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi to visit Tripura for two-day official engagement

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Dec 27: Union Minister Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Pralhad Joshi will arrive in Tripura on December 28 for a two-day official visit to the state. Officials said that during his visit, the Union Minister will engage in multiple government programs and meetings.

"He is expected to arrive in Agartala tomorrow afternoon and commence his itin-

erary with a visit to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) office at Nandannagar. This will be followed by an inspection of the state government's food godowns. Joshi will later chair a meeting with officials from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC)," she said.

In the evening, a review meeting on various central schemes related to food, public health, aspirational districts, and renewable

energy will be held at Secretariat. Chief minister Manik Saha will also be present at the meeting to discuss progress and implementation strategies.

On December 29, the second day of his visit, union minister Joshi will head to Charilam under Sepahijala District to inspect a programme organised by the Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency (TREDA). He is expected to interact with local residents during this visit.

Manmohan Singh's contribution in shaping economic landscape of country will always be remembered: Tripura CM



AGARTALA, Dec 27: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha condole the death of former prime minister Manmohan Singh and said his contribution in nation building and shaping the economic landscape of the country will always be remembered.

Singh, 92, died in AIIMS Delhi on Thursday night.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of former PM of India and veteran Congress leader Manmohan Singh Ji. His contributions in nation-building and shaping the economic landscape of the country will always be remembered", the chief minister wrote in a post on Facebook on Thursday.

"May the departed soul find eternal peace! Om Shanti", Saha said.

The Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) also expressed grief over the death of former prime minister Manmohan Singh.

"We are deeply mourned by the death of Manmohan Singh

ji, the former prime minister. He was a towering figure of Indian politics and a statesman of unparalleled integrity. His visionary leadership, astute economic acumen, and unwavering commitment to the nation's progress have left an enduring legacy", TPCC said in a Facebook post on Thursday.

It also said, "He (Singh) has been an inspiration for all of us. We stand behind the bereaved family during difficult times. The country has lost a genius son".

Tipra Motha Party (TMP) supremo Pradyot Kishore Manikya also mourned the death of former prime minister Manmohan Singh and said his legacy will live on forever.

He posted on Facebook on Friday, "RIP Manmohan Singh - history will be kinder to you. Your legacy will live on forever! Let us bow to a gentleman who has left us today - it's a collective loss for the whole nation". (PTI)

Two militants arrested

IMPHAL, Dec 27: Two militants of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (People's War Group) were arrested from Manipur's Imphal West district, a police statement said on Friday.

The two militants involved in extortion activities were arrested from Awang Wanagai Lamkhai area of the district on Thursday, the statement said.

Two mobile handsets and other items were seized from their possession, it added. (PTI)

7-day state mourning in Manipur

IMPHAL, Dec 27: The Manipur governor on Friday ordered a seven-day state mourning as a mark of respect to former prime minister Manmohan Singh, an official statement said.

Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms, died in Delhi on Thursday night at the age of 92. He was the prime minister from 2004 to 2014.

The state mourning commenced on December 26 and will continue till January 1.

"During the period, the national flag will be flown at half past throughout the state and there will be no official entertainment during the state of mourning," the notification issued by the state government's General Administrative Department by orders and in the name of the governor said. (PTI)

Agartala Book Fair from Jan 2-14 Bangladesh publishers not to participate



AGARTALA, Dec 27: The 43rd Agartala Book Fair will be held from January 2 to 14, 2025 but Bangladesh publishers or booksellers will not participate in the event, an official said on Friday.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha will inaugurate the 12-day-long book fair in West Tripura's Badharghat fair ground on January 2.

"The lottery for distribution of stalls at the book fair is scheduled to take place on Friday. Till now, no Bangladeshi publishing house or bookseller has submitted any application for setting up stalls at the book fair venue," Director of Information and Cultural Affairs (ICA), Bimbisar Bhattacharjee told PTI.

However, he said publishers from Kolkata, Guwahati and Delhi will participate in this year's book fair apart from local publishing houses.

President of Tripura Publishers' Guild (TPG), Subabrata Deb said, "Given the situation in Bangladesh after the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina, no publication house or bookseller seems to be brave enough to join the book fair at Agartala. We keep contact with publication houses of Bangladesh but they are

not in a position to join the book fair this time. As book lovers, we will miss the essence of Bangladeshi publications."

"This will be the first time in many years that Bangladeshi publishers are not participating in the book fair," Deb added.

He hailed the state government's decision to advance the book fair from February-March to January this year.

"Normally Agartala book fair used to be held in February or March but this time it has been advanced to the first week of January. We oppose organising book fair in February and March because of board examinations. I hope this time, students will get a fair chance to visit the book fair due to advancement in the book fair schedule", he said.

Eminent writer Nandita Roy said, "It is natural that Bangladeshi publishers are most unlikely to participate in the Agartala book fair because of their internal problem. Besides, visa problem is also there. I heard that they are also not going to join the Kolkata book fair. We will miss literary masterpieces of Bangladeshi publishing houses as well as research based books which have good demand in Tripura. Last year, they had joined the book fair". (PTI)

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TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender affixing non refundable KAAC court fee stamp (receipt) Rs. 10.00 (Rupees Ten) only eventually to be drawn up in form are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractor/reputed firms of works department and will be received by the undersigned up to 4 P.M. on 02/01/2025 and will be opened on the same date, place and the hours in presence of the tenderer or their authorized agent if any.

If the day of the opening of tender happens to be a holiday/non-working days, the tender will be opened in the next day. The undersigned has the right to accept, reject any tender without any reason thereof and will not be bound to accept, the lowest tender quoted rate.

| SL No. | Name of Works | Tender Amount | A/A Amount | Earnest money | Time allowed for completion |
|--------|---|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Construction of Cremation Shed at Lokhan Bey Gaon Jaipong. | Rs. 7,36,000.00 | Rs. 7,36,000.00 | ST/SC/OBC= 1% General = 2% | 90 days |
| 2 | Construction of RCC Ringwell with C.C. Platform (1 Nos) at Lokhan Bey Playground Jaipong. | Rs. 2,00,000.00 | Rs. 2,00,000.00 | ST/SC/OBC= 1% General = 2% | 60 days |
| 3 | Earth Filling at Sport Playground at Jaipong Lokhan Bey Jaipong. | Rs. 9,42,000.00 | Rs. 9,42,000.00 | ST/SC/OBC = 1% General = 2% | 90 days |

Detail NIT documents and name of works amounts may be obtained from Office of the S.E.(Works), KAAC, Diphu during working hours .

Terms & Conditions

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- The rate to be quoted as % (Percent) above/below/as per schedule rate for building/sanitary/ works for all division under CPWD for the year 2020-21.
- Earnest money should be deposited in favour of the undersigned in the form of call deposit/bank draft & should be attached with the tender without which no tender will be accepted
- The Contractor shall Repair/Re-Construction if the works executed failed due inferior quality of works The KAAC Authority will take legal action if the contractor refuse to repair/Re- construction the woks
- The work must be carried on as directed by the E.E. (W). KAAC/KAAC Authority.
- The following up to date documents should be enclosed with the tender
 - Professional Tax Clearance Certificate
 - Sale Tax Clearance Certificate/GST.
 - KAAC Registration (Contractual)
 - Call Deposit.
 - Caste Certificate.
 - Bank Account number & Pan Card
- Payment will be made subject to availabilities of fund
- The undersigned is not bound to accept the lowest quoted rate.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer (Works)
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
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JUNAID KHAN, KHUSHI KAPOOR'S NEXT MOVIE IS ROMANTIC COMEDY 'LOVEYAPA'



NEW DELHI, Dec 27: Newcomers Junaid Khan and Khushi Kapoor's upcoming romantic comedy has been titled "Loveyapa" and will be released in theatres on February 7, 2025. Described as a "tangled tale of love and its complications with a mix of fun and laughter", the film is directed by Advait Chandan of "Laal Singh Chaddha" and "Secret Superstar" fame, according to a press release. "Loveyapa" is backed by Phantom Studios and AGS Entertainment. "In theatres 7th Feb 2025. 'Loveyapa'. Khushi Kapoor Junaid Khan Directed by Advait Chandan. Situationship? Relationship? Love ka syapa? ya Loveyapa? See you in the theatres on the 7th of Feb 2025." Phantom Studios posted on its social media pages. "Loveyapa" is the second project for both Junaid and Khushi. Junaid, son of superstar Aamir Khan and Reena Dutta, forayed into acting with the historical drama "Maharaj" from Siddharth P Malhotra. The film, which also featured Sharvari, Shalini Pandey and Jaideep Ahlawat in pivotal roles, was released on streaming service Netflix. Khushi, daughter of late Bollywood star Sridevi and producer Boney Kapoor, started her career with 2023 Netflix movie "The Archies", co-starring Suhana Khan and Agastya Nanda. (PTI)

'THE SECRET OF THE SHILEDARS' TO STREAM ON DISNEY+ HOTSTAR

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: Disney+ Hotstar on Friday announced that its upcoming series "The Secret of The Shiledars", headlined by actor Rajeev Khandelwal, will start streaming on its platform from January 31. Helmed by Aditya Sarpotdar of "Munjya" fame, the series is touted as a first-of-its-kind treasure hunt-based series and also stars Sai Tamhankar, Gaurav Amlani and veteran actor Ashish Vidyarthi in pivotal roles. "The Secret of The Shiledars" narrates the story of the Shiledars, who were members of military units in the Maratha Empire. Sarpotdar said it was his curiosity about stories of adventure and history that led him to "The Secret of the Shiledars". "The concept of Shiledars, The Guardians, hasn't been explored before, making it intriguing yet fulfilling. I believe that The Secret of the Shiledars is the project that challenged me and made me move out of my comfort zone and I am so glad that I could embark on this journey with Rajeev Khandelwal as he has truly given his heart and soul to it and I am sure it will reflect on screen," the filmmaker said in a statement. (PTI)

Unparalleled humility, quiet dignity: Cine stars pay tributes to former PM Manmohan Singh

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan, Chiranjeevi, Manoj Bajpayee and other film stars on Friday condoled the demise of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, remembering him as a "visionary" and a "great financial reformer and statesman".

Singh, the architect behind India's economic reforms, passed away on Thursday night at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) at the age of 92.

He served as the prime minister from 2004 to 2014. As the nation's finance minister in 1991, he played a pivotal role in shaping India's economic framework, earning widespread recognition in global financial and economic circles.

In a post on X, actor-politician Haasan said the nation has lost "one of its finest sons". "India has lost one of its most eminent statesmen and scholars. The passing of Dr. Manmohan Singh marks the end of an era in Indian polity. A man of quiet dignity, he reshaped the nation through his visionary economic and social policies.

"Few have influenced the nation's trajectory with such far-reaching impact. His policies, both as Finance Minister and Prime Minister, empowered millions, strengthening the fabric of Indian democracy and uplifting the most vulnerable," Haasan posted.

Rajinikanth was asked about Singh's demise at the Chennai airport and he said, "He was a great human being. Great financial reformer and statesman."

Chiranjeevi said he is anguished by the passing away of Singh, who was a "highly educated, most graceful, soft spoken and humble leader".

"His visionary and game changing contributions as the finance minister and then his highly successful tenure as the 13th Prime Minister of India for two successive terms will remain etched in history," he said. The actor said he was privileged and fortunate to have served as a member of parliament and minister of state for tourism during Singh's second tenure as the PM.

"I fondly cherish my interactions with him and the inspiration and wisdom I got from him forever. It is a tremendous loss to



our country. My deepest condolences to his family and each of his numerous admirers," he added.

Sunny Deol also hailed Singh for playing a pivotal role in shaping India's economic liberalisation.

"His wisdom, integrity & contributions to the nation's growth will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences. #RIPDrManmohansingh," he posted on X.

Bajpayee said, "Saddened by the passing of our former Prime Minister. A statesman whose contributions in every aspect of our nation's growth will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his family. #RIPDrManmohanSingh."

Anil Kapoor recalled that he once met the former PM who left "an indelible impression" on the actor.

"He was a man of unparalleled humility and wisdom. His extraordinary

contributions will forever be remembered. May his soul rest in peace," he said. Diljit Dosanjh shared a photo of Singh on his Instagram Stories and captioned it, "Oh Waheguru".

Anushka Sharma wrote on Instagram Stories, "Rest in peace Dr Manmohan Singh ji."

Sharing a photo of Singh on Instagram, Allu Arjun said, "His leadership and dedication to the nation will always be remembered. Rest in peace sir." Veteran actor Anupam Kher, who played the role of the former PM in the 2019 film "The Accidental Prime Minister" based on the memoir of Singh's former media advisor Sanjay Baru, said he is deeply saddened by his demise.

"Having studied him for more than a year for the movie #TheAccidentalPrimeMinister, it felt that I actually spent that much time with him. He

was inherently a good man. Personally completely honest, great economist and a very humble person. Some can say may be not an astute politician! My heartfelt condolences to his family," he said on X.

Kajol said, "Tributes to Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji, a distinguished leader who served India with dedication & wisdom. May his legacy continue to inspire future generations."

Sanjay Dutt posted, "Deeply saddened by the loss of Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji. His contributions to India will never be forgotten."

Ritesh Deshmukh called Singh one of India's "finest Prime Ministers".

"The man who propelled India's economic growth. He epitomised dignity and humility. We will forever be indebted to his legacy. May his soul rest in eternal glory. Thank you Shri Manmohan Singh ji," he said. (PTI)

'Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani' to re-release in theatres on January 3



NEW DELHI, Dec 27: Ranbir Kapoor and Deepika Padukone starrer "Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani" is set to re-release in theatres on January 3, 2025.

Directed by Ayan Mukerji, the film was produced under Karan Johar's Dharma Productions and also featured Aditya Roy Kapur and Kalki Koechlin. The film had its original release on May 31, 2013. According to a press release, "Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani", which went on to have great box office in 2013, will release on January 3 across 140 PVR INOX Cinemas in 46 cities. Johar said "Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani" is a perfect film to start the new year. "Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani" holds a special place in the heart of Dharma Productions. The film has great music, stunning locations, some of our most loved actors, and a story that resonates across all generations. The film leaves you with a warm, fuzzy feeling about life. We can't wait to see how Gen Z feels about watching it as adults on the big screen while millennials join in, singing along and repeating all the dialogues before the actors do," he said in a statement. Mukerji said the film is like a second child for him.

"More than a decade later, I can confidently say that creating it was one of the greatest joys of my life. What we accomplished, despite its imperfections and imperfections, remains a source of immense and lasting pride for me," he added.

"Ayan Mukerji's masterful storytelling sets the perfect tone, making it a timeless repeat watch, with emotions that transcend all barriers. We are thrilled to bring this film back to the big screen and eagerly anticipate the audience's reaction," said Niharika Bijli, Lead Strategist, at PVR INOX Ltd. The romantic comedy followed the stories of four friends, Bunny (Kapoor), Naina (Padukone), Avi (Kapur) and Aditi (Koechlin) as they go through the various adventures life has in store for them. The film was also praised for its songs such as "Badtameez Dil", "Ghagra", "Kabira", "Dilliwaali Girlfriend" and "Subhanallah". (PTI)

'ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE' STARS ON EMBODYING NOVEL'S CHARACTERS: A MAGICAL AND SURREAL EXPERIENCE

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: Walking on the massive Netflix sets of "One Hundred Years of Solitude" felt like she had stumbled into a parallel universe, says actor Susana Morales, who plays young Ursula Iguaran in the streamer's ambitious adaptation of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's 1967 literary classic. Morales stars alongside Vina Machado and Marco Gonzales, who play Pilar Ternera and young Jose Arcadio Buendia, respectively, in the eight-episode Spanish series, whose first part is currently streaming on Netflix.

The actor said she does not have the right words to describe how it felt to be acting in a story that has been such an integral part of every Colombian's life.

"It was just (like) living in a different world. Each part of the art, costumes and everything, it felt like a complete universe. It was like a parallel universe. Sometimes, it would click in our heads and we would be, 'I don't understand why I'm walking around

right now,'" Morales told PTI in an interview. "Well, I feel like it was a playground for grownups and such beauty to just discover each set," Gonzales added.

As young Ursula Iguaran and Jose Arcadio Buendia, the two actors play the central couple who set out to find a new land at the beginning of the book and establish the fictional town of Macondo where Marquez's multi-generational saga takes place.

Machado, who is such a big fan of Marquez that she can recite pages of the book from memory and has read it seven times, said she just felt lucky to be part of the experience. "Sometimes, I would come to the sets and go: 'Oh my god, I am living on the pages of the book'. We are so happy and honoured," the actor said.

"I can phrase it in my mind all the time. Actually, when we were watching the first episode, I was saying the lines because I am like that. I am by the book. I'm very structured in my work.... That's such a magical

oeuvre, such a magical book that when you have these little things and you just let it flow into your imagination," she added.

As Pilar Ternera, Machado plays a character whose fate is tied closely to the lead Buendias. She comes to Macondo to escape the man who raped her. Pilar can predict the future with the help of cards.

For decades, Marquez's novel was considered unfilmable with its century-spanning sweep, multiple characters and how the Nobel laureate intricately wove elements of magic realism with Colombian history, politics and religion.

One of the most ambitious and expensive productions in Latin American history, it took Netflix six years to translate the book to the screen. The 16-episode series, divided in two parts, was shot in Colombia with the support of the author's family.

Machado believes it was the right time for the book to be adapted for screen as they had the ability, technology, writers and ac-

tors to recreate the grandeur as well as the "little things" that make the book great.

"This was the right moment to do it and do it right," she said about Marquez's most celebrated creation that has fans in every corner of the world.

Morales said the series, which has received great reviews internationally, could come together beautifully because of the hard work and respect that every department showed to the original work.

"Our biggest effort was to be really true to the story," she said, adding that everyone worked on the series with a sense of responsibility. Gonzales admitted that the adaptation was a big challenge for those involved.

"I feel like when something is impossible, its just sparks (something in us) as humans. And it's a challenge that we give our all because you cannot pick and choose what you will do," he added.

The actor read the book when he was 18 and re-read it again before realising that it

was important to "let it go".

"Because if not, you just start recreating all these scenarios and it's fine to do it but it can take away the joy of the moment in that particular thing. I rather be there (on the sets) and enjoy and not speculate about all the things that it might be," he said.

Morales found it easy to rely on the script and the book but also to the people around her as the story takes into account "the way we are in Colombia, Latin America and the way we live in our body".

"I think all the characters surround our daily life too," she added.

Gonzales hopes that the attention that the series is receiving will, hopefully, shine a light on Colombian talent.

"Everything is built by small steps, so if we can be part of small steps for the industry to put their eyes on Colombia, to believe in our talent, and in our capacity, I just feel happy to open the door." (PTI)

World Boxing forms new Asian body; Lovlina in Athletes' Commission, Ajay Singh named board member

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: Tokyo Olympic medallist Lovlina Borgohain has been included in the Athletes' Commission while six Boxing Federation of India (BFI) officials, including president Ajay Singh, will be part of the newly-formed interim Asian body established by the break-away organization World Boxing. India will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Asian boxing within this new structure, with the BFI holding seven key positions, including Singh, who has been appointed as a board member.

Borgohain will represent the athletes' voices in Asian and global boxing. Key BFI officials, including

secretary general Hemanta Kumar Kalita and treasurer Digvijay Singh, will hold positions on the Olympic Commission and Finance and Audit Committee respectively.

"The creation of Asian Boxing marks a significant milestone for World Boxing and a crucial step toward ensuring that boxing remains a part of the Olympic Games in LA 2028 and beyond," Singh was quoted as saying in a media release.

"India is proud to be at the heart of this transformative initiative, contributing to the process of securing boxing's Olympic future."

"With strong representation across key commissions, India

is strategically positioned to influence key policies, drive the development of Indian boxing, and champion the growth and prominence of the sport not only within the country but across Asia," Singh said on the formation of the interim Asian body and BFI's role.

Borgohain, one of three members of the Athletes' Commission, emphasised the importance of the platform to advocate for better infrastructure, fair opportunities, and support systems for athletes across Asia.

"It is an honour to represent India as a member of the Athletes' Commission in Asian Boxing. This is a vital platform



to ensure that athletes' voices are heard and prioritised in the decision-making process.

"My focus will be on advocating for better training infrastructure, fair opportunities, and

robust support systems throughout Asia that empower boxers to excel on the global stage," she said.

BFI officials Narender Kumar Nirwan and D P Bhattacharya will serve

on the Constitution and Sports & Competition Commissions, respectively, while Dr. Karanjeet Singh will join the Medical Commission.

The announcement comes a week after India was awarded the hosting rights of the World Boxing Cup Final in November 2025.

The country will also simultaneously host the World Boxing Congress.

The development comes amid the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) repeated threats to exclude boxing from the 2028 Olympics unless national federations move away from the suspended International Boxing Association (IBA) and form a

new governing body.

India had joined WB earlier this year.

However, the Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC) has twice voted against leaving the IBA to join the rival association this year.

In the wake of the latest vote last month, ASBC President Pichai Chundhavaajira and Secretary General Ali Salameh resigned from their positions with the former revealing plans for creating a new Asian boxing governing body under the aegis of WB. WB is a breakaway international federation aiming to secure recognition from the IOC and ensure that boxing remains on the Olympic roster. (PTI)

Chennaiyin FC aim to return to winning ways; HFC look to halt East Bengal's momentum



CHENNAI, Dec 27: Chennaiyin FC will be aiming to rebound to winning form and finish the year on a positive note when they face Bengaluru FC in the Indian Super League here on Saturday.

In the day's other game, Hyderabad FC will host East Bengal FC with an aim to turn things around and halt the visitors' momentum.

Chennaiyin and Bengaluru have played each other 15 times in the ISL, with the former winning four matches. This corresponding fixture last year produced a 2-0 win for the Marina Machans and head coach Owen Coyle will be eyeing the same this time.

However, the tactician will be without captain Ryan Edwards, who is suspended for the match, and is expected to field an all-Indian backline.

Bengaluru come into the match as the second-placed side in the league, and Coyle is wary of the threat they carry, especially with the team missing key personnel.

On the availability front, Coyle confirmed that he will take late calls on Wilmar Jordan Gil and Ankit Mukherjee, both of whom are back in training after receiving knocks.

The head coach also revealed that Elsinho, who left the pitch under medical care

in the previous home match, is recovering in his native Brazil and will be rejoining the squad in the new year.

This will be the ninth ISL meeting between the two sides, with East Bengal FC aiming to continue their recent dominance over Hyderabad FC.

East Bengal FC have won their last two ISL matches against Hyderabad FC, including a league double in the 2023-24 season.

Meanwhile, Hyderabad FC will look to bounce back after a disappointing run that has seen them lose their last five matches in the league on a trot.

The Red & Gold brigade has managed a turnaround in the previous five matches, winning four of those clashes.

They are 11th in the table with 13 points from 12 matches, whereas Hyderabad FC are positioned 12th with seven points from the same number of games as East Bengal FC.

The visitors have rediscovered the spark in their front-line in the last five outings, netting nine times in total, and their match-up against the Hyderabad FC defence will have a key say in the eventual outcome of this game. (PTI)

Hockey India League: Delhi SG Pipers to take on Gonasika in opener

ROURKELA, Dec 27: A new era in Indian hockey will be ushered in when the much-anticipated Hockey India League (HIL) restarts with the opening clash between Delhi SG Pipers and Gonasika of Vizag here on Saturday.

The HIL is set to be revived in a new avatar after seven years with eight men's teams in the fray. The icing of the cake is the introduction of the women's league, comprising four teams, which will be played in Ranchi from January 12.

The Birsas Munda Stadium will host the men's teams till the final on February 1, while the women's teams will compete from January 12 to 26 in Ranchi.

The first phase of men's HIL, from December 28 to January 18, will see the teams play each other once.

The second phase, beginning on January 19, will see the teams divided into two pools: Pool A (Delhi SG Pipers, Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers, Soorma Hockey Club, Vedanta Kalinga Lancers) and Pool B (Gonasika, Hyderabad Toofans, Tamil Nadu Dragons, UP Rudras).

Each team will face the other in their respective pool, with the top-four advancing to the semifinals on January 31.

Delhi SG Pipers will look to make a positive start to their campaign in the men's competition.

Co-captained by Olympic medallist Shamsheer Singh and Australia's Jake Whetton, the Delhi franchise have a strong squad and would be buzzing with confidence after a successful pre-tournament camp at Bhubaneswar.

"All our players are excited to play against Gonasika and are looking forward to the start of the league. We have prepared well for the last two weeks and we have had a few bonding sessions as well," Shamsheer said.

"There is a bit of pressure that comes with it but all the players in our squad are well trained and aware of the demands at this level, so we will play the match with the aim to do our best."

"We have to execute the strategy set by our coaches and take it game by game. Every match is important but it is also important to take the first step in the right direction tomorrow," he added.

"HIL is returning after seven years and everyone in the team is excited for the match against Delhi. We have a good understanding amongst each other and (we have) a good mixture of youngsters, Indian seniors and foreigners."

"We will look to implement the things we have trained on so far in the match tomorrow. We have also played with and against these players before, so we will look to play our game and do our best to minimise their goal-scoring opportunities," Gonasika captain Manpreet Singh said.

Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers, Delhi SG Pipers, Soorma Hockey Club and Odisha Warriors are the four teams in the Women's HIL. Their matches will be played at Ranchi's Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Astro Turf Stadium, with each team playing against the others twice.

After the pool stage, the top two teams will meet in the final on January 26. (PTI)



Deepti stars with all-round show as India whitewash West Indies 3-0

VADODARA, Dec 27: Senior off-spinner Deepti Sharma did the star turn with career-best figures of 6/31 before doing her bit with the bat as India completed a 3-0 whitewash of the West Indies with a five-wicket victory in the final Women's ODI here on Friday.

Having bowled out West Indies for 162 after Deepti's superlative performance and pacer Renuka Singh's (4/29) excellent show with the new ball, India recovered after a top-order wobble to reach the target of 163 in 28.2 overs.

India were in a spot of bother at 73/4 but Deepti (39 not out in 48 balls) used all her experience to see the team through with plenty of overs remaining.

Swashbuckling wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh was unbeaten on an 11-ball 23 when the winning runs were scored.

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who eased nerves with two boundaries after last match centurion Harleen Deol's (1) dismissal left India at 23/2, blazed away to a 22-ball 32 before getting bowled by Afy Fletcher.

During her breezy knock, Kaur smashed seven boundaries and looked good for a big one before getting dismissed.

In-form opener Smriti Mandhana (4) departed early as Ashmini Munisar completed a strange one-handed catch after appearing to have misjudged what should actually have been a straightforward catch off the bowling of Aaliyah Alleyne.

Enjoying a good run of form in recent times, vice-captain Mandhana did not get

to the pitch of the ball on the day and paid the price.

One-down batter Deol followed suit, nicking for a Deandra Dottin delivery way outside off-stump and got a faint edge that was taken by wicketkeeper Shemaine Campbell.

Middle-order batter Jemimah Rodrigues chipped in with 29 off 45 balls.

Earlier, Renuka Thakur tormented West Indies with a fiery opening spell before Deepti got into the act to bowl out the visitors cheaply. (PTI)

Inter-District Athletics Competition begins in Morigaon

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Dec 27: The 46th Inter-District Athletics Championships, organised by the Assam Athletics Association in collaboration with the Morigaon District Sports Association and the Morigaon District Administration, commenced on Friday at Khirud Barua Stadium, Morigaon. The tournament has attracted over 1,500 athletes from various districts of Assam.

Competitions in multiple categories for boys and girls under 14, 16, 18, and 20, as well as for men and women, began at 7 a.m. on Saturday. The grand event is set to conclude by the end of the day.

tricts. The tournament was inaugurated by senior journalist Pratap Hazarika, and the memorial book Kridangan, edited by Dr. Achyut Kumar Das, was launched by Sports Minister Nandita Garlosa.

The event was graced by dignitaries, including Ministers Piyush Hazarika and Keshav Mahanta, MP Jayant Basumatari, Advocate General Devajit Lon Saikia, MLAs Manav Deka and Rupak Sharma, Assam Athletics Association Secretary Githartha Goswami, Treasurer Ritubaran Sharma, Secretary of Sports and Youth Welfare Department Kaushar Jamil Hillali, Director of Sports Pradeep Timu, and Director of Fisheries Gauri Shankar Das. Renowned athletes Taiyabun Nesa and Lovlina Borgohain were also present, along with several other notable figures.

Competitions in various athletics events will begin at 7 a.m. on Saturday. The grand event is set to conclude by the end of the day.

Bickering, stagnation as Indian tennis battles for relevance

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: Disillusioned players declined national duty and their governing body grappled with infighting as Indian tennis struggled to stay afloat in a largely disappointing 2024.

The All India Tennis Association (AITA) and the players being at loggerheads was not a new development. But the striking part was the lack of transparency in decision-making and nearly non-existent effort to address the concerns of the players. Result was that the game plunged to new depths.

AITA President Anil Jain, who was accused of using his position for personal gains, avoided facing a no-confidence motion from the state associations only after he agreed to step aside. Towards the end of a forgettable year, a new team of administrators won the elections, promising to change Indian tennis but a writ petition filed by two former players did not allow their declared reform

process to begin.

There were accusations that the elections were held in violation of the Sports Code. The matter will not be heard before March 25, putting on hold the much-needed revamp of the system. In a nutshell, everything that could have gone wrong, went wrong for Indian tennis in 2024.

Yuki Bhambri refused to play for India in a Davis Cup tie against Sweden in September without communicating any reasons. But it was made clear by federation sources that his withdrawal was in response to being left out of the Paris Olympics where Rohan Bopanna, being a top-10 player, preferred N Sri Ram Balaji as his doubles partner.

The same Bhambri had travelled to Islamabad, Pakistan despite security concerns for a Davis Cup engagement in January-February with some counselling from the administrators, he might have been able



to let go of his misgivings.

But the AITA could not give a convincing reply to Bhambri either on why his name was not sent for inclusion in Target Olympic Podium Scheme or the role Bopanna had in making decision for Paris.

While Bhambri was disillusioned, India's top singles player Sumit Nagal's decision to pull out of ties against both Pakistan and Sweden was a bit baffling.

Captain Rohit Rajpal had even agreed to Nagal's demand for a remuneration amount of USD 50,000 for annual Davis Cup duty but the Jhajjar player cited a back strain to pull out of the Sweden tie and also withdrew from an ATP Tour event the following week.

AITA went public with Nagal's demands for money after India were thrashed 0-4 by a beatable Sweden. This once again triggered a war of words

between AITA and Nagal.

Amid this drama, Sasikumar Mukund, the second-best singles player in India, was not even picked for the tie because a ban was imposed on him for his earlier refusal to travel to Pakistan owing to security fears and other disciplinary violations. All these issues should have been handled in a better way. On court, India did not enjoy much success. The 44-year-old Bopanna won the Australian Open men's doubles title with Matthew Ebden, the high point of a productive partnership that drew to a close in November. But singles success was very limited.

After a decent first half in which Nagal touched a career-high rank of 68, he began to fizzle out in the second half of the season. Such was his struggle that in his last 12 tournaments, Nagal has managed to win only two matches -- one at Kitzbuhel Challenger in July and one at Basel in October. (PTI)

