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Vol .No. XXVI

Issue No. 013

RNI-ASSENG/2000/12862

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2025 PAGES 12 PRICE ₹ 8

## Himanta meets 160 industry leaders in Tokyo, pitches for investment in state

### 'Japan a natural partner in Assam's pursuit of growth'



**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Jan 22: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday met at least 160 industry leaders in Tokyo and called them to invest in Assam.

The chief minister also argued that Japan has been collaborating in

a series of ongoing projects in the state and the government is looking forward to extending the collaboration in the upcoming days. He stated that with active support from Japanese technologies, the longest River bridge is coming up in Phulbari in Assam.

"Had a very engaging Day 1 in Japan where I had meetings with over 160 industry leaders and outlined our vision of Simplicity, Transparency, Efficiency and Effective Policy to attract investments into Assam. In several of Assam's developmental efforts in infrastructure, healthcare, skilling etc. Japan is already partnering with Assam. India's upcoming longest river bridge in Phulbari is also being built with Japanese assistance," Sarma wrote on X.

Sarma also mentioned that in the last few years, Assam has seen tremendous development in terms of industrial growth.

"In recent years, Assam has taken giant strides in ensuring large scale investments to the State and has earmarked \$3 billion for production linked incentives. Japan is a natural partner in Assam's pursuit of growth and development," he stated. Sarma has invited the top industrial players (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## SC slams Assam govt for 'defective' affidavit

### Detention of 270 foreigners at Matia camp: Apex court summons CS

NEW DELHI, Jan 22: Calling it a "defective" affidavit, the Supreme Court on Wednesday slammed the Assam government for not giving in its reply reasons for detaining 270 foreigners at the Matia transit camp.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Nongmeikapam Kotiswar Singh directed the Assam chief secretary to remain present through video-conferencing on the next date of hearing.

The top court said it granted six weeks time to the state government on December 9 to file the affidavit and expected it to give reasons for detaining 270 foreign nationals in the transit camp besides details on the steps taken for their deportation.

"The affidavit does not give any justification for detaining...steps taken to deport are not set out. This is gross violation of orders of this court. We direct the chief secretary to remain present through video-conferencing and explain the non-compliance," the bench said.

The counsel appearing for the



stat government submitted that persons were detained only after they were declared foreigners by the foreigners tribunals and explained the mechanism of deportation of illegal migrants.

The top court sought to know why detentions were continuing without the deportation process even being initiated.

The court expressed displeasure after the Assam government counsel said the affidavit was confidential and should remain sealed.

"This shows that the state does not want to come clean. Tell us what is confidential in the affidavit?" asked the bench.

The lawyer said the affidavit contained the addresses of foreigners and the details could go to the media.

"Assam counsel states that affidavit filed should be kept in sealed envelope, as contents thereof are confidential. Though we are di-

recting that it be kept in sealed envelope, prima facie we disagree with the counsel that there is something confidential about the contents," the bench said.

The top court had directed Assam State Legal Services Authority to conduct surprise visits at the Matia transit camp for foreigners to check the facility's hygiene and food quality.

The bench was hearing a plea concerning the deportation of persons declared foreigners and facilities at the detention centres in Assam.

While hearing the matter on May 16 last year, the apex court observed that the Centre must take immediate steps for deporting 17 foreigners at the detention centre in Matia. It said priority should be given to deport four, who had spent more than two years in the detention centre.

The plea also sought a direction to the Assam government not to detain any person declared a foreigner by the tribunal until it could show proof of a possible deportation in near future. (PTI)

## HT BRIEFS

### Awareness programme

DIPHU: The Central Bureau of Communication has organised a day-long awareness programme on 'Swachhata Hi Seva, Atmanirbhar Bharat & Nasha Mukta Bharat' at Disagisim, Dhanisiri of Karbi Anglong on 22nd Jan of 2025. The programme started with a plantation drive called Ek Ped Maa Ki Naam followed by other activities like Awareness Meeting, Theme based Quiz Competition, Extempore Speech competition etc. The public Meeting was presided by Gaon Burha (Govt), Robin Nunisa accompanied by other Guests, Gaon Burha, Hemchandra Thousen and social activist and farmer, Ranjit Langthasa. In-Charge, Field Office of Central Bureau of Communication, Bikash Rajbangshi, elaborated the importance of the themes as mentioned above.

### Five arrested

GUWAHATI: In a significant operation, the East Guwahati Police District (EGPD) team from Basistha Police Station successfully busted a gang of ATM fraudsters in the Panjabari area, the police officials informed on Wednesday. Five individuals, identified as Asif Iqbal Hussain (20), Abdula Azad (20), Dewan Azlan Hariz (20), Arifil Islam (26), and Sahil Ahmed (21), were apprehended during the raid. Talking to the micro-blogging site X, the Guwahati Police stated, "In a major crackdown, an EGPD team from Basistha PS busted a gang of ATM Fraudsters from Panjabari today. Team arrested 5 crooks - Asif Iqbal Hussain (20), Abdula Azad (20), Dewan Azlan Hariz (20), Arifil Islam (26) & Sahil Ahmed (21)." The gang had been targeting elderly citizens, taking advantage of their vulnerability and unfamiliarity with ATM procedures. Using deceptive tactics, the fraudsters convinced their victims to part with their ATM cards, which they then used for unauthorized financial transactions.

## New pact with European bloc to bring USD 100 bn investment in India: Jayant

DAVOS, Jan 22: A new Trade and Economic Participation Agreement with a four-nation European bloc will bring USD 100 billion worth of investment and create one million jobs in India, Union minister Jayant Chaudhary said on Wednesday.

Here to attend the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, the minister told PTI in an interview that Indian talent has proved its mettle globally and the commitments made by global companies show their trust in the skillset of Indian youth.

The Indian government has done a lot on capital formation, infrastructure creation and bringing investments, and the results are visible everywhere, be it ports, railway or road networks, he said.

The minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship said these are basic things for any industry as well as for people and investors.

"One thing is also clear that the Indian government trusts its youth a lot. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself keeps talking to youth and keep inspiring them on every occasion," he said.

He cited the example of the recent Young Leaders



Dialogue and said the prime minister spent six hours with the youth and it was only to listen to the youth of the country who had come from all over India.

This marks a sea change in the way youth of our country are being taken by the government, he said. "When we talk about skill (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 14 killed, 24 injured in two separate accidents in Karnataka

YELLAPURA/RAICHUR (KARNATAKA), Jan 22: As many as fourteen people were killed and 24 sustained injuries in two separate road accidents occurred in Uttara Kannada and Raichur districts on Wednesday, police said.

The injured are out of danger, but are undergoing treatment in the hospital, they said.

Condoling the tragic incident, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the families would be paid compensation.

"It's heartbreaking to hear the news that 14 people died in two separate accidents in Yellapur in Uttara Kannada district and Sindhanur in Raichur district. I pray for the souls of the deceased to rest in peace," Siddaramaiah said in a statement.

"The families of the deceased will be provided appropriate compensation by the government," he added. In the Yellapura incident, a

truck carrying 29 fruit sellers fell into a 50-metre-deep valley in the wee hours of Wednesday, police said.

The victims from Savanur in Haveri district, were heading towards the Yellapura fair to sell fruits. The accident occurred in a forested section, the Uttara Kannada Superintendent of Police M Narayana said.

"Around 5.30 am, the truck driver in a bid to give way to another vehicle went to the extreme left and fell into a 50-metre-deep valley," Narayana told PTI.

He added that there was no protection wall in the road there.

"Eight persons were killed on the spot and two got critical injuries. The injured have been shifted to the KIMS Hospital in Hubballi," the officer said. Two critically wounded persons too died, failing to respond to treatment, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Disappointing Q2 GDP numbers aren't a blip but clear slowdown in economy: Cong

NEW DELHI, Jan 22: The Congress on Wednesday claimed that it is becoming clear that the "disappointing" Quarter 2 GDP growth numbers are not a blip but a clear slowdown in the economy and the post-pandemic bump is not broad-based enough to power long-term growth.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh cited an article in a newspaper which claimed that the fallout of limited job creation and muted wage growth can be seen in the greater recourse to debt.

Ramesh said the article confirms the growing concerns on the Indian economy.

"It is becoming clear that the disappointing Q2 GDP growth numbers aren't a blip but a clear slowdown in the economy. The Government's attempts to pass the buck on to the RBI's interest rate

regime and foreign exchange market interventions is an attempt to escape responsibility," he said.

The post-pandemic bump in growth was driven by a service exports boom and its knock-on effects - but this is not broad-based enough to power long-term growth, Ramesh said, citing the article.

"The middle class is shrinking. The shift in the automotive industry is clear evidence: the low-priced, small car markets (the sub Rs 10 lakh segment) earlier accounted for 73% of all car sales and now accounts for only 46% of cars sold. Growth is coming only from the premium end of the market, reflecting high inequality," he said.

"The failure of Make in India and PLIs, the country's mass unemployment crisis, and the decade-long wage stagnation is beginning to reflect in increasing household indebtedness, poor macro-economic

outcomes, and sluggish investment," Ramesh said.

India's economic growth slowed to near two-year low of 5.4 per cent in the July-September quarter of this fiscal due to poor performance of manufacturing and mining sectors, but the country continued to remain the fastest-growing large economy, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday had also hit out at the Modi government over its economic policies and asserted that real development is when everyone progresses, there is a fair environment for business, a fair tax system and the income of workers increases. Gandhi on Sunday had announced the launch of a 'White T-shirt Movement,' championing the rights of the masses. He had accused the Narendra Modi government of turning its back on the poor. The Congress leader had announced the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Kokrajhar Lit Fest to begin on Feb 1

KOKRAJHAR, Jan 22: The 4th Kokrajhar Literary Festival will start on February 1 with prominent writers from different parts of the country and abroad participating, organisers said on Wednesday.

The three-day festival will be held at Bodofa Cultural Complex in Assam's Kokrajhar district.

Organising committee working president Gobinda Boro said the theme of the festival is bridging the gap between people and cultures, and literature with a message of peace.

"The literary festival will bring here many eminent international and national guests, scholars and writers. They will engage in panel discussions, fireside poetry, reading and podcasts in various sessions," he said.

Boro said that nine international and 60 national guests along with more than 100 local guests have confirmed their presence for the festival.

"There will be a programme, where all the invited guests, scholars and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Six held for uploading cow slaughter video on social media

GUWAHATI, Jan 22: Six people were arrested for allegedly sharing a video of cow slaughter on social media from Assam's Kamrup district, officials said on Wednesday.

A senior official said that the six youths from Chhaygaon area went for a picnic a few days ago and slaughtered a cow.

"They made a video of it and shared it on Instagram. We received a complaint and a case was registered at Hatigaon police station in Guwahati," he added.

The FIR was registered under various sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and The Assam Cattle Preservation Act, 2021, the official said.

The accused were apprehended from Chhaygaon area and legal proceedings (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 'Stroke, often caused by conditions like diabetes and hypertension, is largely preventable'

### Centre to expand network of stroke units across country

NEW DELHI, Jan 22: Around 500 stroke units are operational across the country and the Centre is committed to expanding this network to ensure wider access to specialised care, Union health secretary Punya Salila Srivastava said on Wednesday.

"Recognising the critical importance of prevention, we have prioritised primary prevention strategies within our national health programs," she said while addressing the National Stroke Summit 2025 organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Stroke prevention remains a critical priority as India addresses the dual challenge of communicable and non-communicable diseases, she said.

While significant strides have



been made in controlling communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) now account for 74 per cent of global mortality and 66 per cent of deaths in India, Srivastava said.

"Stroke, often caused by condi-

tions like diabetes and hypertension, is largely preventable," she said.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has undertaken pivotal studies to establish stroke care pathways, specialised units,

and mobile stroke units.

Moreover, the government is fully committed to addressing the growing burden of NCDs by implementing a comprehensive hub-and-spoke model for stroke care, ensuring optimised resource allocation and equitable access to specialized treatments and rehabilitation services nationwide, she said.

"With nearly 500 stroke care units operational, our focus remains on expanding this network to further enhance accessibility and improve patient outcomes by the next financial year," Srivastava said.

"Ayushman Bharat, our flagship universal health coverage scheme, not only provides financial protection for stroke care but also plays a pivotal role (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

WASHINGTON, Jan 22: Indian-American lawmakers have opposed the executive order by US President Donald Trump on changes in birthright citizenship, a move likely to hit not only illegal immigrants from around the world but also students and professionals from India.

On Monday, in the opening hours of his second term as president, Trump signed an order declaring that future children born to undocumented immigrants would no longer be treated as citizens. The order would extend even to the children of some mothers in the country legally but temporarily, such as foreign students or tourists.

Trump's executive order asserts that the children of such noncitizens are not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States, and thus are not covered by the 14th Amend-



ment's longstanding constitutional guarantee.

Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna said changes in birthright citizenship as done through the executive order would impact newborn babies of not only illegal and undocumented immi-

grants but also those staying in this country legally like on H-1B visas.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Sensex jumps 567 pts, Nifty ends above 23,150 on recovery in IT, banking shares

**MUMBAI, Jan 22:** Benchmark Sensex rebounded nearly 567 points and Nifty regained 23,150 level on Wednesday following value buying in IT and banking shares and firm global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex surged 566.63 points or 0.75 per cent to close at 76,404.99, driven by gains in Infosys, TCS and HDFC Bank. During the day, the benchmark surged 624.77 points or 0.82 per cent to hit an intraday high of 76,463.13.

The broader NSE Nifty climbed 130.70 points or 0.57 per cent to settle at 23,155.35. In the intraday session, the Nifty rose 144.9 points or 0.63 per cent to 23,169.55 on the NSE.

The key stock indices had slumped to seven-month lows on Tuesday due to foreign fund outflows and profit-taking by investors amid tariff war worries. Sensex tumbled by 1,235 points and Nifty by 320 points.

Recovering its past losses, Infosys surged 3.16 per cent to emerge as the biggest gainer among Sensex scrips. Tata Consultancy Services jumped 2.97 per cent and Tech Mahindra by 2.28 per cent. Sun Pharmaceutical, Bajaj Finserv, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, IndusInd Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among



the gainers. Tata Motors was the biggest loser among Sensex shares, dropping by 2.24 per cent. PowerGrid, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, NTPC, Tata Steel and Adani Ports were the major laggards.

"The benchmark indices rebounded amidst heightened volatility following better-than-expected results from a major private bank. The IT sector led gains, recovering from recent losses, while mid and small-cap stocks continued to underperform due to valuation concerns," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services

said. Broader markets, however, closed lower. The BSE smallcap index slumped 1.56 per cent and midcap gauge declined 1.2 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, focused IT rose the most by 2.19 per cent, followed by Information Technology by 1.88 per cent, Teck by 1.65 per cent, Bankex by 0.26 per cent and Financial Services by 0.17 per cent.

On the other hand, Realty plunged the most by 4.53 per cent, followed by Industrials (1.88 per cent), Capital Goods (1.82 per cent), Power (1.57 per cent) and Utilities (1.38 per cent) were among the lag-

gards.

Overall market breadth was negative as 2,802 stocks declined while 1,142 advanced and 115 remained unchanged on the BSE. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies fell by ₹ 2,18,878.25 crore to ₹ 4,21,88,327.56 crore or USD 4.87 trillion.

Shares of Cyient DLM plunged 13.55 per cent to close at ₹ 515.70 apiece after the electronic manufacturing services firm reported a decline in its December quarter profit.

During the day, the shares of the company slumped over 15 per cent to hit a 52-week low of ₹ 506.05 apiece.

The scrip of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance declined 6.04 per cent to end at ₹ 597.50 per piece. During the day, it hit decreased 10 per cent to hit an intraday low of Rs 572.35 apiece.

In Asian markets, Tokyo and Seoul were settled on a positive note while Hong Kong and Shanghai closed in the negative territory. European markets were trading higher on Wednesday. Wall Street ended higher on Tuesday.

International oil benchmark Brent Crude was trading 0.49 per cent higher at USD 79.68 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded shares worth ₹ 5,920.28 crore on Tuesday. (PTI)

## OPPO launches Reno13 series in India

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Jan 22:** OPPO India has unveiled its much-awaited Reno13 Series 5G, setting a new standard in AI-powered smartphones. The Reno13 Series, which includes the Reno13 and Reno13 Pro, is designed to deliver a flagship-level experience, combining innovative features with superior performance.

Powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 8350 SoC, an energy-efficient chipset optimized for gaming and multitasking, the Reno13 Series offers exceptional speed and efficiency. The smartphones feature advanced AI tools such as AI LivePhoto and AI Clarity, along with underwater photography capabilities supported by IP66, IP68, and IP69 certifications for water and dust resistance, ensuring durability in challenging conditions.

The Reno13 Series is also equipped with 80W SUPERVOOC fast-charging technology, providing rapid power restoration for users on the go. With its focus on blending style, functionality, and innovation, the series aims to cater to a diverse range of consumers.

Available through Mainline Retail Outlets, the OPPO e-Store, and Flipkart, the Reno13 Series is priced starting at ₹37,999, offering a premium smartphone experience at competitive rates.

## Gold jumps ₹ 630 to hit record high of ₹ 82,730 amid strong global cues



**NEW DELHI, Jan 22:** Gold prices rallied by ₹ 630 to a lifetime high of ₹ 82,700 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday following persistent buying by jewellers and retailers amid strong global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Rallying for the sixth straight session, gold of 99.5 per cent purity appreciated by ₹ 630 to hit a lifetime high of ₹ 82,330 per 10 grams.

"Gold prices touched new all-time highs in Wednesday's session. The uncertainty surrounding US President Donald Trump's trade policy appears to be an important factor driving a haven flow toward precious metals," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity previously hit its record level of ₹ 82,400 on October 31, 2024. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity hit an all-time of ₹ 82,000 per 10 grams same day.

Silver also surged ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 94,000 per kg on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for Febru-

ary delivery increased by ₹ 299 or 0.38 per cent to trade at ₹ 79,523 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

"In the domestic market, MCX gold registered comparatively minor gains, limited by the rupee's strength. This currency strength capped the upward movement in domestic gold prices," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

Silver futures for March delivery increased ₹ 204 or 0.22 per cent to ₹ 92,295 per kg.

Globally, Comex gold futures rose USD 10.20 per ounce or 0.37 per cent to USD 2,769.40 per ounce.

"Gold prices continue to rise as the dollar weakens. Markets are worried after Trump delayed his promised trade tariffs on China, Mexico, and Canada, raising fears they may come next month sparking fears of a prolonged trade war," Abans Holdings' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta, said.

Further, weak economic data has added to the bullish outlook for gold, with retail sales falling short of expectations and unemployment claims, Mehta said.

These signs of economic strain have increased speculation that the US Federal Reserve may ease its hawkish stance and introduce more rate cuts this year, and boosting gold's appeal as a safe-haven asset, he added.

Silver Comex futures also traded 0.27 per cent higher at USD 31.58 per ounce.

According to Augmont's Head of Research Renisha Chainani, "Since there is a lot of uncertainty in the market about the tariffs that US President Trump plans to put on imports, the precious market is building momentum to hit record-high levels.

"Over the past ten years, the US trade deficit has almost doubled, rising from USD 500 billion to USD 850 billion in 2024," Chainani said. (PTI)

## Rupee rises 25 paise to close at 86.33 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, Jan 22:** The rupee appreciated 25 paise to close at 86.33 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, supported by positive domestic equities and soft US dollar index.

Forex traders said the rupee is likely to witness high volatility with a negative bias ahead of key events in the global and domestic economic landscape.

Moreover, the overall uncertainty about the global economy continued to weigh on both currencies and commodities, keeping investors on edge. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.56 against the greenback. During the day, the local unit touched an intraday high of 86.30 and a low of 86.71.

It finally closed at 86.33 (provisional) against the US dollar, up 25 paise from its previous

close. On Tuesday, the rupee fell 13 paise to 86.58 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to remain largely weak on underlying strength in the US dollar and overall weakness in the domestic markets. Importer demand for dollars may also pressurise the rupee. However, any extended sell-off in crude oil may support the rupee at lower levels," Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said.

Choudhary further noted that markets may see some volatility on incoming statements and announcements by the Trump administration. "USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 86.20 to 86.65," he added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six cur-

rencies, was trading down 0.15 per cent to 107.89 as traders pondered over the Trump Tariff Plan. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.48 per cent to USD 79.67 per barrel in futures trade. Crude oil prices had fallen due to fears of tough US policies and had touched USD 78 per barrel, a 4 per cent decline from recent highs following President Trump's mention of increasing US oil output.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 566.63 points, or 0.75 per cent, to settle at 76,404.99 points, while the Nifty rose 130.70 points, or 0.57 per cent, to 23,155.35 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) remained net sellers in the capital markets on Tuesday, as they offloaded shares worth ₹ 5,920.28 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

## Industry pins hope for mega wagon orders, focus on freight infra development

**KOLKATA, Jan 22:** With the Union Budget 2025-26 approaching, industry players are pinning hopes on significant announcements for the railway sector, particularly in freight operations and infrastructure development.

The industry also stressed the need to increase the average speed of freight trains to 50 kmph and deploy advanced 12,000 HP electric locomotives.

Texmaxo Managing Director Sudipta Mukherjee expressed optimism for a substantial wagon order, building on the government's 2022 announcement of approximately 1.2 lakh wagon orders over three years.

"Out of the total 3 lakh long-term wagon procurement plan to increase the total number to six lakh wagons, the government had placed nearly 1.2 lakh wagon orders in 2022, which are supposed to be fulfilled by 2025. We hope the government will repeat a similar mega order for wagons in the upcoming budget to push the railways' share



in logistics to 45 per cent from the current 26-27 per cent," Mukherjee said.

He also emphasised the need for increased funding for safety, technology, and predictable train running infrastructure.

Vivek Lohia, Managing Director of Jupiter Wagons Limited, called for a multi-pronged approach to strengthen freight operations.

He highlighted the importance of accelerating the expansion of Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs), including the proposed 'Central India

to Coast via DFC', to enhance the competitiveness of Indian industries.

Stressing the need to increase the average speed of freight trains to 50 kmph, deploy advanced 12,000 HP electric locomotives, and increase freight train length.

He advocated for strategic railway geography assessments for key sectors like mining, NTPC, petrochemicals, cement, steel, FCI, dry ports, fertilizers, and textiles.

Lohia further suggested prioritising capital expenditure on mod-

ernising infrastructure, urban rail projects, and innovative strategies such as the real-time information system (RTIS) and the separation of parcel traffic from passenger operations.

He also proposed dedicated Kisan Rails for perishables to support agricultural supply chains.

With the government's focus on sustainability and its net-zero mission, the logistics sector anticipates increased attention on railways and waterways in the upcoming budget. Expectations are rife for a 10-20 per cent boost in the railway budget from the previous allocation.

In the previous budget presented in July 2024, Railways received a record capital expenditure allocation of ₹ 2.62 lakh crore. This increase is expected to fund track expansion, the addition of high-speed Vande Bharat trains, and improvements in rail freight.

An expenditure report of Indian Railways until January 5, 2025, pointed at substantial investment in capacity augmentation. (PTI)

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## 'Japan a natural partner

in Japan to explore Assam as a favourable destination for the investment. "Assam is inviting businesses to invest in the State based on 3 solid fundamentals- Simplicity, Transparency & Efficiency. We're following these principles and encouraging new age industries to set their bases and offering them customised sops," he avowed.

Sarma also met Eiji Hosoi, president & CEO of Toyo Engineering Corporation and asked him to explore opportunities in renewable energy.

"Grateful to Mr. Eiji Hosoi, President & CEO of Toyo Engineering Corporation for hosting me at the company's Tokyo headquarters. Toyo's vast experience in energy and Assam's innate advantages in the sector can lead to better solutions for sustainable growth. I've asked them to explore opportunities in renewable energy at the upcoming #AdvantageAssam2 summit," the chief minister added.

Later, Sarma held a meeting with Japan minister of economy Yuichiro San where he discussed establishing centres for skill workers.

"It was an absolute pleasure to meet Mr Koga Yuichiro San, State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Government of Japan. I have conveyed Assam's readiness to establish a business park dedicated to Japanese firms. During my meeting, I requested the Government of Japan to consider setting up testing centres for Technical Intern Training and Specified Skill Workers programs, so that our youth have better access to short-term work opportunities in Japan. I am grateful to the Hon'ble Minister for his time and for his support to our vision of #AdvantageAssam2," Sarma said.

Earlier in the day, the chief minister was welcomed in Tokyo by the Assamese diaspora.

"Grateful to the Assamese diaspora in Tokyo who welcomed me with warm hearts and some delicious pithas. Their energy, love and unwavering connection to Assam are truly inspiring," Sarma wrote on X.

## New pact with European bloc

development, the entire world is now recognising the potential of our young talent. We are getting ranked at top positions in various education and skillset rankings and at some places we have even overtaken countries like the US. Even in areas like AI skills, we are being ranked on top globally," Chaudhary said.

"I feel so proud when here I tell business and government leaders from all over the world during meetings and roundtables about the progress India has made in areas like education, skill development and youth empowerment. Even in trade and business agreements we sign, they also show our and our partners' trust in India's youth. We have had several successful meetings here which would be converted into partnerships and agreements in the coming time and would bring new investments and create a large number of jobs," he added.

Talking about the meetings he had here during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, he said the Swiss government is soon likely to ratify a trade and economic participation agreement that has been signed with a bloc of four European nations and India expects that to come into effect from next year.

"One of the key positive outcomes is that it is the first free trade agreement that will have a skill development component. The skill development institutes of these four European nations and their curriculum would be taken to our youth also. It will also ensure that someone who had learnt a skill in India would be recognised in these European nations also.

"This agreement will lead to USD 100 billion worth of investments and one million new jobs in India through companies of these four European countries," he said.

Total population of these four countries is 13 million and one million jobs would be created in India, the minister said. Right now also, companies from these countries are present in India and employ 2 lakh people, which would increase by five times. These companies are in top positions globally across the sectors. These new jobs would be created in various sectors such as manufacturing, service, heavy engineering, technology, sustainable development, life sciences etc, he said.(PTI)

## CBI to seek death sentence

challenging the verdict and seeking death penalty for Roy. The CBI has opposed the state's right to file an appeal in the case, claiming that as it was the prosecuting agency, it had the right to appeal on the grounds of inadequacy of the sentence. Appearing for the CBI, deputy solicitor general Rajdeep Majumdar on Wednesday opposed the state's submission, maintaining that the West Bengal government does not have the right to appeal against the trial court's order on the ground of inadequacy.

He submitted that the CBI had prayed for awarding capital punishment to Roy before the trial court.

The high court said it would hear the CBI, the victim's family and the convict before deciding on the admission of the state government's appeal. The high court said it will hear the matter on January 27.

The trainee doctor was raped and killed in the early hours of August 9 in the seminar hall of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital when she had gone to have rest during her graveyard shift. Her body with severe injury marks was found inside the hall by a doctor next morning.

Civic volunteer Sanjay Roy was arrested the next day based on CCTV footage in which he was seen entering the seminar hall at 4.03 am on the day of the incident. On August 13, the Calcutta High Court ordered the transfer of the probe from Kolkata Police to the CBI, which took over the case on August 14. (PTI)

## Kokrajhar Lit Fest to begin

other literatures will present their theories on the change from conflict to reconciliation," he added. The rich cultural heritage of the Bodofa will also be showcased and discussed, Boro said. Sharingain Longkumer, the speaker of the Nagaland assembly, will be the chief guest of the festival, he said. (PTI)

## 14 killed, 24 injured

sources said. Nine victims have been identified as Fayaz Imam Saab Jamakhammadi (40), Wasim Mulla Mudageeri (25), Ijaz Mushtaq Mulla (20), Sadiq Bhasha Paras (30), Ghulam Hussain Gudusaab Jawali (40), Imtiaz Ahmed Jafar Mulageri (45), Alfaz Jafar Mandaki (25), Jalani Babdul Ghaffar Zakati (20) and Aslam Babu Benne (24). "We shifted the 15 injured persons to the hospital. They are out of danger," a police officer said.

A pall of gloom descended on Savanur town after the accident. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah too condoned the tragic death of 10 people in Yallapura. "Deeply saddened by the loss of lives in the accident in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka. Condolences to those who lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon. The local administration is assisting those affected. An ex-gratia of ₹ 2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given ₹ 50,000," the Prime Minister Office said in a post on X.

"Deeply saddened by the tragic road accident at Yallapura in Uttara Kannada that took away precious lives. My sincerest condolences to the families that lost their loved ones and my prayers for the speedy recovery of those injured," Shah said on X.

In the Raichur incident, at least four persons including three students were killed and nine others injured when the vehicle they were travelling in overturned due to a tyre burst in the wee hours of Wednesday, police said.

The vehicle carrying students of Mantralaya Sanskrit Pathashala were on a pilgrimage to Hampi to offer prayers at Narahari Temple. Police said the accident occurred near Aragamarama Camp in Sindhanur.

The deceased students have been identified as Aryavandan (18), Suceendra (22) and Abhilash (20). Driver Shiva (24), too, lost his life in this accident. The injured have been admitted to a local hospital.

The Sindhanur police visited the spot, shifted the bodies to the mortuary and the injured to the hospital. Sindhanur Traffic Police Station registered a case. (PTI)

## Disappointing Q2 GDP numbers

launch in a post on X and urged people to be a part of it. "If you believe in economic justice, oppose rising wealth inequalities, fight for social equality, reject all forms of discrimination, and strive for peace and stability in our country, wear your white T-shirts and join the movement," said the video voiceover posted by Gandhi on X.

The Congress has been attacking the government over its handling of the economy, claiming the issues of rising prices, decreasing private investment and stagnating wages are hitting the common people hard. (PTI)

## Six held for uploading

have been initiated, he added. Consumption of beef is not illegal in Assam, but The Assam Cattle Preservation Act, 2021, bans cattle slaughter and sale of beef in areas where Hindus, Jains and Sikhs are in a majority and in areas within a five-km radius of a temple or satra (Vaishnavite monastery). (PTI)

## Centre to expand network

in addressing risk factors. Our Ayushman Arogya Mandir are at the forefront of health promotion, focusing on early identification and management of risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, unhealthy diets, and physical inactivity," she said. These centres are integral to the National Programme for Prevention and Control of non-communicable diseases, Srivastava stated. A study recently published in the International Journal of Stroke had said that ischaemic stroke is the most common, accounting for about 70-80 per cent of all strokes in India. An ischaemic stroke is caused when a blood clot affects supply to the brain.

Researchers, including those from the US' Ascension Health and All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Hyderabad, found that a total of 566 stroke centres equipped with the 'intravenous thrombolysis' method of treatment (which breaks up blood clots) were spread across 26 states and union territories, the study had said. Of the 566, over 60 per cent (361) were found to be also equipped with endovascular therapy for stroke patients, considered superior. (PTI)

## Indian-American lawmakers

companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. "Trump's order removes birthright citizenship for children born in the US not just to undocumented parents but to 'lawful' immigrants who are temporarily on a student visa, H1B/H2B visa, or business visa. So much for the pretence that the Republicans are for legal immigration," Khanna said.

Indians are the main beneficiaries of the H-1B visas, which bring in the best of the talent and brains from across the world. Highly skilled professionals from India walk away with the overwhelming number of H-1B visas - which is Congressional mandated 65,000 every year and another 20,000 for those who received higher education from the US. "No matter what Donald Trump says or does, birthright citizenship has and will be the law of the land. I will fight to protect it at all costs," Indian American Congressman Shri Thanedar said. Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal described it as unconstitutional. "Plain and simple this is unconstitutional and cannot be done with the stroke of a pen. If enacted, it would make a mockery of our country's laws and the precedents set in the Constitution," she said. A coalition of immigration rights groups has challenged this in court and said that this is unconstitutional. As per the executive order, the US would not give automatic citizenship to newborn babies after February 19, 2025, if one of the parents is not a US citizen or lawful permanent resident.

Also, attorneys general from 22 states sued President Trump in two federal district courts on Tuesday to block the executive order that refuses to recognise the US-born children of unauthorised immigrants as citizens, the New York Times reported.(PTI)

## Minister Ajanta Neog inaugurates welfare infrastructure in Cachar



**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Jan 22: Assam finance and women & child development minister Ajanta Neog inaugurated the district social welfare office building in Meherpur and the new treasury office building at Sadarghat, Silchar, on Wednesday.

The events witnessed the participation of dignitaries, including MP Parimal Suklabaidya, Silchar MLA Dipayan Chakraborty, and district commissioner Mrudul Yadav, who highlighted the transformative impact of the state's welfare initiatives.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremonies, minister Ajanta Neog underscored the government's unwavering commitment to uplifting women, children, and the underprivileged. She stated, "The new infrastructure symbolises our resolve to bring services closer to the people. The district social welfare office will serve as the nucleus of our outreach programs, ensuring every woman, child, and vulnerable group in Cachar has access to vital resources."

Highlighting the accomplishments under the Women and Child Development (WCD) Department, she noted that Cachar district now has 16 project blocks overseeing 3,407 Anganwadi centers after amalgamating 534 centers. These centers play a pivotal role in implementing schemes like the Supplementary Nutrition Program, POSHAN Abhiyaan, District Hub for Empowerment of Women, Sakhi One Stop Centre, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan.

"With over 181,132 beneficiaries, including 7,054 pregnant women and 4,784 lactating mothers, we are building a healthier and more empowered society," she added, urging stakeholders to work collectively toward realizing the vision of holistic development.

Addressing the gathering at Meherpur, MP Parimal Suklabaidya praised the state government's initiatives, saying, "The new office building will enhance administrative efficiency, ensuring seamless delivery of welfare

schemes to those in need. Under the dynamic leadership of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and minister Ajanta Neog, Assam is witnessing unprecedented development in women and child welfare."

Silchar MLA Dipayan Chakraborty, who spoke at both venues, emphasized the transformative role of grassroots-level implementation. He remarked, "Anganwadi centers in Cachar have become the backbone of our social welfare ecosystem. These facilities are not mere buildings but lifelines for communities, especially in rural areas." He also highlighted the new Treasury Office's role in bolstering financial governance and transparency in Silchar.

Earlier, district commissioner Yadav, in his inaugural address, commended the integration of modern infrastructure with government schemes. "The inauguration of these two facilities marks a crucial step toward achieving administrative excellence and ensuring last-mile delivery of welfare benefits," he said, urging all stakeholders to maximize the potential of these initiatives for community welfare.

It needs to mention here that under the aegis of the WCD department, Cachar has made remarkable strides, supplementary Nutrition Program ensures nutritious meals for children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.

POSHAN Abhiyaan focuses on eradicating malnutrition. Sakhi One Stop Centre provides integrated support for women facing violence. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao aims to empower the girl child through education and awareness.

Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan works towards a drug-free society. The inauguration of these landmark buildings marks a new dawn for Cachar, reflecting the government's commitment to fostering social and economic development. With an integrated approach combining infrastructure, governance, and community participation, the district is poised for transformative growth, paving the way for a brighter future.

## Sparsh Leprosy Awareness campaign held in Dima Hasao



**HT Correspondent**

HAFLONG, Jan 22: Sparsh Leprosy Awareness campaign organised by the District Health Society & NLEP, Dima Hasao was held at the office of the joint director, Medical & Health Services, Haflong on Wednesday.

The meeting was chaired by joint director, medical & health services, Naba Kumar Bailung in presence of Kalpana Kemprai, L Vaiphei, district nodal officer, DTCC, and medical Officials.

The main objective of the campaign is to spread awareness on Leprosy. Leprosy is a chronic disease caused by bacteria (Mycobacterium leper). It appears as a hypo-pigmented patch(s) on skin with definite loss of sensation. It affects nerves, skin and eyes. According to the report currently three leprosy cases have been identified in Dima Hasao district.

Joint director, medical & health services, Naba Kumar Bailung emphasised on the importance of early detection of Leprosy disease and immediate treatment of Leprosy to prevent physical disabilities and reduced stigma. Further he appealed to the other Departments including Social Welfare, Education department and Social Organization for ending stigma with the ultimate goal of making a Leprosy free district.

During the meeting medical officer (AYUI) Archana Kemprai informed that Sparsh Leprosy Awareness campaign will be launched on January 30 on Anti Leprosy day. The campaign will be carried out in Dima Hasao district from January 31 till February 13.

BTR Peace Accord has been regarded as third Bodo peace accord, was signed on January 27, 2020

## ABSU to celebrate 5<sup>th</sup> BTR Peace Accord Day in Chirang

**HT Correspondent**

KOKRAJHAR, Jan 22: The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) is going to celebrate 5th Bodo Peace Accord on January 27 to be held at the Kashikotra Higher Secondary school playground in Chirang.

The celebration will mark the five glorious year in bringing peace and tranquility across the Bodoland region since the signing the historic BTR Peace Accord, ABSU stated.

Notably, the BTR Peace Accord which was regarded as third Bodo peace accord, was signed on January 27, 2020 with the Bodo movement organisations : ABSU, UBPO & four factions of NDFB and Government of India and Government of Assam during NDA-II Government.

Addressing the reporters on Wednesday held at the Bodofa House in Kokrajhar on Wednesday, ABSU president Dipen Boro said that the All Bodo Students Union is going to celebrate the 5th Bodo Peace Accord Day (BTR Agreement) at Kashikotra Higher Secondary playground in Chirang district on January 27 with a day-long programme.

The programme will be followed by flag hoisting of the ABSU, floral tribute to Bodofa



Upendra Nath Brahma, homage to the Bodoland martyrs, release of pigeon for peace and prosperity, rally for peace and implementation and a grand open discussion on the topic of "Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma and Dream for building vibrant Bodo community" in connection with Bodo peace accord day.

The programme will be attended by all the signatory leaders followed by Pramod Boro, the CEM of Bodoland Territorial Region.

Gobinda Ch Basumatary, deputy CEM, BTR, Urkhao Gwra Brahma, Assam cabinet minister, Rbwngwa Narzary, MP, Rajya Sabha, Ohnjalu Basumatary, for-

mer general secretary of NDFB, Dil Ranjan Narzary, former VP, NDFB, Ranjit Basumatary, EM, BTR, Saikhong Basumatary, EM, BTR, Jayanta Basumatary, MP, Lok Sabha among others.

The organisers have invited all the Bodo Nationalist organization to this grand programme where 3000 delegates will participate.

Leaders from ABSU, ex-NDFB welfare Association, United Boro People Organisation, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Dularai Boro Harimu Afad, All Bodo Primary Teacher Association, All Bodo Women Welfare Federation, Ex Volunteer Force, Boro Cine artist association, Boro

Samaj, Boro Department College Teacher

Association, BTR principal Council, BTR Region Tribal sangha Co-ordination committee, Boro Mothers Association, Boro People Co-ordination Committee and former leaders of different organization are expected to participate in the programme.

"It was our commitment to uphold the Bodoland region with peace, harmony and prosperity and to build the Bodo community with the principle of Bodofa which is to uplift the Bodo as a vibrant community in the world," ABSU stated.

The ABSU urged the Union and state government to fulfill its commitment for time bound implementation of all the remaining clause of Bodo Peace Accord at this moment of the completion of 5 yrs of the accord.

The student union leader also appealed to the government of India and Assam for release of all the 66 former NDFB members from the central jail and withdrawal of their remaining cases.

ABSU and the Bodo community is highly hopeful that the dynamic leadership in centre and state will address all those issues at the earliest, a PR stated.

## LAC-level training programme launched

**HT Bureau**

DIPHU, Jan 22: Karbi Anglong district admin has officially launched the LAC-Level Training Program across the three constituencies of the district—108-Bokajan (ST), 109-Howraghat (ST), and 110-Diphu (ST).

The initiative, in line with the Assam Government's directives, aimed to empower participants from tea garden communities by nurturing cultural talent and promoting skill development.

The training program would commence from Jan 24 to 28 in the district's three legislative constituencies.

Participants would undergo an initial evaluation on the first day, with the best performers would be selected to continue for the subsequent training days. Females aged between 15 and 35 years and males aged between 15 and 45 years would be eligible to participate. Additionally, participants are required to complete official formalities during the rehearsal day.

## Historic book release highlights India-Myanmar cultural ties

**HT Correspondent**

DIBRUGARH, Jan 22: The 1st International Tai Youth Festival witnessed a momentous occasion with the launch of the book "Basic History of Multiracial Burma: Indianization and Burmanization" by renowned Myanmar-based author Sai San Aik.

The grand event, held at Langi Godapani Khetra, brought together luminaries from various fields to celebrate the deep historical and cultural connections between India and Myanmar.

Author Sai San Aik, present at the event, provided an insightful account of the ancient Hindu influences in Burma (modern-day Myanmar), tracing the enduring cultural bonds that have shaped both nations over millennia. He highlighted how these influences continue to resonate today, strengthening the shared heritage of the two countries.

Sunil Mohanty, Assam Kshetra Prachar Pramukh, RSS and a distinguished scholar with a Ph.D. in Southeast Asian Studies, elaborated on Bharat's ancient cultural and trade relations with Southeast Asia. He emphasised how India's rich legacy of script, scriptures, spirituality, art, and craftsmanship is still deeply ingrained in the region's cultural fabric.

Speaking on the occasion, minister of transport and indigenous affairs, Jogen Mohan, praised the book as



a significant intellectual contribution. He noted its potential to strengthen India's Act East policy by fostering a deeper understanding of historical and cultural ties. The event also featured Vijay Sharma of EBH Publishers, who expressed pride in bringing such an impactful work to readers.

The release of "Basic History of Multiracial Burma: Indianization and Burmanization" marks a significant step in highlighting the intertwined histories of India and Myanmar, offering valuable insights into their shared legacy and fostering greater cultural connectivity.

## Final touch to Karbi Lammet Amei venue

**HT Bureau**

DIPHU, Jan 22: With two days left for the 33rd annual general conference of Karbi Lammet Amei (KLA) – Karbi literary body from January 24 to 27, workers have been giving the final touch to every area at the venue at Langphar Karbi Jutang Aklam, Volongkom Aji.

The entrance gate designed with Karbi typical structure looked attractive and a treat to the eyes. The pandal to be used for delegate session and other activities have been ornamented with sitting arrangement, lighting and heavy sound system.

The surroundings were completely kept clean with no paper and polythene seen around. During the four day event the organising committee has been trying to keep the venue free from plastics and polythene to maintain cleanliness.

## 'Shabdar Kolaj' released

**HT Correspondent**

NAGAON, Jan 22: Professor Mrudul Hazarika, vice-chancellor of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, ceremonially released "Shabdar Kolaj" penned by scribe Hemen Kumar Das at a solemn function held at the Nagaon Press Club on Wednesday.

In his speech, Professor Hazarika said that the book was a collection of articles that reflected the author's thoughts and experiences. He also expressed concern over the lack of reading habits among the Assamese people, saying that it was essential to cultivate the habit of reading books to spread knowledge. Noted educationist and newly elected president of the Nagaon District Sahitya Sabha, Sarat Borkatoki, appreciated the author's efforts in writing the book, saying that it was a timely attempt to document the experiences of a journalist.

Historian and principal of Dhing College, Biman Hazarika, emphasised the importance of reading books, saying that it was essential to make reading a national habit. He also stressed the need to promote creative thinking and writing among the younger generation.

## Biennial conference of Srimanta Sankardev Sangha held

**HT Correspondent**

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Jan 22: The 48th biennial conference of Nagsankar regional committee of Srimanta Sankardev Sangha under Tezpur was held under the aegis of Bijaypur primary branch recently with a two-day programme at Bijaypur. The delegate session selected Lakhi Bezbarua as president and Diganta Barua as secretary. Bangshi Bhuyan graced the delegate's session as an observer. The second day session began with hoisting of the institutional flag by Lakhi Bezbarua. It was followed by a Bhagawat procession.

## Mahatma Gandhi statue unveiled

**HT Correspondent**

KOKRAJHAR, Jan 22: The statue of Mahatma Gandhi was officially unveiled by BTR CEM Pramod Boro in front of the Kalgajgon Parade Ground on Wednesday.

The statue, part of a larger beautification project, marks a significant step in enhancing the district's central campus and its surroundings.

The installation of the statue was part of a comprehensive effort to improve the aesthetics and infrastructure of the area. Recognising the need for a permanent structure, the urban development department, in collaboration with the district administration, spearheaded the project to create a lasting monument that would serve as a beacon of Gandhian values.

The ceremony was attended by several distinguished figures, including EM Ranjit Basumatary, EM Saikhong Basumatary, EM Wilson Hasda, among others.

## Seven tea workers injured in jumbo attack in Naharkatia

**HT Correspondent**

DIBRUGARH, Jan 22: Seven female tea garden workers were injured in an attack by a wild elephant in the Naharkatia area of Dibrugarh on Wednesday.

According to reports, the incident occurred as a group of workers from the Tipam tea estate were on their way for their daily morning duties alongside the Tipam hills.

While others workers managed to escape, seven female workers were attacked from behind, leading to significant injuries.

The injured workers were identified as Rashmi Gowala, Mamoni Gowala, Shilpi Bhuyan, Jaya Bawri, Sonali Gowala, Rupali Hazda, and Bobita Bhuyan. Four of the women suffered major injuries while the remaining three sustained minor injuries. They were admitted to the Naharkatia civil hospital.

"There were 17 of us walking on the road when suddenly the elephant attacked us from behind. Seven of us were injured in the attack," a female worker said.

The tea estate close to the Tipam hills often witnesses elephants roaming as they come out in search for food.

Man-elephant has been rising due to shrinking of forest covers and as a result elephants are moving towards human habitation.

## Road safety awareness in Kheroni

**HT Correspondent**

KHERONI, Jan 22: Given the increasing frequency of road accidents in Kheroni area resulting in fatal consequences in West Karbi Anglong, Kheroni police have organised road safety awareness in Kheroni. A procession was taken from Kheroni HS School to Kheroni Daily Market by HS School students, police and teachers. Leading the procession were police personnel and an assistant teacher, Kheroni HS School, Gobinda Tamuli Phukon.

The assistant teacher, Phukon said that the step taken by the police was very much appreciated.

Phukan said, "As we have seen frequent accidents in Kheroni have raised concerns. Some of our students even got injured. Our students travel by this road. Because of this, the steps taken by the Kheroni police are appreciated."

## Sonitpur District TB Forum sorts out activities under 100 day campaign

**HT Correspondent**

TEZPUR, Jan 22: The meeting of the District TB Forum of Sonitpur under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) was held on Wednesday in the Conference Hall of the district commissioner's office, Sonitpur.

The meeting was chaired by additional district commissioner (Health) Twahir Alam and focused on strategies to eliminate tuberculosis in the district.

District TB Officer Hiranjan Saikia informed attendees that this was the first of the two biannual meetings of the forum for 2025. He outlined the forum's objectives, emphasizing effective screening, notification, and elimination of the disease. Saikia noted that approximately 10,511 fruit baskets under the Nikshay Mitra initiative have been distributed in the district to date. Adding to this, the district president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), Dwipen Mahanta, stated that an appeal would be made to all doctors under the IMA banner to contribute to the Nikshay Mitra initiative within their capacities.

Regarding the ongoing 100-Day TB Elimination Campaign, launched on December 7 2024, Saikia shared that two operational Nikshay Vans are active in the district, and approximately 700 Nikshay Shivirs (TB screening camps) have been held to date. Joint director of health services Rupak Baruah highlighted that these camps are primarily conducted alongside Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) Screening Camps every Tuesday and Friday.

It was noted during the meeting that around 2,82,243 people in the district have been mapped for TB screening, with approximately 70,000 already screened. Furthermore, 173 health institutions have been mapped for TB screening as part of the 100-Day Campaign. The meeting was attended by the inspector of schools, the district information and public relations officer, the superintendent of Kanaklata Civil Hospital, the district programme manager of NHM, SDMOs, and other concerned officials.

## Ayushman Arogya Mandir initiative revolutionises primary care delivery

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between 27 Tea Gardens in Cachar and the District Health Society

**HT Correspondent**

SILCHAR, Jan 22: The Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM) initiative has made significant strides in bringing quality healthcare services closer to the people of Cachar district. With the establishment of 176 centers across the region, this ambitious program seeks to provide Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC) services that are not only accessible and affordable but also of high quality. This transformative step underscores Assam's commitment to achieving Universal Health Coverage.

The Ayushman Arogya Mandir centers are equipped to offer a wide spectrum of services, including maternal and child healthcare, management of non-communicable diseases, emergency medical care, and basic diagnostic facilities, alongside the provision of free essential drugs. These centers are designed to function as a vital healthcare lifeline for the local community, ensuring timely and comprehensive care for all.

A key highlight of the initiative is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between 27 Tea Gardens in Cachar and the District Health Society, Cachar. Under this agreement, Tea Garden Hospitals



will be transformed into Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, bringing quality healthcare services directly to tea garden workers and their families. This integration of healthcare into the lives of tea garden communities exemplifies a targeted approach to address their unique challenges.

The official launch of the initiative took place at the Old CM Block in Janata Bhawan, Guwahati, in the presence of the Ashok Singhal, minister of health & family welfare and irrigation and the minister of

labour welfare, tea tribes, and Adivasi welfare, Rupesh Gowala. Simultaneously, a district-level launch ceremony was held at the Old Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office in Silchar, attended by public representatives, tea garden management, district administrators, and health officials.

Ayushman Arogya Mandir initiative is built on a foundation of 12 essential health services, addressing key areas such as pregnancy care, neonatal and infant health, fam-

ily planning, and the management of both communicable and non-communicable diseases. The program also extends its scope to emergency and trauma care, as well as basic oral, ophthalmic, ENT, and mental health services. This holistic approach aims to cover a wide range of healthcare needs, ensuring no one is left behind.

Notably, to strengthen the healthcare framework within tea gardens, Community Health Officers (CHOs) have been appointed to serve as the first point of contact in these hospitals. With CHOs already deployed in 21 Tea Garden Hospitals, the program is poised to deliver immediate and effective care to tea garden workers and their families.

Ayushman Arogya Mandir initiative represents a collaborative effort between the Assam government and health authorities to address the pressing healthcare needs of underserved communities. By focusing on preventive, promotive, curative, and rehabilitative care, the program is not only transforming the healthcare delivery system but also paving the way for a healthier and more equitable future for the people of Cachar.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*Our work is the presentation of our capabilities.*  
— Edward Gibbon

## US withdrawal from WHO

The inaugural ceremony of crowning of Donald Trump as the 47th President of the USA was marked by the presence of super-rich who have influence not only their governments but on the governments of other countries as well. Immediately after the swearing in, Trump did not lose time to sign several orders. An order of the foremost concern with long term impact, is the order to formally withdraw the US from Paris Climate agreements. This is so far the most important agreement which has taken cognizance of the manmade climate crises. It highlighted the importance of global cooperation to mitigate the climate change. We have already seen the effects of climate change in the form of rising temperature, floods, change in the crop patterns, crises of food security and the impact on the health of the poor vulnerable people in the third world countries. Trump has also passed the order to withdraw from the World Health Organisation (WHO). This amounts to abdicating the responsibility to participate in the global efforts to promote health of the people. Trump's decision does not hold ground because it has been pointed out that the WHO toes the line of multinational corporations in several matters. Most of these corporations belong to the United States of America. Whereas there have been shortcomings in handling the pandemic by the WHO, it should be noted that US based vaccine making corporations made huge profits, even blackmailed some of the developing countries particularly in Africa. Needless to say that the multinational health related corporations of the USA have made much more profit in the name of US governments contribution to the WHO.

Trump's order on having only two genders is highly regressive. That the genders are to be defined based on whether people are born with eggs or sperms, rather than on their chromosomes, according to details of the upcoming order. This will affect the rights of the transgender population. Any policy about the immigrants should be designed based on the humanitarian values. His stand of the rights of immigrants has to be viewed with scepticism. Aggressive stances toward Latin America, especially Cuba, signal continued imperialist interventionism, threatening the self-determination of nations. He has reiterated to take over control the Panama Canal by putting Naval Blockade. He has already changed the name of Gulf of Mexico to Gulf of America. There is an open move to purchase the green land.

US economy is based on the armament industry and they would continue to make profit by selling arms and promoting wars at the cost of people's life. Donald Trump's inaugural speech marks a troubling shift in global politics. His policies reflect the colonial mindset of 18th and 19th century. He denies global mutual cooperation and multilateralism. His threat to the BRICS shows complete contempt for sovereignty of nations. This will threaten global stability. His orders have shown his mindset for unilateralism, against the mutual respect and dialogue among nations. Protectionist economic policies, like tariffs, aim to control trade against developing nations, exacerbating global inequality and systemic exploitation. The global expenditure on arms race including the nuclear arms race is increasing continuously with maximum share of the US in it. Donald Trump has not uttered a word for global nuclear disarmament.

## Voter list manipulation is a serious issue in Delhi election

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

Voter list manipulation has become a serious issue in Delhi Vidhan Sabha election, more so after the publication of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituency wise number of electors as on January 17, 2025. Shrinkage of number of electorates in 'one in five' Vidhan Sabha constituencies compared to 2020, shows the shifting demography, which is likely to impact the poll outcome.

Total number of electorates has also jumped to 1,56,14,000 in 2025 compared to 1,47,18,119 in January 2024, an increase of about 9 lakh in one year. Total number of electors in Delhi in January 2020 were 1,47,86,382. Why the number of electorates shrank in 2024 compared to 2020, and why it rose sharply within one year in 2025 by about 9 lakh is surprising. It is still unexplained. Constituency wise changes in numbers of electorates are even more puzzling, which needs answers why there is such a demographic shift in number of electorates.

Chief Minister of Delhi Atishi had alleged on January 6 that there was large scale scam happening to manipulate the electoral roll of New Delhi assembly constituency where AAP Supremo Kejriwal is contesting. She had sought an immediate inquiry into the matter. She had also submitted a written complaint to the Chief Election Commissioner.

Atishi had said that a summary revision of the electoral roll was done by the Election Commission and after that, there have been a large number of applications to add and delete voters in the New Delhi assembly constituency, adding that "There is a conspiracy to manipulate the election in the New Delhi assembly constituency by adding about 10 per cent new voters and deleting 5.77 per cent voters."

"Out of the 6,167 applications for voter deletion, 4,283 applications to delete votes were filed by merely 84 people. The expose of this scam is that, when these 84 people were called for hearing by the election commission after sending notices, all of these objectors came for the hearing and said that "we did not file any applications," she said.

AAP supremo Kejriwal, after a week, also wrote to CEC alleging that BJP's central ministers and leaders are getting fake voters registered at their home addresses, and demanded that an FIR should be filed against the BJP leaders involved. BJP has, however, dismissed the claims as baseless, but also has alleged manipulation by AAP leaders. Nevertheless, Election commission officials have denied any truth in allegations of both the BJP and AAP leaders. CEC has assured that the procedures for updating the voter list were both stringent and transparent, and integrity of the electoral process is intact.

Nevertheless, it has been reported that in as many as 14 assembly constituencies, number of electorates have shrunk in January 2025 compared to January 2020. How it happened is puzzling, but sure to impact the political outcome. Many other assembly constituencies have on the other hand registered sharp increase in number of electorates. Amidst these allegations and counter allegations of voters list manipulation in various constituencies, the change in number of electorates in every constituency in Delhi shows that the state is undergoing sharp demographic changes, particularly between January 2024 to January 2025.

There are 7 Lok Sabha Constituencies in Delhi and each of them has 10 Vidhan Sabha constituencies. Number of electorates in Chandini Chowk Lok Sabha constituency have increased from 1609730 to 1681116 (71,386); in North East Delhi from 2381442 to 2554496 (1,73,054); in East Delhi from 2062423 to 2160506 (98,000); in New Delhi 1481338 to 1561974 (80,636); in North West Delhi 2472910 to 2684169 (2,11,259); in West Delhi 2488831 to 2624291 (1,35,460); and in South Delhi from 2221445 to 2347448 (1,26,003).

Such an uneven demographic change or shift within a year needs explanation, for various regions, since all the regions need development and social welfare schemes, according as the increase in population. Moreover, freebies are being committed by political parties in the fray, the demographic shift is surely to impact the election outcome differently based on the shift in electorates in the respective Vidhan Sabha Constituencies.

Not only that, such a demographic change has posed new challenges to the political parties regarding their winnability in the changed circumstances. It is precisely the reason behind allegations and counter allegations by AAP and the BJP regarding the voter list manipulation. Both the political parties are however reworking their strategies based on the fact changing demography of Delhi, scheduled to poll on February 5. (IPA Service)

## Beijing scores diplomatic victory in Myanmar via regional ceasefire

China has scored a major diplomatic victory in Myanmar by helping the conclusion of a truce between the ruling military junta and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in the provinces bordering China. The MNDAA rebels took control of large areas around the border by driving out the junta troops last month. China was negotiating a deal as the mediator for the last two weeks and it was finally announced on Saturday.

The Myanmar war began from February 1, 2021 after the military took over power in the country overthrowing the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. It is the second such pact in little over a year, a previous one in January 2024 not having been honoured by either side. The new ceasefire agreement brokered by China gives the Chinese government big advantage in reshaping the nature of the future government in this neighbouring country where China has big investments. Among the other big powers, US and the EU members have imposed sanctions against the Junta government for its undemocratic actions while India, while keeping relations, have not been too close to the regime. India also have very little contacts with the rebel groups.

China, on the other hand, has not taken any action against the military regime but at the same time called upon them to have negotiations with the rebels and the Suu Kyi supporters of the Movement for Democracy. In the provinces bordering China, the rebels got assistance from the Beijing authorities also. In all, China is most advantageously placed in Myanmar now in respect of its relationship with all stakeholders.

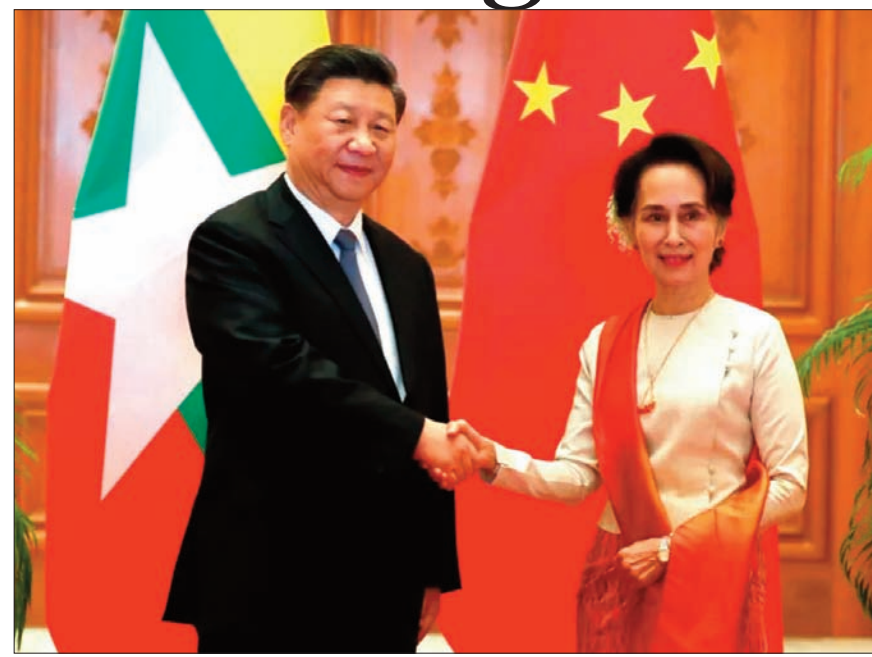
China has a big stake in ensuring stability in Myanmar in view of protecting its large investments in infrastructure sector. Chinese spokesperson said on Saturday "We hope that all parties will maintain the momentum of ceasefire and peace talks, earnestly implement existing common understandings, take the initiative in de-escalating the situation on the ground and further negotiate and settle relevant issues through dialogue."

Chinese officials said China stands ready to promote talks and provide support for the peace process in northern Myanmar. They did not give details and nor did Myanmar's military government immediately comment on the ceasefire.

The Myanmar Civil War, also known as the Burmese Civil War, Burmese Spring Revolution or People's Defensive War, is an ongoing civil war since 2021. It began following Myanmar's long-running insurgencies, which escalated significantly in response to the 2021 coup d'état and the subsequent violent crackdown on anti-coup protests. The exiled National Unity Government and major ethnic armed organisations repudiated the 2008 Constitution and called instead for a democratic federal state.

Besides engaging this alliance, the ruling government of the State Administration Council (SAC), also contends with other anti-SAC forces in areas under its control. Defence experts observed the insurgents are apportioned into hundreds of armed groups scattered across the country.

As of March 2023, the United Nations estimated that since the coup in February 2021, 17.6 million people in Myanmar re-



quired humanitarian assistance, while 1.6 million were internally displaced, and over 55,000 civilian buildings had been destroyed. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said that over 40,000 people had fled into neighboring countries, such as Bangladesh, India and Thailand.

As of October 2023, Myanmar's military, the Tatmadaw, controlled under 40% of the country, although they maintained that they controlled around two-thirds of the country's 330 townships. In the second half of 2023, Chinland Defense Forces in Chin State had captured a majority of the state, with a few holdouts in urban areas and along the India-Myanmar border remaining. In October 2023, the Tatmadaw began facing manpower issues, with desertions and low morale being extremely common. This coincided with a major offensive by the People's Defense Force and Three Brotherhood Alliance in the west of the country, which was successful in taking 80 bases, 220 SAC positions and several towns by 28 November 2023.

October and November 2023 saw a series of concurrent anti-SAC offensives, including Operation 1111 besieging the state capital of Loikaw and renewed conflict by anti-SAC forces in northern Rakhine and Chin states. In Operation 1027, anti-SAC forces seized Laukkai, the capital of Kokang Self-Administered Zone, in early January 2024. Northern Shan State fighting stopped with the Haigeng ceasefire after the fall of Laukkai. The Rakhine offensive, however, continued in northern Rakhine state with Mrauk U, among others, falling to the Arakan Army in February 2024.

As of February 2024, thousands of the SAC's soldiers surrendered without a fight, including six generals of the Tatmadaw. The SAC used terror tactics against the population, including burnings, beheadings, mutilations, war rape, torching villages, and a massive aerial bombing campaign that has displaced nearly 3 million people. The Myanmar Air Force has dropped more bombs per capita than have been dropped in

the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In late March 2024 anti-SAC forces in southeastern Myanmar captured Demoso and Papun, bringing the number of district-level towns captured by anti-SAC forces up to eight. The ninth district-level town, Matupi, was captured by Chin resistance in mid June 2024. In late June 2024 the Three Brotherhood Alliance restarted Operation 1027 after claiming that Tatmadaw forces had broken the ceasefire, capturing the tenth district level town, Kyaukme, by the end of the month.

On 17 July, two more district level towns were captured by the Brotherhood Alliance, Thandwe and Mongmit, bringing the number up to twelve. On 3 August, the MNDAA as part of a wider effort from the Three Brotherhood Alliance and other resistance groups captured Lashio, the largest town in northern Shan State, as well as the headquarters of the SAC's Northeastern Command. On 20 December 2024, the Arakan Army (AA) claimed to have captured a large tracts of areas near the Chinese border belonging to Rakhine province. China took maximum interest in this and organized mediation resulting in the latest truce.

India, despite its large investments in Myanmar had no active contacts with the rebels. Only late last year, a move was initiated to organize a meeting with the representatives of the rebels. The follow up meetings were not held. For India, China is a big power rival in Myanmar and its increasing presence and influence can hurt the interests of India as China has its own geopolitical goals.

The recent news of China deploying private security companies to protect its infrastructure and other projects in Myanmar is alarming for India. Myanmar has been embroiled in a civil war since the 2021 coup, creating a politically volatile environment. The entry of Chinese nationals as security guards represents a significant escalation. It suggests that traditional diplomatic channels have failed to provide adequate security as-

surances to Chinese investors and the government. This deployment of private security personnel introduces a new and complex dimension to the ongoing crisis in Myanmar. The interesting feature is that Chinese move has the approval of the junta administration.

Political observers in Myanmar believe that such a move could further escalate tensions and potentially lead to unintended consequences. While many countries have invested in infrastructure and businesses in Myanmar, the 2021 coup has led to a significant withdrawal of foreign investment. Many companies have ceased operations and closed down their businesses due to the deteriorating political and security situation.

China, as a close neighbour with substantial investments in Myanmar, is particularly concerned about the impact of the conflict on its interests. The inability to conduct business and contain the damage to infrastructure projects have forced China to consider alternative solutions, including the deployment of private security forces. However, if other countries with significant investments in Myanmar, such as Japan, South Korea, Russia, or the United States, follow suit and deploy their own private security personnel, it could escalate tensions and create a more volatile environment, feel experts.

For instance, India has substantial investments in Myanmar, with several infrastructure projects underway that involve Myanmar, India, and Bangladesh. If India were to deploy its own troops or security personnel to protect its interests, it could further complicate the situation and potentially escalate tensions in the region.

China's decision to deploy private security forces to Myanmar has other implications for India. It suggests that India's diplomatic efforts to address the crisis in Myanmar have been limited. The instability in Myanmar, particularly the increased rebel activity and cross-border illicit trade, has a direct impact on India's northeastern states. India will likely need to reassess its approach to Myanmar and consider alternative strategies to protect its interests and maintain regional stability.

As the year 2025 has begun, and Donald Trump has taken over as the President of USA, the Myanmar authorities are also looking for some new direction from the Trump administration. The earlier Biden administration judged the Myanmar situation from human rights angle and adopted policies. Trump being a transactionalist, may like to get benefits for the USA from Myanmar junta. He may not like Chinese influence to increase with the coming to power of the rebels. So despite losses, Myanmar junta is not going for any truce with the rebels at the moment at national level. They are waiting for some response from Washington.

For China, however its realpolitik is such that either way, it is in win win situation. Beijing is comfortable with both the junta and the rebels. Only India, on the other hand have to build fresh relations with the future stake holders of power in Myanmar. Indian diplomacy is on backfoot in its neighbourhood already with the last year's developments in Bangladesh. New Delhi needs to have a proper dialogue with the rebels including the leaders of democracy movement. (IPA Service)

## How Mark Zuckerberg fell for the Republican right after his Liberal period

By: Paris Marx

Until pretty recently, if you thought of Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, you'd probably come up with a flesh-and-blood automaton whose mission to connect the world turned into the upending of political systems and poisoning of our information environment — not to mention that weird metaverse side project. Accusations that his platform helped get Donald Trump elected in 2016 led to a series of scandals that the company struggled to effectively respond to — at least until another billionaire rose to take his crown.

By July 2023, some of Zuckerberg's detractors were ready to give him a pass because they'd found a new enemy. That month, Meta launched Threads, its competitor to an increasingly right-wing and conspiracy-filled X/Twitter. Zuckerberg's opportunistic move to take advantage of Twitter's struggles under its new owner was recast by some of Elon Musk's newfound critics as a political move to show that Meta was different. All of a sudden, a company with one of the worst reputations in tech was being positioned as something of a liberal darling.

Zuckerberg's new fans wanted to see him as Musk's foil — the better social media baron — despite history showing that they were two sides of the same coin. The billionaires even played into the supposed rivalry by suggesting they were going to physically fight each other, as robotic Zuckerberg morphed into a mixed martial arts enthusiast.

When he unveiled a more muscular build, alongside baggy shirts and gold chains a little later, segments of social media went wild, and it seemed like his days of being one of the most hated corporate executives in Silicon Valley

were behind him. But Zuckerberg was never who those newfound Musk haters wanted him to be.

In 2023, Meta had lifted its ban on Donald Trump, before rolling back the final restrictions on July 12, 2024. The following day, Trump suffered an assassination attempt in Pennsylvania. Zuckerberg called Trump to say he was "praying" for him, and less than a week later he said Trump was a "badass," although he made sure to clarify that this wasn't an explicit endorsement. Meanwhile, Zuckerberg refused to renew his support for local electoral efforts after it had been criticized by Republicans, and Meta continued rolling back policies it had implemented to safeguard elections.

For some, Zuckerberg's recent decision to ditch fact-checkers in exchange for community notes, open the floodgates to hate speech, and begin ditching diversity and trans-inclusive initiatives might feel like a betrayal. But for those who didn't fall for the expertly orchestrated public relations campaign that accompanied his makeover, it was hardly a surprise.

Zuckerberg spent years taking figurative punches before stepping into the ring to take some real ones. He was called out by the political right for supposed suppression of conservative speech — a dubious accusation — but faced real regulatory pressure from Democrats, especially when they returned to power in 2021. However, his response to that political scrutiny has changed over time.

In the 2010s, it seems quite clear that Zuckerberg wanted to appear socially progressive like many other tech leaders, despite the libertarianism that dominates the politics of Silicon Valley. He was outspoken on issues like immigration, even as his company helped push the opposite narrative

where it was profitable, and he funded philanthropic efforts supposedly aimed at addressing those causes. That included a big donation to promote school privatization to try to distract from the release of The Social Network.

When the political pressure escalated, Zuckerberg again tried to show that the company then called Facebook was responding to the criticism. But he was never willing to go far enough to really address the root of the problem, in part because he took disingenuous conservative anger at face value. If conservatives were being silenced on social media more than liberals, it was only because they were more likely to use hate speech and express bigoted views that got caught up in moderation. But the company wouldn't accept that reality.

According to reporting in BuzzFeed News, Zuckerberg was already personally intervening to protect extreme right-wing users in 2019, including Infowars founder Alex Jones. As one employee told the publication, "Mark personally didn't like the punishment, so he changed the rules," allowing a wide range of right-wing militant groups to remain on Facebook and organize for the insurrection that occurred on January 6, 2021. That event finally forced the company to take more serious action, but many of those efforts have proven short-lived.

The man helping Zuckerberg stifle moderation of right-wing accounts was Joel Kaplan, a Republican operative who was serving as vice president of global public policy. There's little doubt that Kaplan helped shape Zuckerberg's views and the policies the company took, and now he'll be even more influential. Ahead of Zuckerberg's bombshell announcement on moderation policy, Kaplan replaced Nick Clegg —

Britain's former deputy prime minister — as president of global affairs. Kaplan has significant influence, not to mention a good relationship with Zuckerberg, but the CEO's actions shouldn't solely be placed at Kaplan's feet.

A poorly titled profile of Zuckerberg suggesting he was "done with politics" published in the New York Times in September provides good insight into some of the factors driving his political realignment. It describes Zuckerberg as being fed up with political backlash but holding far more ire toward progressive politicians and employees at his philanthropic group than the right-wing political figures who also had him in their crosshairs.

In particular, Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, pushed back on employees who expected their initiative to do more in response to the killing of George Floyd and the overturning of abortion rights in the United States. Zuckerberg reportedly now sees himself as a libertarian or "classical liberal" who abhors regulation and "far-left progressivism" like pro-Palestine campus protests, which he and Chan consider anti-semitic.

Zuckerberg's realignment toward the political right should not be a surprise. Over the past decade, he's become the third-richest person in the world. He can also never be displaced from his position at the top of Meta because its dual-class share structure gives him a majority of the voting power. More recently, he's embraced mixed martial arts, which has a more conservative culture. He's been quick to gut diversity initiatives at Meta and now claims the company needs a more "masculine energy."

Zuckerberg has been done with the criticism and threats to his power for a while; he's just

been looking for the right path to rid himself of it. His firm paid to stoke the campaign against TikTok to take the focus of American social media, and he sees the Trump administration as an opportunity not just to get the US government off his back but to use its remaining power to pressure other countries to back off too. His social position has made an embrace of the political right personally and commercially advantageous, and he sees that conservatives are ready to embrace him as long as he'll take corporate actions that will keep them happy.

When Zuckerberg rebranded the company as Meta in 2021, it was not just to distract people from the leaks by former employee Frances Haugen. In a short video before the Facebook Connect keynote where he laid out his vision for the metaverse, he expressed a defiant tone. He claimed that for many people, namely his critics, there will never "be a good time to focus on the future." The real heroes in society, he claimed, were "those who are willing to stand up and say, 'This is the future we want and I'm going to keep pushing and giving everything I've got to make this happen.'"

The future Zuckerberg wants is one where tech billionaires like himself can play in the gated world of suburban tech campuses and Hawaiian compounds without criticism or accountability while telling the rest of us that toys like VR headsets and the metaverse will save their lives. It doesn't matter that their tech ambitions are little more than sci-fi fantasies. Silicon Valley's alliance with the extreme right will allow them to keep preaching how much tech will save the world for a little longer — all while they continue to degrade life for everyone. (IPA Service)

# Netaji: The revolutionary freedom fighter

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose is a name etched in the annals of India's history as a symbol of courage, determination, and revolutionary fervor. Among the pantheon of leaders who contributed to the Indian freedom struggle, Bose stands apart for his unique vision and unyielding commitment to liberate the nation from British colonial rule. His legacy transcends the confines of political ideologies, embodying the spirit of resistance and the desire for self-determination. Born on January 23, 1897, in Cuttack, Odisha, Bose's life was a saga of defiance against imperialist forces and a testament to the power of conviction and sacrifice.

From an early age, Bose exhibited exceptional intelligence and a profound sense of patriotism. His academic journey led him to prestigious institutions, including Presidency College in Kolkata and the University of Cambridge. Bose's success in clearing the Indian Civil Services (ICS) examination in 1920 showcased his brilliance, but his heart lay elsewhere. Unable to reconcile the idea of serving a colonial administration, he resigned from the ICS, choosing instead to dedicate his life to the cause of India's independence. This act of renunciation was not merely symbolic; it was a bold declaration of his allegiance to his motherland and his rejection of British authority.

Bose's approach to the freedom struggle was markedly different from that of his contemporaries. While leaders like Mahatma Gandhi advocated non-violent resistance, Bose believed that India's liberation required a more aggressive and militant approach. His radical ideas often put him at odds with the Indian National Congress, but they also earned him immense respect among those who shared his vision of complete and immediate independence. His fiery speeches and unwavering resolve to achieve "Purna Swaraj" (complete independence) galvanized the youth and made him a beloved leader of the masses.

In 1938, Bose was elected as the president of the Indian National Congress, a testament to his popularity and leadership capabilities. However, his tenure was marked by ideological clashes with the more moderate faction of the Congress, led by Gandhi. Bose's insistence on adopting a confrontational stance against the British led to his resignation in 1939, but this setback did little to dampen his resolve. Instead, it propelled him to chart a new course, one that would redefine the contours of the freedom struggle.

Bose's revolutionary spirit was most evident in his efforts to forge international alliances. Recognizing the global dimensions of India's struggle, he sought support from nations opposed to British imperialism. His daring escape from house arrest in 1941



and subsequent journey to Germany exemplify his resourcefulness and determination. In Germany, he met with Adolf Hitler, seeking support for India's independence. While his alliance with the Axis Powers remains a subject of debate, it underscored Bose's willingness to explore unorthodox strategies to achieve his goals.

In 1943, Bose's efforts culminated in the formation of the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind) in Singapore. As the leader of this government, he assumed the title of "Netaji," a term of endearment that reflected the reverence he commanded among his followers. Along-

side the government, he reorganized the Indian National Army (INA), comprising Indian prisoners of war and expatriates in Southeast Asia. The INA's rallying cry, "Chalo Dilli" (March to Delhi), symbolized the determination to overthrow British rule through armed struggle.

The INA's campaigns in northeastern India, including the battles of Imphal and Kohima, were bold attempts to challenge British forces on Indian soil. Although these efforts faced military setbacks, they succeeded in igniting a sense of pride and unity among Indians. Bose's leadership and the INA's sacrifices demonstrated that Indians were willing to fight and

die for their freedom, challenging the British claim of unassailable authority.

Bose's famous slogan, "Give me blood, and I will give you freedom," remains etched in the national consciousness. It epitomized his call for action and his ability to inspire unparalleled devotion among his followers. His speeches and writings reveal a leader deeply committed to the principles of equality, secularism, and justice. For Bose, the struggle for independence was not just about political sovereignty but also about creating a society free from discrimination and inequality.

The circumstances surrounding Bose's death in 1945 continue to be shrouded in mystery, adding an enigmatic dimension to his legacy. Official accounts claim that he died in a plane crash in Taiwan, but the lack of conclusive evidence has fueled speculation and conspiracy theories. This enduring mystery has only heightened his iconic status, with many viewing him as a martyr whose life and sacrifices remain unmatched in the annals of Indian history.

Bose's contributions to India's freedom struggle extended beyond his revolutionary tactics. He envisioned a modern, progressive India built on the principles of economic self-reliance, scientific advancement, and social harmony. His emphasis on industrialization and technological development reflected his forward-thinking approach to nation-building.

Bose's belief in unity, irrespective of religion, caste, or ethnicity, was a cornerstone of his vision for a free India.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's heroism lies not only in his defiance of colonial rule but also in his ability to inspire a nation to dream of freedom and dignity. His life exemplifies the power of conviction, the importance of action, and the enduring value of sacrifice. While his methods and alliances may have been controversial, his commitment to the cause of independence was unwavering. Bose's legacy is a reminder that the path to freedom is often fraught with challenges but is ultimately driven by the courage and determination of those who dare to lead.

Today, as India continues to navigate the complexities of nationhood, Netaji's ideals remain profoundly relevant. His call for self-reliance, unity, and justice resonates in a world grappling with inequality and division. Bose's life and work remind us that true heroism lies in the relentless pursuit of truth and the courage to fight for what is just. His story is not merely a chapter in India's history but a source of inspiration for generations to come. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was not just a revolutionary freedom fighter; he was the embodiment of India's unyielding spirit and the architect of its destiny. (The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-magazine SAMPROTIK who can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

## Subhas Chandra Bose

### The architect of revolutionary nationalism and holistic progress



By: Dipak Kurmi

In a nation renowned for its devotion to commemorating dates and birthdays, the significance of January 23 surpasses mere celebration. This day, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, transcends the boundaries of traditional homage to a patriot. It calls for a deeper reflection on the multidimensional contributions of a leader who envisioned India not only as a politically independent nation but also as a beacon of social and economic justice. Bose's legacy is a rich tapestry interwoven with revolutionary zeal, philosophical depth, and a profound commitment to human dignity, making him one of the most transformative figures in the annals of India's history.

Netaji's enduring image as a relentless crusader against the tyranny of British imperialism often overshadows his nuanced philosophical insight, which was the cornerstone of his patriotism. His vision for India's freedom was deeply rooted in the emancipation of the human spirit and the elimination of all forms of exploitation and subjugation. For Bose, independence was not an end in itself but a pathway to holistic national development, where every individual would enjoy the fruits of social and economic equity. His actions, from initiating reservations for minorities in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation to envisioning large-scale economic planning, reflected a leader deeply committed to the welfare of all citizens, particularly the marginalized.

Bose's ideological framework was shaped by his belief in socialism, which he saw as a counterforce to the oppressive ideologies of his time. As he succinctly put it, "Socialism is the only alternative to Hitlerism." Alongside Jawaharlal Nehru, Bose became a key proponent of socialist principles within the Indian National Congress. This ideological affinity led to groundbreaking initiatives, such as the formation of a Planning Committee in 1938 during Bose's presidency of the Congress. This committee, chaired by Nehru, laid the groundwork for India's post-independence Planning Commission and the introduction of Five-Year Plans. Bose's vision of economic growth was inextricably linked to social justice, emphasizing the democratization of industrial and agricultural production to ensure the equitable distribution of

wealth. His ideas resonate even today, as India grapples with persistent poverty and strives to extend the benefits of development to its most disadvantaged citizens.

Netaji's philosophy extended beyond India's borders, as he sought to align the nation's struggle for freedom with a broader vision of internationalism. While he was acutely aware of the rise of communism, he remained skeptical of its suitability for India. Instead, he championed civil rights and human dignity, advocating for a society free from political and social bondage. During his tenure as chief executive officer and later as mayor of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, Bose introduced policies aimed at improving the living standards of ordinary citizens. His fourteen-point agenda for Calcutta's development reflected his belief in nationalism as a force for social upliftment and a catalyst for the quest for freedom.

Netaji's secularism and commitment to universal brotherhood were equally remarkable. Rejecting religious orthodoxy and communalism, he envisioned a pluralistic India where diversity would be a source of strength rather than division. His leadership of the Indian National Army (INA), which brought together individuals of various religions and nationalities, epitomized this philosophy. Drawing inspiration from Swami Vivekananda's call for unity and Sri Aurobindo's concept of spiritual nationalism, Bose viewed the struggle for political freedom as inseparable from the quest for social and economic emancipation. His emphasis on rationality, scientific temperament, and inclusivity countered the divisive tactics of colonial rule and remains a model for contemporary India.

Women's emancipation was another pillar of Bose's philosophy. He recognized that the twin challenges of illiteracy and economic dependence were the root causes of women's subjugation. Netaji took pioneering steps to create spaces for women in public life, exemplified by his efforts to ensure their participation in cultural events like the Simla Byayam Samity Durga Puja in Calcutta. His advocacy for education as a tool for character-building and empowerment highlighted his belief in its transformative potential to awaken moral consciousness, foster intellectual freedom, and instill confidence.

Despite his ideological differences with Mahatma Gandhi, Bose acknowledged the importance of Gandhian principles in uplifting the underprivileged. While he disagreed with Gandhi's non-violent approach, he shared the Mahatma's commitment to social justice and the betterment of marginalized communities. This ability to engage with opposing ideas without compromising his core beliefs underscored Bose's intellectual openness and maturity.

Bose's pluralistic and reformist vision culminated in his leadership of the INA, which symbolized his belief in the unifying power of nationalism. The INA's cosmopolitan composition and shared commitment to a common cause stood as a testament to Bose's ideal of a multi-ethnic, inclusive India. This philosophy of unity in diversity remains one of Netaji's most enduring legacies, offering valuable lessons for a world grappling with divisions along lines of religion, ethnicity, and ideology.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was far more than a revolutionary or a freedom fighter; he was a thinker, reformer, and visionary who sought to liberate India not just from colonial rule but also from the shackles of social and economic inequality. His contributions, spanning from economic planning to the promotion of secularism and women's rights, reflect a leader deeply attuned to the complexities of nation-building. As Pandit Lal Bahadur Shastri aptly described him, Bose was indeed "a beacon of light."

Today, as we reflect on Bose's legacy, it is imperative to move beyond mere celebration and assess his philosophy and contributions in their entirety. His vision of a just, inclusive, and prosperous India remains as relevant as ever, offering a blueprint for addressing the challenges of our time. By embracing the principles of social justice, unity, and rational progress that Bose epitomized, India can continue to honor the memory of a leader whose ideals remain a guiding star for generations to come. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

## Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was a socialist based on the spiritual values of India

By: Mithun Dey

On January 23 this year, the nation is going to observe 128th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Netaji was a firm believer that rashtrabhakti (patriotism) is a fusion of religion and nationalism, of the spiritual and the political. He looked for religious philosophy that would encourage political activism to lead him to find out the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and the writings of Aurobindo Ghose. In the end, he introduced his political activism with a religious aspect.

Netaji deeply felt that spiritual awareness was required for influential national service. Bose believed that "Hinduism was an important part of his Indianness".

Netaji's social consciousness appeared itself in various forms as well. He laid his life in his characteristic undaunted manner. Subhas Chandra Bose is synonymous with valour and patriotism. He was an inspirational beacon of his age and a steering as well as rousing soul of our age too.

His pure idealism, solemn thoughts and intrepid self could in still glowing optimism and strength in many helpless, doleful and disenchanting hearts. He advocated each and every Indian to feel proud of his Indian identity and to dedicate himself for liberation and development of his beloved motherland.

The leader was greatly influenced by Swami Vivekananda's philosophical thoughts. He introduced Swamiji as the 'Creator of Modern India'. Vivekananda advocated the path of practical approach to solve the humanitarian plights in modern India.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose came into Swamiji's philosoph-

ical thoughts and ideas to rebuild India. Bose was a true believer that God dwells in every human being as he felt in Vivekananda. Netaji wanted economic resurgence and technological method in the way Swamiji looked-for.

Bose once quoted, "National defence is must in order to safeguard our freedom in the future. India need to build up modern war industries for self-defence. Netaji also thought of a democratic society that was based on equality of social and economic status and no caste and creed would be made.

Subhas Bose was a true socialist like Vivekananda. He believed in Swamiji's spiritual thoughts and upliftment of his countrymen and humanity. He left India in pursuit of achieving his goal of building a socialist India by driving out the British rulers. He preferred Swamiji's value-based humanistic social state where everyone would have the opportunity to develop gender equality.

As a true humanist, Netaji also preferred moral progress as opposed to material progress to a great extent like Swami Vivekananda.

On the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, we will gain a lot if we recall the ideals and objectives he lived for. For Netaji, as we fondly remember him, it was his parents who instilled in him the sense of spirituality. And then, his searching mind, right in his school days, could make full sense of the meaning, significance and objectives of human life when he read the teachings and philosophy of Ramkrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo Ghose.

Ramakrishna's emphasis on character building in general and spiritual approach to life too had a lot of influence on

him. Renunciation of yearning and earthly gains, as per Ramkrishna, is vital for a spiritual life.

Netaji developed in himself the idealistic and spiritualistic virtues; and once he said, "I have a new ideal before me now, which has influenced my soul to affect my own salvation and to serve humanity by abandoning all worldly desires and breaking away from all undue restraints."

Meditation and control over emotions changed his entire outlook towards life. He started believing of his future in terms of spiritual wellbeing and uplift of humanity. This made the idealistic aspect of his religious and spiritual bent of mind.

Netaji was deeply impressed by Aurobindo's concept of one's mother country: "For what is a nation? What is our mother country? It is not a part of art, nor a form of speech, nor a fiction of mind? It is a mighty Sakti collected of all the Saktis of all the millions of units that structure the nation just as Bhavani Mahisha Mardini sprang into being from the Sakti of all millions of gods and wielded into unity.

Netaji, the versatile genius was indeed one of the most spiritual political figures in Indian history. He was an avid reader of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity and even took on a few practices to reinforce his belief. He was sincerely engaged in yoga, a spiritual discipline and rituals. He performed himself the puja of 'Devi Durga'.

Netaji imbibed the philosophy of Aurobindo and thought of the Indian nation as the Divine Mother, a spiritual entity, a part of the universal spirit. Thus, spiritualism and upliftment of the Indian poor formed the base of his political philosophy. (IPA Service)

## Tamilnadu's contribution to INA of Subhas Chandra Bose

By: Er.Rajesh Pathak

Composed of men and women fighters, Indian National Army (INA) was raised by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose through collecting the donations from different outfits engaged in socio-religious fields. And when the trust of Chettiar temple of Singapore was urged for the aid, a message was received from the temple that Subhash Babu would have to first come to temple to address the people there for that. Subhas Babu had heard that the trustees of temple made very weird norms regarding the entry to temple based on castes and sects. He wrote in his letter that he would come and give the speech but 'he thought that lest it shouldn't endanger their 'dharma'. For he wouldn't come alone; with him would be the people belonging to different castes and sects. They should kindly think over it, he pleaded. After a deep thought, authority gave their consent at last. And all, along with Subhash Babu, entered the temple, and received the ample doation after the speech. Then what, Gurudwaras and Temples of Singapore opened their coffers-

for INA, thereafter.

INA not only had different kind of castes and sects, but the cadres from different regions also were there in it in considerable proportion. In Tamil Nadu lives a caste named Devar, which is 18% of the state population. They are very nationalist and profess the practices of Vaishnav cult, smearing the forehead with the sacred mark of sandalwood when go out of the house. Renowned freedom fighter and close associate of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Muthu Ramalinga, hailed from this caste. He worked for the propagation of 'Saiva Siddhanta', and called that 'Nationalism and religion are the two eyes of nation. Politics without divinity is a body without soul'. To inspire the people to join Netaji's INA he even started a Tamil weekly, 'Nethaji'. The poster of Ramalingam with Subhash Chandra Bose attired with the uniform of a soldier are displayed every year on the celebration of 'Thevar Jyanti'.

Where Captain Lakshmi Swaminathan (Sehgal) of Rani Jhansi Regiment belonged to Tamil Nadu, then no less prominent were Janki



Thever and Rasamma who were from the same state and joined the Regiment. So many inspiring events of the life of Janki Thever had then been in much limelight. When she first time joined the rally of Subhash at the age of 14 years she grew so impressed with the ideals of INA that there only she dedicated her diamond ring in the fund of INA. Not caring the objection of father she later joined INA, and ascended to the post of Second Commander.

## Taliban say Chinese national killed in northeastern Afghanistan

**KABUL, Jan 22:** A Chinese man was killed in northeastern Afghanistan, a Taliban police spokesman said Wednesday. The killing of foreigners is rare in the country, especially since the withdrawal of foreign troops in 2021.

Police spokesman Mohammed Akbar, in Takhar province, said the man was killed Tuesday night by "unknown people" while he was on his way to Dasht-e-Qala district.

Akbar said the foreigner, surnamed Li, had been travelling to an unknown destination with his interpreter and without informing security authorities. The interpreter was not harmed in the incident, according to Akbar.

"The police have started their initial investigation. Stay tuned for more details," added Akbar. He did not provide further information.

A group called the National Mobilization Front claimed responsibility for the killing and said its fighters had targeted the Chinese man's vehicle.

It alleged the Chinese man was training Taliban intelligence in monitoring social media platforms, without providing evidence.

Asked about the incident at a daily briefing on Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said she was not familiar with it. "I believe that the Chinese Embassy in Afghanistan will do its utmost to protect the safety of Chinese citizens and we will follow the situation," she said.

China is of particular importance to the Taliban, who are courting foreign investment and regional alliances amid their continued isolation on the international stage because of their restrictions on women and girls.

In December 2022, China urged its citizens to leave Afghanistan following a coordinated attack by Islamic State militants on a Chinese-owned hotel in the heart of Kabul.

Chinese firms, with Beijing backing, have sought to pursue opportunities in exploiting Afghanistan's vast, undeveloped resource deposits, especially the Mes Aynak mine that is believed to hold the world's largest copper deposit. (AP)

# Sanctions on Russia likely if Putin doesn't come to negotiation table: Trump

*'If you had a competent President, which you didn't, the war wouldn't have happened'*

**WASHINGTON, Jan 22:** US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said he is ready to meet his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin anytime, but at the same time warned that he would likely impose sanctions on Russia if the latter does not come to the negotiations table on the issue of Ukraine.

"It sounds likely," Trump told reporters when asked if the US will impose additional sanctions on Russia if Putin doesn't come to the negotiation table.

"The war should have never started. If you had a competent President, which you didn't, the war wouldn't have happened. The war in Ukraine would have never happened if I were the president," Trump said.

"Russia never would have gone into Ukraine. I had a very strong understanding with Putin. That would have never, ever happened. He disrespected Biden. Very simple. He disrespects people. He's smart. He understands. He disre-



spected Biden," Trump said.

"Also, the Middle East would have never happened because Iran was broke," he added.

Responding to a query, Trump said he is ready to meet Putin anytime.

"Anytime they want, I'll meet. Millions of people are being killed... It's a vicious situation and they're now largely soldiers. A lot of people have been killed and the cities look like demolition sites,"

he said. "The thing with Ukraine is that many more people died than what you're reporting. You're not reporting the real numbers, and I'm not blaming you for that. I'm blaming maybe our government for not wanting to release those numbers," Trump told reporters.

Asked if the US will continue sending weapons to Ukraine, or will he turn off the tap soon, Trump said he is looking into the matter.

"We'll look into that. We're talking to (Volodymyr) Zelenskyy. We're going to talk with President Putin very soon, and we'll see how it all happens. We're going to look at it very soon," he said.

"One thing I do feel is that the European Union should pay a lot more than they're paying, because under Biden. I mean, we're in there for USD 200 billion more. Now it affects them... We have an ocean in between, right? The European Union should equal us. We're in there for USD 200 billion more than the European Union. I mean, what are we, stupid? I guess the answer is yes," the president said.

Trump also said that Ukraine's President Zelensky told him that he would like to have peace.

"He's told me that wants to have peace very strongly, but it takes two to tango. We'll see what happens. Anytime they want, I'll meet. I'd like to see that end. Millions of people are being killed. It's a vicious situation," he said. (PTI)

## Bangladesh court acquits Khaleda Zia in 10 year-old sabotage case

**DHAKA, Jan 22:** A court in Bangladesh acquitted BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia on Wednesday in a sabotage case filed in the southeastern Cumilla district 10 years ago.

Additional District and Session Judge Court-2 of Cumilla Afroza Jesmin passed the order as there was no evidence against 79-year-old Zia, who is now undergoing treatment in London, the state-run BSS news agency reported.

The court observed that the case was filed on political grounds and harassment, the agency said. The case was filed against 32 people, including Zia, in the Special Powers Act, 1974, at Choudhagram Police Station in Cumilla in connection with damaging and setting fire to a covered van during a strike on January 25, 2015. Zia was the 32nd accused in the case.

No specific evidence was found against Zia and she has been acquitted. Public Prosecutor Kaimul Haque Rinku was quoted as saying by



bnews24 news portal.

He added that 32 people were named in the FIR, but 42 people were charged afterwards. Of them, 36 people have been removed from the case. The decision on six others will be taken later as they received a suspension order in favour of them in the case.

Last week, the Supreme Court acquitted Zia, her party's Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman, and all other suspects in their appeal over the Or-

phanage Trust graft case, overturning the High Court's earlier 10-year prison sentence.

She was sentenced to 17 years in prison for graft in 2018 under the rule of her arch-rival Sheikh Hasina.

Zia had been imprisoned for more than two years. On March 25, 2020, the Hasina government suspended her sentence and granted her conditional release through an executive order. Subsequently, the government extended her sentence suspension and release period every six months, upon application.

She appeared in public on November 21, 2024, at Dhaka Cantonment to join Bangladesh's Armed Forces Day reception at the invitation of the Chief Adviser of the interim government Muhammad Yunus. Zia is ailing and travelled to London earlier this month for medical treatment.

She served as the prime minister of Bangladesh from March 1991 to March 1996, and again from June 2001 to October 2006. (PTI)

## Rupert Murdoch's UK tabloids offer rare apology in legal settlement with Prince Harry

**LONDON, Jan 22:** Rupert Murdoch's UK tabloids made a rare apology to Prince Harry in settling his privacy invasion lawsuit and will pay him a substantial sum, his lawyer announced Wednesday.

News Group Newspapers offered a "full and unequivocal apology to the Duke of Sussex for the serious intrusion by The Sun between 1996 and 2011 into his private life, including incidents of unlawful activities carried out by private investigators working for The Sun," attorney David Sherborne read from settlement statement in court.

It was the first time News Group Newspapers has acknowledged wrongdoing at The Sun, a paper once known for featuring topless women on Page 3.

The statement itself was remarkable in breadth, acknowledging "phone hacking, surveillance and misuse of private information by journalists and private investigators" aimed at Harry, allegations NGN had strongly denied before trial.

The statement even went beyond the scope of the lawsuit to acknowledge intruding on the life of his mother, the late Princess Diana.

"We acknowledge and apologise for the distress caused to the duke, and the damage inflicted on relationships, friendships and family, and have agreed to pay him substantial damages," the settlement statement said.

The bombshell announcement in London's High Court came as the Duke of Sussex's trial was about to start against the publishers of The Sun and the now-defunct News of the World for unlawfully snooping on him over decades.

Harry, 40, the younger son of King Charles III, and one other man were the only two remaining claimants out of more than 1,300 others who had settled lawsuits against News Group Newspapers over allegations their phones were hacked and investigators unlawfully intruded in their lives.

In all the cases that have been brought against the publisher since a widespread phone hacking scandal forced Murdoch to close News of the World in 2011, Harry's case got the closest to trial.

Murdoch shut down the News of the World after the Guardian reported that the tabloid's reporters had hacked the phone of Milly Dowler, a murdered 13-year-old schoolgirl, while police were searching for her in 2002.

As the case was about to start Tuesday morning, his lawyer asked for a one-hour recess, then got a longer adjournment and finally asked to have the rest of the day as

it became clear a settlement was in the works.

The case was one of three lawsuits Harry has brought accusing British tabloids of violating his privacy by eavesdropping on phone messages or using private investigators to unlawfully help them score scoops.

His case against the publisher of the Daily Mirror ended in victory when the judge ruled that phone hacking was "widespread and habitual" at the newspaper and its sister publications.

During that trial in 2023, Harry became the first senior member of the royal family to testify in court since the late 19th century, putting him at odds with the monarchy's desire to keep its problems out of view.

His feud with the press dates back to his youth, when the tabloids took glee in reporting on everything from his injuries to his girlfriends to dabbling with drugs.

But his fury with the tabloids goes much deeper.

He blames the media for the death of his mother, Princess Diana, who was killed in a car crash in 1997 while being chased by paparazzi in Paris. He also blames them for the persistent attacks on his wife, actor Meghan Markle, that led them to leave royal life and flee to the US in 2020.

The litigation has been a source of friction in his family, Harry said in the documentary "Tabloids On Trial."

He revealed in court papers that his father opposed his lawsuit. He also said his older brother William, Prince of Wales and heir to the throne, had settled a private complaint against News Group that his lawyer had said was worth over 1 million pounds (USD 1.23 million).

"I'm doing this for my reasons," Harry told the documentary makers, though he said he wished his family had joined him.

Harry was originally one among dozens of claimants, including actor Hugh Grant, who alleged that News Group journalists and investigators they hired violated their privacy between 1994 and 2016 by intercepting voicemails, tapping phones, bugging cars and using deception to access confidential information.

Of the original group, Harry and Tom Watson, a former Labour Party member of Parliament, were the holdouts headed to trial.

News Group had denied the allegations. NGN had issued an unreserved apology to victims of voicemail interception by the News of the World and said it settled more than 1,300 claims. The Sun has never accepted liability. (AP)

## Search resumes after deadly flooding, landslides in Indonesia



**JAKARTA, Jan 22:** Indonesian rescuers retrieved two more bodies after they resumed their search on Wednesday for people missing after floods and landslides on Indonesia's main island of Java, bringing the death toll to 19.

Waters from flooded rivers tore through nine villages in Pekalongan regency of Central Java province and landslides tumbled onto mountainside hamlets after the torrential rains on Monday.

Videos and photos released by National Search and Rescue Agency showed workers digging desperately in villages where roads and green-terraced rice fields were transformed into murky brown mud and villages were covered by thick mud, rocks and uprooted trees.

National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said flooding triggered a landslide that buried two houses and a cafe in the Petungkriyono resort area.

The disasters all together destroyed 25 houses, a dam and three main bridges connecting villages in Pekalongan. At least 13 people injured and nearly 300 people were forced to flee to temporary government shelters.

The search and rescue operation that was hampered

by bad weather, mudslides and rugged terrain was halted Tuesday afternoon due to heavy rain and thick fog that made devastated areas along the rivers dangerous to rescuers.

On Wednesday, they searched in rivers and the rubble of villages for bodies and, whenever possible, survivors in worst-hit Kasimpar village, said Budiono, who heads a local rescue office.

Scores of rescue personnel recovered two muck-caked bodies as they searched a Petungkriyono area where tons of mud and rocks buried two houses and a cafe. Rescuers are still searching for seven people reported missing.

Landslides and floods were also reported in many other provinces, Muhari said. On Monday, a landslide hit five houses in Denpasar on the tourist island of Bali, killing four people and leaving one missing.

Heavy seasonal rain from about October to March frequently causes flooding and landslides in Indonesia, an archipelago of 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near fertile floodplains.

The British Geological Survey defines a landslide as a mass movement of material, such as rock, earth, or debris moving down a slope. Landslides can happen suddenly or slowly and can be caused by rain, erosion, or changes to the slope's material.

Rain adds weight to the slope, making it more unstable. The slope's steepness or erosion at the base can make landslides more likely. They can be caused by the movement of nearby bodies of water or vibrations from earthquakes, mining or traffic.

The types and sizes of the rocks and soils can determine how much water land can absorb before weakening and collapsing.

Studies have found that landslides could become more frequent as climate change increases rainfall. (AP)

## China's navy commissions new-generation frigate as competition rises with US, others

*'With strong capabilities for comprehensive combat operations and diverse military missions'*

**TAIPEI (TAIWAN), Jan 22:**

China's navy has commissioned a new-generation frigate as competition rises with the US and other regional powers, saying the ship will "play a vital role in enhancing the overall combat effectiveness" of its forces.

China already has the world's largest navy in terms of number of hulls, although its technology is sometimes seen as lagging. Its largest competitor, the US, has warned its Navy could be outnumbered and has called for a building programme as well as reforms to put damaged ships into action sooner.

China's People's Liberation Army Navy operates mainly in waters off the Chinese east coast and in the huge and strategically crucial South China Sea, which China claims almost in its entirety.

A key mission also remains back-



ing up the army in any attack on Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy about 160 kilometers (100 miles) off the Chinese coast that Beijing has vowed to annex by force if necessary.

The first Type 054B frigate, christened the Luohe, was commissioned Wednesday in Qingdao, a port city in northern China where

the PLAN's northern fleet is based.

The ship has a displacement of approximately 5,000 tons and includes stealth technology, combat command systems and firepower integration, "significantly enhancing overall performance," the navy said. "With strong capabilities for comprehensive combat operations and diverse military missions, the

## Israel says will maintain control of Gaza-Egypt crossing



**JERUSALEM, Jan 22:** Israel said it will maintain control of the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip during the first phase of the ceasefire with Hamas.

A statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office on Wednesday denied reports that the Palestinian Authority would control the crossing.

It said local Palestinians not affiliated with Hamas who had been vetted by Israeli security would merely stamp passports at the crossing. It noted that, under international agreements, this stamp "is the only way Gazans may leave the Strip in order to enter, or be received in, other countries."

The truce, now its fourth day, is supposed to bring calm to the war-battered Gaza for at least six weeks and see 33 Hamas-held hostages released in return for hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

The statement said European Union monitors would supervise the crossing, which will be surrounded by Israeli troops. Israel also will approve the movement of all people and goods. Israel captured the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing last May, forcing it to shut down. Egypt, a key mediator in more than a year of negotiations that led to the ceasefire, has demanded that Palestinians control the Gaza side.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250. Around 100 hostages still remain in Gaza, after the rest were released, rescued, or their bodies were recovered.

Israel's military campaign has

killed over 47,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to local health authorities, who say women and children make up more than half of the fatalities but do not say how many of the dead were fighters. Israel says it killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Meanwhile, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Gaza has said that trucks from the UN, aid groups, governments and the private sector are arriving and no major looting has been reported — just a few minor incidents.

Nearly 900 trucks of aid entered Gaza on the third day of the ceasefire Tuesday, the UN said. That's significantly higher than the 600 trucks called for in the deal.

Muhammad Hadi, who returned to Jerusalem from Gaza on Tuesday afternoon, told UN reporters by video that it was one of the happiest days of his 35-year humanitarian career to see Palestinians in the streets looking ahead with hope, some heading home and some starting to clean up the roads.

In his talks with families at a communal kitchen run by the UN World Food Program and elsewhere, he said, they all told him they need humanitarian assistance but want to go home, to work and earn money. "They don't like the fact that they have been depending on humanitarian aid," Hadi said.

Palestinians talked about resuming education for their children and about the need for shelter, blankets and new clothes for women who have been wearing the same clothes for more than a year. He said a shipment of tents is expected in the coming days. (AP)

## West Africa's junta-led nations announce deployment of joint force as extremist violence spikes



**DAKAR (SENEGAL), Jan 22:**

The junta-led West African countries of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali have created a joint force that will soon be deployed in the restive Sahel region, Niger's defence minister said on Wednesday, to face rising extremist violence.

The force of 5,000 personnel will be posted in the three countries, Salifou Mody said during an interview on state television, adding that some joint operations have already taken place.

Niger, along with its neighbours Mali and Burkina Faso, has battled for over a decade an insurgency fought by jihadist groups, including some allied with al-Qaida and the Islamic State group.

Following military coups in all three nations in recent years, the ruling juntas have expelled French forces and turned to Russia's mercenary units for security

assistance. Mody also said the unified force will have its own personnel, as well as air, land, and intelligence resources, and a coordination system.

"We are in the same space. We face the same types of threats, in particular this threat from criminal groups," the defense minister said. "We had to pool our efforts."

However, the security situation in the Sahel has worsened since the juntas took power, analysts say, with a record number of attacks and civilians killed both by Islamic militants and government forces.

The violence in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso has killed more than 3,470 people in the last six months while 2.6 million people are currently displaced, according to the United Nations refugee agency. (AP)

warship will play a vital role in enhancing the overall combat effectiveness of naval task forces," it added.

The Luohe's armaments include a variety of machine guns for close combat and anti-air and anti-ship missiles, according to defense publications, some of which say the ship could become the backbone of the Chinese navy.

The statement said nothing about future 054Bs, but at least two more are believed to have been launched and another is under construction. China has around 234 warships compared to the US Navy's 219, including around 50 frigates and the same number of destroyers. China has two operating aircraft carriers and another undergoing sea trials, along with a massive and powerful coast guard.

Recent wargames have shown China would lose many more ves-

sels in a simulated clash with the US, but would be able to absorb the losses and continue fighting.

The PLAN has also sent ships further abroad including the Mediterranean Sea and the Caribbean in its attempts to use its navy as an extension of its growing economic and diplomatic clout. PLAN and Chinese coast guard ships have also patrolled in the East China Sea, where China claims a group of uninhabited islands controlled by Japan.

While planes and ships from both sides have come into contact, no shots have been fired during such incidents.

The US and other nations have deliberately sailed close to islands, some of them human-made, to challenge China's claim to them. Beijing has ignored a UN-backed court's ruling that threw out most of China's territorial claims. (AP)

## Nagaland govt hopes Centre, ENPO will make sincere efforts to form FNT



**KOHHIMA, Jan 22:** The Nagaland government on Wednesday said it is hopeful that the Centre and the Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO) will make sincere efforts in resolving the demand for Frontier Nagaland Territory (FNT) comprising six eastern districts of the state.

ENPO, a Naga organisation that has been demanding a separate state comprising those six districts, last month said it has "temporarily" accepted the Centre's proposal for a mechanism in which the region will be granted a certain level of autonomy.

A tripartite meeting on the formation of the FNT was held in the northeastern state on January 15 in the Chumoukedima district.

Senior minister and state government spokesperson K G Kenye said the matter is "progressing well". "We hope that both sides (Ministry of Home Affairs and ENPO) will be sincere in their approach and reasonable, because all that we aspire for may not be given at one go," he told reporters here.

It may take some time for both

the Centre and the ENPO to assess the issues that have come up in the January 15 meeting, Kenye said.

"Without the financial, executive and legislative autonomy, we cannot sign any agreement," ENPO president A Chingmak Chang had said after that day's meeting.

The state government has already gone through the proposals made by the MHA and they are alright, he said without elaborating.

After receiving the demands from the ENPO, the MHA has selected some of them for discussion, which can be accepted, said Kenye.

The power and parliamentary affairs minister said that the state government is also in touch with the other territorial councils like Bodoland in neighbouring Assam as to how they are managing their systems.

"However, Nagaland is a little different from those councils. And the ENPO has stated several times that they do not want the proposed FNT to come under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution," he

said.

The Sixth Schedule allows the constitution of Autonomous District Councils in northeastern states like Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram for safeguarding the rights of tribal population.

Kenye said that the ENPO wants to retain Article 371A, the special Constitutional provision given to Nagaland and revert to the system under which the state was administered by a regional council between 1964 and 1974.

"We cannot 100 per cent replicate that because time was different then. But they are discussing something of that arrangement," said Kenye.

Asked about the date for the next round of meeting, the spokesperson said that the state government wants frequent talks so that the matter could be finalized quickly.

Alleging that the Eastern Nagaland areas have been neglected in all sectors since the creation of Nagaland state in 1963, the ENPO has been demanding statehood starting September 2010.

Pressing for its demand, the organisation boycotted the Lok Sabha and Urban Local Body polls last year. The ENPO is the apex body of the Naga tribes in six districts of Nagaland - Mon, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire, Noklak and Shamator.

These districts - Kiphire, Longleng, Mon, Noklak, Shamator, and Tuensang - are home to eight tribes - Chang, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Phom, Sangtam, Tikhir, Yimkhung and also a section of Sema. (PTI)

## Tripura Industry and Commerce Fair from Jan 29

To host investors' summit on Feb 7, eyes ₹ 600 Crore in MoUs

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Jan 22:** The Tripura government is gearing up to host the two-day 'Destination Tripura Business Conclave 2025,' scheduled to commence on February 7 in Agartala. The event is expected to result in the signing of MoUs worth an estimated ₹ 600 crore with various investors.

Tripura Industries and Commerce Minister Santana Chakma, while addressing the media on Wednesday, shared details about the event and its associated initiatives. She highlighted the state's annual Industries and Commerce Fair, which will be held at the International Fair Ground in Hapania, Agartala, from January 29 to February 12.

"We have conducted three review meetings to ensure the suc-



cess of this year's fair," the minister stated. "Special emphasis is being given to local traders and businesses. Last year, 269 participants showcased their products, while

this year, the number has risen to 337. In line with our vision of 'Ek Tripura Shrestha Tripura,' supporting local entrepreneurs is a priority. This year, 515 stalls will be set up,

compared to 465 last year. Goods worth ₹ 6.12 crore were sold in the previous edition, and we anticipate higher sales this year."

To attract investors and boost the state's industrial growth, the 'Destination Tripura Business Conclave 2025' has been planned, featuring 150 investors from various sectors. The event will take place at Hotel Polo Tower from February 7 to 8.

"Our aim is to strengthen communication with investors and showcase the state's abundant resources. The conclave will focus on sectors such as health, IT, food processing, education, tourism, rubber, bamboo, and agar," said Minister Chakma. "With the theme 'Destination Tripura: The Land of Opportunity,' we are confident of achieving significant investment milestones."

## Ancient Lord Brahma sculpture unearthed in Tripura

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Jan 22:** A remarkable discovery has been made in the Bhuiyapara area of Kailashahar Sub-division under Tripura's Unakoti District, where villagers unearthed an ancient sculpture of Lord Brahma during development work.

Kailashahar Sub-divisional Magistrate Pradip Sarkar said, "The idol was uncovered on Tuesday while workers were carrying out ground development activities. News of the find spread rapidly on social media, attracting a large crowd eager to catch a glimpse of the artefact," he said.

Upon receiving information about the discovery, officials including ASI Assistant Conservator Abhishek Kumar, Gournagar BDO Pranoy Das, and Secretary of Deorcheria ADC Village Umesh Nama promptly arrived at the site.

Following departmental guidelines, the sculpture was transferred to the Unakoti District Magistrate's office, where locals have been flocking to view the

relic.

Abhishek Kumar has since reached out to senior officials at the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for guidance on the artefact's preservation and analysis.

In a formal letter to Kumar, BDO Pranoy Das stated, "The ancient sculpture of Lord Brahma was discovered during Pala siding work in Deorcheria ADC Village on January 21 around 12:05 PM. Recognising its cultural and historical importance, the sculpture was carefully retrieved and safeguarded. In accordance with established protocols, it has been handed over to the appropriate authorities for preservation and documentation. I request your esteemed office to involve relevant departments for further investigation and conservation efforts."

This significant discovery highlights the historical richness of Unakoti, further cementing its reputation as an archaeological treasure trove.

## Man arrested with Yaba worth ₹ 25 Lakh

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Jan 22:** In a significant anti-drug operation, Tripura Police arrested a man and seized Yaba tablets valued at ₹ 25 lakh in Bagbassa, located in the North District near the Assam border.

Bagbassa Police Station Officer-in-Charge Partha Deb informed that the operation was conducted following a tip-off received late Tuesday night. Police were alerted about a passenger in a Bolero car transporting a large consignment of Yaba tablets from Assam to Tripura.

"Acting on the information, we set up a naka point in the Bagbassa area. Upon stopping and inspecting the vehicle, we discovered approximately 10,000 Yaba tablets concealed in a secret compartment," Deb stated.

The driver, identified as Suman Mia, a resident of Dhanpur in Sepahijala District, was arrested on the spot. The seized tablets have an estimated market value of ₹ 25 lakh.

Police have produced the accused in court and requested remand for further investigation.

## Rio urges youth to take pride in Naga heritage

**KOHHIMA, Jan 22:** Nagaland Chief Minister, Neiphiu Rio urged the younger generation to take pride in the heritage and actively work towards preserving the rich culture and traditions passed down by our forefathers.

Rio also stressed that the youth play a vital role in carrying forward the legacy of the Naga people. Rio also expressed his commitment to fostering an environment of peace and inclusivity. He encouraged all citizens to celebrate responsibly and reflect on the shared values that bind the diverse communities of Nagaland together.

Neiphiu Rio said this while gracing the Khozaosie Hok-Ah Festival of Feast and Rest at Thonoknyu Town, Noklak in Nagaland on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion as the special guest, Rio extended his greetings to the Khiamniungan community on the occasion of Khozaosie Hok-Ah, a celebration that showcases the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the Nagas.

In his message, Rio emphasised the importance of festivals in promoting peace, unity, and harmony among communities. He called upon everyone to use such occasions to strengthen bonds, foster mutual respect and Noklak, Nagaland's frontier district situated along the international boundary, to prioritise peace and harmony as the foundation for progress and development and contribute towards the overall development of the State.

"Festivals like Khozaosie Hok-Ah are not just a reminder of our deep-rooted traditions but also a platform to unite as one people, keeping peace and harmony at the forefront. It is through such unity that we can bring progress and prosperity to Nagaland," Rio said.

The festival was organised by Khiamniungan Tribal Council aided by the Government of Nagaland. (NNN)

## BJP to implement law on women's reservation: New party chief



**ITANAGAR, Jan 22:** Newly elected Arunachal Pradesh unit BJP president Kaling Moyong on Wednesday said that the ruling party will implement the law on women's reservation in the next assembly elections in the state in letter and spirit.

This will provide women with a platform to participate in governance and will enhance their role in the decision-making processes, Moyong said.

Chief minister Pema Khandu recently announced that the BJP will field 20 women candidates in the polls for the 60-member assembly in 2029.

President Droupadi Murmu in September 2023 gave her assent to the women's reservation bill which seeks to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

The law, however, is supposed to be implemented after the next census and the subsequent delimitation exercise - redrawing of Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies.

Moyong said that he has been instructed by the chief minister to motivate women candidates to 'come out of the kitchen' and prepare themselves to contest assembly elections due in 2029.

"The chief minister had categorically mentioned that even spouses

of sitting ministers and MLAs are not to get party tickets if they are not competent," Moyong said.

Women of the state are shining in various fields, and they can excel in politics too, the state party chief said.

"Political and societal barriers (faced by women) should be broken," Moyong said.

On the development front, he said the party will support the state government in implementing its policies and programmes and emphasised the importance of public outreach to raise awareness about development schemes.

He said the party and the state government must have proper coordination to ensure a holistic well-being of the last man in the queue.

Moyong, who represented Pasighat East MLA twice, while expressing gratitude to the party for entrusting him with new responsibility said, "I will do my best to strengthen the party at the grassroots level with dedication and teamwork."

He said he would visit all the districts soon to ensure coordination between party functionaries from the state level to the booth level.

The BJP came to power for the third time in a row in Arunachal Pradesh in June last year. (PTI)

## HNLC accuses govt of using surrendered cadres as 'weapons'

**SHILONG, Jan 22:** The proscribed Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) on Tuesday accused the Meghalaya state government of using its surrendered cadres as "weapons" against the outfit.

In a statement, HNLC general secretary-cum-publicity secretary Sainkupar Nongtraw said the government's actions during and after the peace talks with the HNLC demonstrate "bad faith diplomacy".

"Summoning our leaders during negotiations was not a step toward peace but an act of coercion, proving they sought control and not dialogue. Now, targeting lower-ranking members is a deliberate attempt to intimidate and fragment our movement—a textbook example of the divide-and-rule strategy," he said.

"The state government, particularly the Police department, uses these so-called surrendered HNLC members as weapons against the HNLC. These individuals, despite any crimes they may have committed against the public, are not charged with any cases and are allowed to work scot-free. This is because they are now fighting against the HNLC, making them tools of the state's manipulative tactics to destabilize and weaken the movement," Nongtraw alleged.

He further alleged, "Recently, the Office of the Additional Director General of Police, Special Branch, has resorted to delivering summonses to the families of HNLC cadres, coercing them into signing and accepting these letters. This cowardly tactic weaponises the love and bonds of family to pressure our people, attempting to break their resolve and suppress our movement through fear and public shaming. At the top of the letter, they prominently wrote - SECRET-OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE, SPECIAL BRANCH, implying that the content is confidential and intended for limited circulation. However, in a glaring contradiction to the very definition of secrecy, they shamelessly post these so-called "secret" letters on walls in markets or other public places if the families of HNLC members refuse to accept them."

This deliberate and public display of so-called "secret" communications highlights the hypocrisy of their actions and exposes their true intent: to humiliate and intimidate."

"The HNLC has always made a clear distinction: those who leave the organization and join the government without fighting against the HNLC are considered surrendered. However, those who leave the organization but still engage in fighting against the HNLC are considered defectors," Nongtraw added.

Urging the people to recognise this "betrayal" and stand united, the HNLC leader said, "Genuine peace comes from addressing the root causes of conflict, not by silencing those who demand justice and sovereignty for the Hynniewtrepsians. (NNN)

## Nagaland govt pushes for review of FMR, PAP policies

**KOHHIMA, Jan 22:** The Nagaland government on Wednesday reiterated its demand to the Centre to review its decision on the 10 km Free Movement Regime (FMR) along the Indo-Myanmar border and the re-imposition of the Protected Area Permit (PAP).

Interacting with reporters, minister and government spokesperson K G Kenye expressed the state's objection to the new FMR restrictions, which limit movement to a 10 km radius along the border instead of the previous 16 km.

"While we respect the government's security concerns, we believe that Nagaland's situation is unique and requires a different approach," he said.

He added that the state has not yet received any official response from the Centre regarding its request for a review.

Highlighting the unique historical and political context of Nagaland, Kenye stressed that the state's concerns should be considered in light of its distinct history and people.

"Nagaland is the political nerve centre of the entire North East, and it serves as an epicentre for many aspects of life for the states and people in this region," he explained.

"While we empathise with neighbouring states, Nagaland's history and concerns must be understood and addressed accordingly," he added.

## Bike rally in Dimapur to commemorate 10 years of BBBP

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Jan 22:** A bike rally was organised by the Dimapur district administration and Sankalp District Hub for the Empowerment of Women in Dimapur to commemorate 10 years of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) on Wednesday.

Flagged off by Dimapur district public relations officer Stephen Nguille, the rally began at Dimapur DC's office and concluded at Chumoukedima DC's office.

The event aimed to promote the message "Save the Girl Child: Educate the Girl Child" and was part of a broader campaign scheduled from January 22 to March 8. A total of 30 riders from Dimapur, including members from renowned motorcycle clubs such as R.E Brothers Nagaland, United Riders Motorcycle Club, United Royal Riders Motor-

cycle Club, Nagaland Motorcycle, Flying Falcons Motorcycle Club, and The C.R.E.W Motorcycle Club, participated in the rally.

At Chumoukedima, the bikers were received by DC Polan John.

In his address, John lauded the bikers' clubs for their participation in the rally. He praised their efforts in raising awareness about protecting and educating the girl child.

On the occasion, the DC launched the menstrual health manual for women and girls and distributed feminine hygiene kits, developed by the District Hub for Empowerment of Women, to promote menstrual hygiene and awareness. In Kohima, the celebration was held at the Capital Convention Centre.

Meanwhile, commissioner and secretary, social welfare department, Martha R Ritse graced the event as the special guest.

## Training on GIS and remote sensing for water resources management

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Jan 22:** A specialised three-day training programme on remote sensing and GIS application in water and land management commenced in the chief engineer's office, water resources department, in Kohima on Wednesday.

The event organised by the North Eastern Regional Institute of Water and Land Management (NERIWALM) Tezpur aims to equip participants with knowledge and skills on remote sensing and GIS applications as well as water conservation and water management.

At the inaugural function, the chief engineer of the water resources department, K Hutoi Sema, in his keynote address, stressed the importance of effective water and land management in a region like Nagaland, where rivers, streams, and fer-



tile lands are lifelines.

He commended NERIWALM for its continuous efforts in enhancing knowledge and skills in water and land management across Northeast India. Sema said the training programme will focus on utilising remote sensing and GIS technology to gain a better understanding of the region's water and land resources. He emphasised that these tools can

provide real solutions to the challenges faced in water management.

The second topic of the training programme, water conservation and water management, will focus on the importance of conserving water in a region prone to droughts, he added.

He encouraged all participants to actively engage in the training sessions, learn from experts, and apply the acquired

knowledge in their respective divisions and sub-divisions.

"Good management, whether of land, water, or people, often comes down to common sense and timely action," Sema stressed.

Sobu Angami, senior engineer, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the activities of the Nagaland water resources department.

Dr Luna Momi Das, assistant professor at NERIWALM presented an overview of the institute's activities, showcasing their contribution to research, training, conducting international and national workshops and seminars and policy formulation in water and land management.

This training marks a significant step towards effective water and land management, aligning with sustainable development goals in the region.

No:- MB-123/15<sup>th</sup> FC/BTC/2020-21/224

Date 22/01/2025

### SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER (SNIT)

The office of the Block Dev. Officer, Manikpur Dev. Block (Chirang Part) invited bid for the works under 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission fund of BTC for the year 2023-24 during 2024-25 in Bid system (F2 Form) affixing a non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & twenty five Paisa) only from the registered contractors of Class-I (A, B, C) Class-II and class-III category of Assam PWD (Road & Building) for the works as details below.

Sl. No.	Name of Scheme	Estimated Amount (Rs. in Lakh)	Cost. of Tender Paper	Time of completion of work	Earnest Money
1	Const of Community toilet at Rupamoni Bathou Mandir	11.00	Rs. 500/-	90 days	1% for ST,SC.
2	Const of Community toilet at Dakin High School	10.4796	Rs. 500/-	90 days	OBC Category &
3	Const of Community toilet at Alukhunda Bazar	10.4796	Rs. 500/-	90 days	2% for General Category in favour of BDO, Manikpur Dev. Block
4	Const of Community toilet at Puran Bijini Bazar	10.4796	Rs. 500/-	90 days	
5	Const of Community toilet at Samabay Samitee	10.4796	Rs. 500/-	90 days	
6	Const of Community toilet at Nityananda Ashram at No. Chatianguri	10.4796	Rs. 500/-	90 days	

Details SNIT may be seen in all working days during office hours in the Office of the undersigned tender paper will be issued to the contractors or their authorized representatives in the office of the undersigned on payment of Rs. 500/- (Rupees Five hundred) only in the form of demand draft / Bankers Cheque from any Nationalized Bank duly pledged in favour of "The Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar" Payable at Kokrajhar. In case the Office remains closed on tender issuing/receiving/ opening Date the same will be issued/ received/ opened on the next working day.

- Date of issue of Bid Document:- 24-01-2025
- Last date of issue and submission of Bid Document: 13-02-2025 up to 2:00 PM
- Date of Opening of Bid: 13-02-2025 at 2:30 PM
- E-procurement (<https://www.assamtenders.gov.in>) for procurement of all Goods, Services and works of value Rs. 25.00 lakh and above are to be mandatorily done.

Sd/-

Block Development Officer,  
Manikpur Dev. Block, Manikpur

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1340

# Electoral bonds: Plea seeks review of SC order rejecting petitions for seizure of money



**NEW DELHI, Jan 22:** A petition filed in the Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a review of its August 2, 2024 order dismissing pleas for confiscation of ₹ 16,518 crore received by political parties under the 2018 electoral bond scheme.

The review plea sought a recall of the August 2, 2024 order which dismissed a previous petition seeking confiscation of money received under the scheme. It therefore sought the plea's restoration and a fresh hearing.

The top court, on August 2 last year, rejected a batch of pleas including the one filed by Khem Singh Bhati, who filed the review, seeking a court-monitored probe into the electoral bonds scheme (EBS) and observed it couldn't order a roving inquiry.

The review plea, filed through advocate Jayesh K Unnikrishnan and settled by senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, said on February 15, 2024 the apex court held in another case -- Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) v. Union of India -- EBS as unconstitutional for violating Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

"The effect of declaring the Electoral Bond Scheme and the various statutory provisions as unconstitutional is that the said scheme never existed and is void ab-initio and it is a settled position of law that the court only finds law and it does not make law, it argued.

The verdict in the ADR case, said the plea, rendered the EBS void since inception and therefore the subsequent pleas seeking confiscation of the amount collected by political parties could not have been dismissed.

"In the absence of any declaration by this court in the ADR case that the judgement would apply prospectively, the existence of the Electoral Bond Scheme on the date of purchase could not have been the basis for dismissal of the present writ petition. The Electoral Bond Scheme stood wiped out for all purposes from the date of inception and

the necessary consequences must follow, it said.

The plea said the previous bench's reliance on the existence of parliamentary legislation permitting electoral bonds to dismiss the writ petition constituted an "apparent error on the face of the record".

The ADR judgment did not declare its findings to be prospective, which means the statutory framework supporting electoral bonds should have been treated as invalid from the outset, it said.

It argued the judgment had a retrospective effect, rendering the EBS null and void since its inception.

The plea said the three-judge bench's dismissal of the petitions, seeking confiscation of the amount received by political parties under the EBS, indirectly modified the ADR judgment which was delivered by a five-judge constitution bench.

The plea said evidence disclosed under court directions underlined the quid pro quo between donations made through EBS and the benefits received by corporate donors, contradicting the bench's conclusion that such claims were speculative.

"Disclosure of information regarding electoral bonds in terms of the direction of this court clearly establish that there was quid pro quo between the donations made to the political parties and benefits received by the corporate houses and the observation...that the writ petition is based on assumption about quid pro quo between the donor and donee and the petitioner is seeking a roving inquiry, suffers from apparent error, it said.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by former CJI D Y Chandrachud on February 15 last year scrapped the electoral bonds scheme of anonymous political funding introduced by the BJP government.

Following the top court's judgement, the State Bank of India, the authorised financial institution under the scheme, shared the data with the election commission which made it public. (PTI)

during the campaign were strengthening of road, rail and air connectivity in the state, introduction of a stringent anti-copying law for recruitment examinations and an anti-conversion law.

The Congress which suffered desertions ahead of the civic body polls including by state party vice president Mathuradutt Joshi also left no stone unturned to strengthen its chances by countering the BJP's "tall claims" about development and asserting nothing was actually delivered on ground.

Senior leaders like former chief minister Harish Rawat, state party president Karan Mahra, Leader of the Opposition Yashpal Arya, former state chief Ganesh Godiyal and Chakrata MLA Pritam Singh led the Congress's campaign.

The Congress lost all five Lok Sabha seats in the state to the BJP for a third consecutive time last year after being routed by the party in the state assembly polls held in 2022.

However, it regained some

# Why did BJP adopt policy of 'save the criminals' instead of 'save the daughters': Cong

**NEW DELHI, Jan 22:** As the government's 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' initiative completed 10 years, the Congress on Wednesday accused the BJP of hypocrisy and asked why did the ruling party adopt a policy of 'save the criminals' instead of "save the daughters".

'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' (BBBP) was launched by the prime minister on January 22, 2015 at Panipat, Haryana. BBBP addresses the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of women empowerment over a life-cycle continuum.

In a post in Hindi on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "Ten years of Beti Bachao, our three questions to Modi ji — Why did the BJP adopt the policy of 'save the criminals' instead of 'save the daughters'? When will the women of Manipur get justice? Whether it is the Dalit daughter of Hathras or the daughter of Unnao,

Maha Kumbh: UP CM, ministers take dip at Sangam after Cabinet meet

**MÁHAKUMBH NAGAR, Jan 22:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath along with his Cabinet on Wednesday took a dip in the Triveni Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela.

The bathed around 2.15 pm after the cabinet meet here to discuss policies.

The ministers also engaged in some light-hearted, celebratory moments of camaraderie in the sacred waters.

CM Adityanath was surrounded by his Cabinet colleagues, who splashed water on him together as the entourage bathed amid high security.

Adityanath was joined by Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, Minister of State for Minority Welfare, Muslim Waqf and Haj Danish Azad Ansari, Minister Ashish Patel of ally Apna Dal (S) and Baldev Singh Aulakh, the only Sikh face of the Adityanath government, among others. Fisheries Minister Sanjay Nishad of ally Nishad Party also joined them.

The Cabinet meeting and the holy dip comes on a day that marks the first anniversary of the consecration ceremony of the Ram Lalla idol at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Earlier, UP Director General of Police Prashant Kumar also took a dip in the Sangam - the revered confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati. (PTI)



or our champion female wrestler, why has the BJP always protected criminals?"

Why are 43 crimes against women recorded every hour in the country, Kharge asked.

"Every day 22 crimes are registered against women and children of the most vulnerable Dalit-tribal class of our country. Modi ji has spoken about women's safety many times in his speeches from

the Red Fort, but why is there a difference between his words and actions?" the Congress president said.

What is the reason that till 2019, nearly 80 per cent of the total amount allocated for the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' scheme was spent only on media advertising, he asked.

"When this fact was exposed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the funds used for

petitioner would ask for right to vote, which is circumscribed by Section 62 of the Representation of Peoples Act."

Releasing such a person on interim bail would amount to permitting the accused to go for door-to-door canvassing and hold meetings in the locality where the crime took place and witnesses reside, he said.

"Hence, there is a high possibility of the accused meeting the witnesses. The chargesheet reveals serious allegations against the accused and that the rooftop of his house/office was used as the "epicentre" for the offences," said Justice Mithal.

He said it was worth mentioning that canvassing for 10-15 days would not suffice the purpose in as much as a constituency has to be nurtured for years, for contesting.

"If petitioner had not nurtured it for the past few years sitting in jail, there is no reason why he should be released," he said.

While acknowledging the allegations against Hussain were grave and serious, Justice Amanullah said they were only allegations at the present moment.

He said the petitioner was in custody since March, 2020, and had set

the judge added, "Once such right is recognised, as a sequel, the

lower rate? Based on what data are they making the comparisons? It is an attempt to sling mud at the government. The CAG should keep accounts. The BJP has destroyed this institution (CAG). All constitutional institutions and authorities are being destroyed by them," he alleged.

The Congress-led UDF opposition is supporting such acts of the BJP, he further contended. He further claimed that the CAG report was part of its crusade against Kerala.

"Earlier, they came against KIIFB. We replied back in the same coin. The government will give reply to this too," he said.

The CAG report tabled in the state assembly on Tuesday charged that the irregularities in the procurement of PPE kits led to an additional expenditure to the state to the tune of ₹ 10.23 crore.

The report also alleged that the state-run Kerala Medical Services Corporation Ltd (KMSCL) had shown undue favour to Maharashtra-based San Pharma company by providing it 100 per cent of the purchase value of the PPE kits as advance in violation of the norms. (PTI)

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Jan 22:** Stepping up the attack on the Kerala government over the Comptroller and Auditor General's report that points out irregularities in the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment kits during the Covid-19 pandemic, Congress on Wednesday asked "if this is not corruption, what is?".

Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala criticised that the Left government procured PPE kits at inflated rates with the knowledge of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

"Orders for procuring PPE kits at lower rates were cancelled and they were bought at highly inflated rates. If this is not corruption, what is? The then Health Minister K K Shailaja says it was done with the knowledge of the CM. So, if it is done with CM's knowledge, then is it not corruption?" he asked while speaking to reporters here.

Defending the Left government's actions, former state Finance Minister Thomas Isaac questioned on what basis the CAG claimed that kits were available at a lower rate.

"What quality are they saying was available at a

lower rate? Based on what data are they making the comparisons? It is an attempt to sling mud at the government. The CAG should keep accounts. The BJP has destroyed this institution (CAG). All constitutional institutions and authorities are being destroyed by them," he alleged.

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# Poll campaign: No interim bail for 2020 riots accused Tahir Hussain as SC gives split verdict

**NEW DELHI, Jan 22:** Former councillor and February 2020 riots accused Tahir Hussain on Wednesday failed to secure an interim bail to campaign for Delhi assembly polls after a Supreme Court bench gave a split verdict.

While Justice Pankaj Mithal dismissed Hussain's plea saying no case was made out, Justice Abhanuddin Amanullah opined he could be released on interim bail.

The matter would be placed before Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna for the constitution of a new bench to decide the issue.

Observing the right to contest elections was not a fundamental right, Justice Mithal said allowing interim bail could open a Pandora's box as every undertrial would invoke the same ground.

"In the event interim bail is to be allowed for purposes of contesting elections, it will open a Pandora's box. Since elections are all year round, every undertrial would come with the plea that he wants to participate in elections and therefore be granted interim bail. This would open floodgates, which in our opinion can't be permitted," he said.

The judge added, "Once such right is recognised, as a sequel, the

petitioner would ask for right to vote, which is circumscribed by Section 62 of the Representation of Peoples Act."

Releasing such a person on interim bail would amount to permitting the accused to go for door-to-door canvassing and hold meetings in the locality where the crime took place and witnesses reside, he said.

"Hence, there is a high possibility of the accused meeting the witnesses. The chargesheet reveals serious allegations against the accused and that the rooftop of his house/office was used as the "epicentre" for the offences," said Justice Mithal.

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The CAG report tabled in the state assembly on Tuesday charged that the irregularities in the procurement of PPE kits led to an additional expenditure to the state to the tune of ₹ 10.23 crore.

The report also alleged that the state-run Kerala Medical Services Corporation Ltd (KMSCL) had shown undue favour to Maharashtra-based San Pharma company by providing it 100 per cent of the purchase value of the PPE kits as advance in violation of the norms. (PTI)

the scheme were cut by a massive 63 percent between 2018-19 and 2022-23, and later by merging it with a scheme called "Sambal" under 'Mission Shakti', the Modi government stopped providing the data spent on the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' scheme," he said.

There has also been a 30 per cent reduction in the funds allocated and the funds used for 'Sambal' in 2023-24, he alleged and asked what did the government want to hide by this "manipulation" of data.

Will sticking "Beti Bachao" on the back of every truck or painting it on every wall stop crimes against women, provide employment opportunities to them, give them better health facilities or give women justice after atrocities, Kharge asked.

"The BJP's hollow advertisement of 'Enough of attacks on women' shows its utter hypocrisy after 10 years!" he said. (PTI)

curred bail in most cases and the Delhi High Court allowed him to file nomination.

"Subject to apt conditions, the petitioner can be granted interim bail for limited period. Ordered accordingly. Petitioner is enlarged on interim bail however till February 4 noon," he said.

The Delhi High Court on January 14 granted custody parole to Hussain to file nomination papers from the Mustafabad constituency on an AIMIM ticket.

It, however, refused his plea for interim bail from January 14 to February 9 to fight polls, saying the gravity of allegations against Hussain, being the main perpetrator in the violence, which resulted in the death of several persons, could not be overlooked.

The high court said about 11 FIRs were registered against him in connection with the riots and he was admittedly in custody in a related money laundering case and UAPA case.

Violence broke out in northeast Delhi on February 24, 2020, leaving 53 dead and several injured.

Hussain is accused in a case of February 2020 riots connected to the death of Intelligence Bureau staffer Ankit Sharma. (PTI)

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"Earlier, they came against KIIFB. We replied back in the same coin. The government will give reply to this too," he said.

# Amit Shah to visit Gujarat today

**AHMEDABAD, Jan 22:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Gujarat on January 23, during which he is scheduled to inaugurate a host of projects, including a cancer hospital in Surat.

Shah, a Lok Sabha member from the Gandhinagar seat, will inaugurate 'Hindu Spiritual & Service Fair', also known as Hindu Adhyatmik Seva Mela, at the Gujarat University Ground in the city in the morning, a release issued by his office on Wednesday said. Around 1.30 pm, Shah will reach Surat city and address people after inaugurating a newly-built cancer hospital and a sanatorium on Dumas Road, it said.

He will then return to Ahmedabad and inaugurate two underpasses in Sabarmati and New Ranip area at around 4 pm, the release said, adding that Shah will also lay the foundation stone of two projects related to drainage and water conservation in Ranip area of Ahmedabad, which falls under the Gandhinagar parliamentary constituency.

Shah will then address people at Sardar Chowk in Ranip after launching various development projects of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC).

In the evening, Shah will inaugurate a newly-built sports complex underneath an existing railway overbridge in Thaltej area of the city by the AMC, the release said. (PTI)

# AAP govt committed a scam of ₹ 382 crore in healthcare sector in Delhi: Cong leader Ajay Maken

**NEW DELHI, Jan 22:** Congress leader Ajay Maken on Wednesday alleged that the Aam Aadmi Party government committed a corruption of ₹ 382 crore in the healthcare sector.

During a press conference here, Maken said that they used to make allegations against the Congress government on the basis of CAG reports. At present, 14 CAG reports are showing serious corruption charges against the AAP government.

Citing a CAG report, Maken claimed that he found that there was a scam of ₹ 382 crore against former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

AAP claimed that they would complete their work before time and also save money. But the CAG report states that only three new hospitals were built in the past 10 years, Maken said.

All three hospitals started during the time of the Congress government. The delay of Indira Gandhi Hospital was five years, Burari Hospital was delayed by six years and Maulana Azad Dental Hospital was delayed by three years.

"Apart from this, there was a total of ₹ 314 crore extra spent on Indira Gandhi Hospital over the tender amount. An amount of ₹ 41 crore extra was spent on Burari Hospital and ₹ 26 crore on the Maulana Azad Dental Hospital. A total of ₹ 382.52 crore was spent extra from the tendered amount. I am not saying this, the CAG report is saying this," Maken said.

"I am directly accusing Kejriwal and his government that this is the biggest reason for stopping the CAG report," he further stated.

According to the CAG, a total of 15 plots were acquired by the Delhi government between 2007 and 2015 and the work has not started at any of those places. (PTI)

# BJP, Cong heading for another showdown in Uttarakhand civic body polls today

**DEHRADUN, Jan 22:** The stage is set for another electoral showdown between the ruling BJP and the Congress in Uttarakhand with the urban local body polls being held on Thursday.

Campaigning for the urban local body polls ended at 5 pm on Tuesday with both parties throwing all their might to woo voters.

Chief Minister and BJP's star campaigner Pushkar Singh Dhami held a series of public meetings and roadshows across the state during the nearly three-week long campaign seeking votes for a "triple-engine" government to keep the pace of development uninterrupted.

He also touted policy moves like introduction of a UCC Act and stringent land laws which will make it difficult for outsiders to buy limitless land in the state and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's grand vision for the hill state to mobilise voters in support of the party.

Other steps highlighted by him

# Will file ₹ 50-crore defamation suit each against Kejriwal, Mann: Parvesh Verma

**NEW DELHI, Jan 22:** BJP MP Parvesh Verma on Wednesday said he will file ₹ 50 crore defamation suit each against AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann for levelling "false allegations" and claiming he called Punjabis a "threat" to the country. Verma said if he wins the cases, he plans to use the money for development work in his New Delhi constituency, from where he is contesting the February 5 assembly polls against Kejriwal.

Earlier in the day, Kejriwal alleged at a press conference that Verma has called Punjabis a "threat" to the country by saying that "vehicles from Punjab are seen in Delhi (campaigning for AAP) and no one knew who were sitting inside them... and that it was a threat ahead of Republic Day on January 26".

Responding to the charges, the BJP leader said, "I don't need to mention what I and my family have done for the Sikh community."

Verma accused Kejriwal of resorting to "lies" out of frustration over his party's "imminent defeat."

Verma said, "I have complained to the police and the Election Commission that in the past few days, thousands of cars from Punjab have entered Delhi. The Punjab CM, and AAP's ministers and legislators have come

ground by winning two assembly bypolls in Badrinath and Manglaur in July, 2024.

The elections are being held on Thursday to 100 urban local bodies including 11 municipal corporations, 43 municipal councils, and 46 nagar panchayats.

The polling being held by ballot will decide the fate of 5,405 candidates.

There are 72 candidates running for 11 mayoral posts, 445 for municipal council chairperson posts and 4,888 for municipal councillors' posts.

A total of 30,29,000 voters are likely to participate in the polls to be held to 100 urban local bodies spread over 1282 wards in the state, Uttarakhand State Election Commissioner Sushil Kumar said.

There are 1,515 polling centres in the state and 3,394 polling booths, he said.

A total of 25,800 security and 16,284 polling personnel have been deployed to ensure free and fair polling, Kumar said. (PTI)

in those cars to campaign for the AAP. I don't have a problem with their campaign but they are influencing voters by distributing Chinese CCTV cameras, liquor and money.

"I am going to file a ₹ 100-crore defamation case against Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann for making wrong allegations against me. I will use the money after winning the case for the development of my constituency New Delhi," Verma said.

His office later told PTI, "We are sending a defamation notice of ₹ 50 crore each to Kejriwal and Mann."

Verma also criticised Kejriwal for allegedly hurting Hindu sentiments through his remarks on Lord Ram and Hanuman. "The people of Delhi will give them a reply on February 5, and on February 8, the lotus will bloom," he said, referring to the BJP's election symbol.

Meanwhile, Kejriwal took to X also to condemn the BJP leader's remarks.

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"Delhi is home to lakhs of Punjabis, whose families and ancestors have made countless sacrifices for the country. Many Punjabis also came to Delhi as refugees during the Partition, leaving everything behind and enduring immense suffering. Punjabis have shaped Delhi," Kejriwal wrote in Hindi. (PTI)

**MUMBAI, Jan 22:** The Shiv Sena (UBT) on Wednesday claimed that the magisterial indictment of five cops in the custodial killing of the Badlapur sexual assault case exposes the "falsehood" of Maharashtra Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis and the police department.

In an editorial in its mouthpiece "Saamana", the party said that the "encounter" of the accused, Akshay Shinde, would not have been possible without the "consent" of the home minister.

A magistrate's inquiry has held five Maharashtra policemen responsible for the custodial death of Shinde, the lone accused in the Badlapur school sexual assault case, and raised doubts on their claims of opening fire at him in self-defence in September last year.

Chief Minister Fadnavis, the deputy CM at the time, held the home portfolio then. He is also the current home minister of the state.

The editorial said there was always a "doubt" over the killing of Shinde.

"The court should also hold



Thane police commissioner (the then), Thane's guardian minister (Shambhuraaj Desai), (the then) home minister (Fadnavis) responsible, and raised doubts on their claims of opening



# RG Kar rape, murder case: SC defers suo-motu hearing to Jan 29

NEW DELHI, Jan 22: The Supreme Court on Wednesday cited paucity of time and deferred to January 29 the hearing on the suo-motu case over the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

On January 20, a Kolkata trial court awarded convict Sanjay Roy "life term imprisonment till death" in the case.

The suo-motu (on its own) plea was set to be heard by the top court for the first time after the sentencing in the doctor's rape and murder which took place on August 9 last year.

The heinous crime triggered nationwide outrage and prolonged protests in West Bengal.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan on Wednesday said there was paucity of time, and moreover, three fresh applications were filed in the case.

"We will take it up at 2 pm on next Wednesday," the CJ said.

Senior advocate Karuna Nandy, representing the Association of Junior and Senior Doctors, mentioned the plea for hearing.

On December 10 last year, the



top court took note of the CBI's latest status report and expressed confidence that the trial in the case was likely to conclude within a month.

The CBI had informed about the day-to-day -- Monday to Thursday -- trial at a special CBI Court in Sealdah.

The bench had also directed the parties to share their recommendations and suggestions on preventing gender-based violence and developing safety protocols for doctors and medical staff at hospitals across the nation with the court-appointed national task force (NTF).

The bench directed the NTF to

file a report and said, "All recommendations and suggestions be sent to the National Task force and a reply be filed by the states and UTs (union territories) to the last report of the NTF."

The body of the post-graduate trainee doctor was found in the hospital's seminar room on August 9, last year following which the Kolkata police arrested civic volunteer Roy the next day in connection with the crime.

While taking a suo motu notice of the case, the bench constituted the NTF on August 20 to formulate a protocol to ensure safety and security of medical professionals in the wake of the crime.

## Navy's tableau at R-Day parade to feature warships 'Surat', 'Nilgiri', submarine INS Vaghsheer

NEW DELHI, Jan 22: Indian Navy will showcase its three newly commissioned frontline combatants -- warships INS Surat and INS Nilgiri, and submarine INS Vaghsheer -- in the tableau at the 76th Republic Day Parade on the Kartavya Path in Delhi. At a press conference held at Kota House on Wednesday, the Navy unveiled a model of the tableau featuring the thematic tagline, 'Atmanirbhar Nausena se Rashtra Nirman' (Nation Building through a Self Reliant Navy).

Officials said the Navy's mixed marching contingent and a band will also participate in the ceremonial parade.

Vice Admiral Vineet McCarty, the Controller Personnel Services, highlighted that the tableau will de-

scribe the three platforms commissioned just a week ago in Mumbai, symbolising India's naval prowess and the spirit of 'Atmanirbharta'.

On January 15, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the three frontline naval combatants to the nation during their commissioning at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The commissioning of three major naval combatants marks a significant leap forward in realising India's vision of becoming a global leader in defence manufacturing and maritime security, the defence ministry had earlier said.

INS Surat, the fourth and final ship of the P15B Guided Missile Destroyer Project, ranks among the largest and most sophisticated destroyers in the world. (PTI)

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## Torres scam: HC raps police, says nobody acted with alacrity

MUMBAI, Jan 22: The Bombay High Court on Wednesday said police officials committed dereliction of duty by failing to take prompt action in the Torres investment scam. "Nobody has acted with alacrity," a division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Neela Gokhale said.

The police "need to be alive to what is happening" and take prompt action so that commoners do not lose their hard earned money, it said.

The court also called for some mechanism to be put in place so that such scams could be avoided in future.

The jewellery company that owns the Torres brand is accused of cheating investors of crores of rupees through a combination of Ponzi and multi-level marketing (MLM) schemes.

The Mumbai police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has so far arrested three persons in the case, two of whom are foreign nationals.

City-based chartered accountant Abhishek Gupta last week moved the HC, claiming to be the whistleblower in the case and seeking police protection.

The high court last week ordered the police to give security cover to Gupta and sought details of the probe being carried out in the case.

Public Prosecutor Hiten Vene-

gaonkar on Wednesday submitted a probe report to the high court.

He informed the bench that out of the 12 wanted accused in the case, eight left the country before December 30, 2024. Seven of these eight accused are Ukrainian nationals while one is Indian.

"The police know their locations as of now and also their travel history. Appropriate action would be taken," Venegaonkar said.

The Navi Mumbai police were discreetly inquiring into the scam since October 2024, he added.

The bench then said if information (of the scam) was available, then why prompt action was not taken.

"Somewhere there has been dereliction of duty. Nobody has acted with alacrity. Information was there," the HC said.

"Now see to it that it doesn't happen again in future. Now you know the modus operandi. Police need to be alive to what is happening and take prompt action so that people do not lose their money, or there can be some mechanism in the future," the bench added.

Venegaonkar informed the court that apart from the case being probed by the city police's EOW, four more FIRs have been lodged in the case by the Navi Mumbai, Thane, Navghar and Mira Bhayandar police.

## Chhattisgarh: Five sentenced to death for gangrape-murder of girl, killing of her 2 family members

KORBA, Jan 22: A court in Chhattisgarh has sentenced five men to death for the gangrape-murder of a 16-year-old girl and the killing of her two family members in 2021, holding that the crime has shocked the collective conscience of society.

The Fast Track Special Court in Korba district sentenced to death Santram Manjhar (49), Abdul Jabbar (34), Anil Kumar Sarthi (24), Pardeshi Ram (39) and Anand Ram Panika (29) and handed a life sentence to the six accused, Umashankar Yadav (26).

While delivering the judgement on January 15, Additional Sessions Judge Mamta Bhojwani held that this inhuman and cruel act of the accused is extremely perverted, heinous, brutal and cowardly, said special public prosecutor Sunil Kumar Mishra on Wednesday.

A copy of the order was made available on Monday.

Those given the death penalty were convicted under sections 302 (murder), 376 (2)(G) (gangrape) and other sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and provisions of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The lawyer said he had sought the death penalty for all six accused but Yadav was sentenced to life imprisonment on medical grounds.

Yadav's medical examination had shown that he underwent a surgery following an accident that damaged his private parts. His involvement in the rape was not established but his role in the conspiracy and murder was found and he was sentenced accordingly, Mishra added.

In 2021, the teenage girl was allegedly gang-raped and bludgeoned with stones before she was dumped in a forest leading to her death near Gadhpura village under Lemru police station area of Korba district.

The accused also killed the girl's father, aged around 60, and his four-year-old granddaughter who were with her.

According to police, the de-



ceased man, a resident of Barpani village, had been working as a cattle grazer at the house of prime accused Manjhar since July 2020.

On January 29, 2021, Manjhar offered lift to the man, his 16-year-old daughter and four-year-old granddaughter to their village on his motorcycle. On the way, they stopped at Korai village and Manjhar consumed liquor following which the other men also joined him, they said.

The men took the trio to the foot of a hill surrounded by forest near Gadhpura where the 16-year-old girl was gang-raped in front of her father. After thrashing all the victims with stones and sticks, they dumped them in the forest before fleeing from the scene, police said.

Four days after the crime, when the deceased man's son approached the Lemru police station saying three members of their family were missing, cops swung into action and rounded up the six men on February 2, they said.

After questioning them, police reached the crime site the same day and found the injured teenager alive and two others dead. The rape victim died while being rushed to a local hospital, police said.

The victims belonged to the Pahadi Korwa tribal community, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).

Citing police investigation, Mishra said that Manjhar was pressuring the teenage girl to become his second wife. When she and her family objected to this, Manjhar and his five associates raped and killed her and also murdered her two family members.

In its judgment, the court said

## 'Skyrocketing' airfare, lack of tariff regulation dominate PAC meeting

NEW DELHI, Jan 22: Concerns over "skyrocketing" airfare and "little action" by government agencies and regulator dominated the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) meeting on Wednesday as several MPs sought accountability from private airport operators and airlines to provide relief to passengers.

PAC Chairperson K C Venugopal described the meeting of the panel, which has witnessed fiery and at times acrimonious discussion along party lines in the past, as "one of the best" sittings.

Members, he said, expressed concerns that the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) "is not acting properly as a regulator".

"We need clear cut answers," he told PTI after the meeting.

He said the regulatory body could not answer adequately the questions raised by members.

The senior Congress MP said, "Concerns were raised by members that airfare is skyrocketing, and there is no action from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) or the Civil Aviation Department."

Sources said some MPs called for an amendment in the AERA Act to make it more effective in regulating fare amid general unhappiness over issues like "arbitrary" rise in user development fees and price surge, as they alleged that the

existing system fell short of fixing accountability and transparency in the functioning of private operators.

Civil aviation secretary and AERA chairperson were among those who appeared before the panel in the meeting in which presentations were made on related issues.

While AERA is tasked with regulating tariff for services covering major airports, the DGCA is primarily concerned with safety issues.

Sources said the PAC members, in general, were unsatisfied with the replies of officials, and the panel has asked them to submit a detailed response.

Several members, sources said, gave examples of a few airports where the user development fee (UDF), which is included in the airfare, has gone up many times since they were handed over to private operators.

Some of them sought details from officials about the revenue collected under different heads and to what use they were put to.

An MP lauded the government's UDAN scheme, which envisages air connectivity for smaller cities, but noted that many of its routes are either not served or not served adequately by private airlines as they focus on more profitable routes. It strikes a blow to the vision of having the common man to fly, he added. (PTI)

## Over 150 special trains to run for Maha Kumbh on Mauni Amavasya

MAHAKUMBH NAGAR (UP), Jan 22: The Prayagraj Railway Division has rolled out extensive plans to run over 150 special fair trains to accommodate the large influx of devotees expected on Mauni Amavasya on January 29, officials said here on Wednesday.

In addition to running special trains, the division has also implemented colour-coded ticketing and shelter arrangements to ensure a smooth experience for passengers.

Senior Public Relations Officer of the Prayagraj Railway Division, Amit Malviya said that more than 150 fair special trains will be operated on Mauni Amavasya on January 29, the majority of which will run from Prayagraj Junction.

Special trains will also be operated from other stations in the division, along with regular trains running at their scheduled times, he said. Malviya highlighted that operating over 150 special trains in a single day will be a landmark achievement, surpassing the 85 trains run during Mauni Amavasya in Kumbh 2019.

With these plans, the Prayagraj Railway Division aims to run a train

## Sambhal: Excavation begins of ancient well found near Shahi Jama Masjid

SAMBHAL (UP), Jan 22: The Sambhal administration on Wednesday started excavating an ancient well found under illegal encroachments near Shahi Jama Masjid. The well, located about 50 metres from the disputed Shahi Jama Masjid-Harihar temple in the Kot Garvi locality area, is believed to be one of the 19 ancient wells in the region. According to locals, the well holds historical and religious significance.

Speaking to reporters, local resident Sanjay Kumar said, "This well is situated near the Harihar temple. It used to be a place of worship where people came during auspicious occasions like childbirth or weddings."

"Over time, it was covered and its original form altered. The excavation will restore its historic appearance," he said.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Shirish Chandra, while talking to reporters, confirmed that

the excavation was initiated following complaints from locals about the well having been illegally covered up.

"Preliminary investigation suggests the well was encroached upon and covered. We are excavating to restore it. Appropriate legal action will follow after further investigation," he said.

Asked whether the well is of historical significance, the ASP said, "According to local accounts and elderly residents, this well has existed for centuries. Further verification will be done as the excavation progresses."

The administration's initiative is part of an ongoing effort to safeguard ancient structures and heritage sites across the district.

Sambhal has been tense since November 19 when a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid was carried out following claims that a Harihar temple previously stood at the site. (PTI)

## 'Kalpvasis' brave chill, austerity in search of spiritual salvation at Maha Kumbh

MAHAKUMBH NAGAR, Jan 22: Sexagenarian Rohini Jha from Bihar's Maithili region sleeps on the ground in her camp on the banks of the Sangam, wakes up early to take up a holy dip, and has one meal a day despite the biting cold.

The 68-year-old is performing Kalpvas -- a month-long practice of austerity and spiritual focus -- at the Maha Kumbh.

Stretching from Paus Purnima to Magh Purnima, Kalpvas has been a part of the region's spiritual heritage for centuries. The tradition is highlighted in various Vedic texts, including the Mahabharata and the Ramcharitmanas, showcasing its deep-rooted significance in Hindu spirituality.

Jha is among more than 10 lakh devotees performing Kalpvas at the Maha Kumbh.

On her 11th Kalpvas, Jha said her first was when she was four years old, accompanying her mother and father during their

Kalpvas. "It is considered auspicious to perform at least 12 Kalpvas. The rituals begin with the devotees' arrival at the Sangam where they set up their temporary tents. This is the maiden step in this spiritual journey," she told PTI.

"The devotees move away from all the comforts of home and lead a simple lifestyle, symbolising detachment from material possessions," she added.

Jha is accompanied by seven members of her family, all senior citizens also on their Kalpvas -- a practice she called "living in pain".

"It is believed the more pain or difficulty you face during Kalpvas, the more successful it is. You feel closer to God and free from pleasures as well as concerns of life," she said.

"When I was young, I would sleep on the sand. Now, since I am old, I place a bedding on the sand. The rules of Kalpvas are strict but



people now follow them flexibly. It is the thought that matters," she added.

Throughout the day, she takes at least two holy dips at the Sangam -- the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers -- and prays regularly.

The Kalpvasis forsake modern comforts to reside in temporary tents near the Sangam. Their daily routine includes holy dips, attend-

ing spiritual discourses and listening to devotional music -- aimed at fostering spiritual growth and inner purification.

Family members and friends also visit the Kalpvasis to take blessings and be a part of the ritual, even though they cannot stay the entire month and follow the strict routine.

"Kalpvas usually starts by planting bananas, tulsi and barley. We are supposed to observe fast and

the soul. It is considered highly auspicious during various astrological alignments, known as Kumbh Snaan," she said.

"Devotees believe that taking a dip during this time in the sacred water absolves them of all sins, leading to salvation," she added.

Maha Kumbh, a mega-religious event organised every 12 years, is being held in Prayagraj from January 13 and will continue for 45 days. More than seven crore pilgrims have so far taken a holy dip at the Sangam.

Mahakumbh Nagar Additional District Magistrate Vivek Chaturvedi said more than 15 lakh Kalpvasis were expected.

"Most Kalpvasis are accompanied by at least two or three people. We have made arrangements to ensure that they do not face problems. The majority of Kalpvasis are associated with some seer or religious organisation and stay in tents arranged in their guru's camp but

there are families who make their own arrangements and we provide them the support," he told PTI.

A seasoned Kalpvasi, 75-year-old Gopal Nuniwal has witnessed the evolution of the Kumbh -- from the increasing number of pilgrims to the tent city's changing landscape.

"Yet, the essence of Kalpvas remains unchanged. It is not an event but a way of life. It's a time to reconnect with one's inner self and the divine," he said.

For the Sharma family from Ballia, Kalpvas is a tradition passed down through generations.

"It's an annual coming together of three generations, setting up the tent in the familiar vicinity of the Ganga. The elders share tales of Kalpvas from their youth while the younger ones imbibe these stories and the essence of the rituals," said VK Sharma. The family's days are a blend of individual and collective activities. (PTI)

# How time passes: Javed Akhtar on 50 years of 'Deewaar'

**NEW DELHI, Jan 22:** Time passes "so quietly and quickly", lyricist-scriptwriter Javed Akhtar recalled fondly as he looked back at "Deewaar", his blockbuster with Salim Khan that released 50 years ago this day. Salim-Javed, as the two were known at the time, gave Hindi cinema some of its biggest hits but the Yash Chopra-directed "Deewaar", starring Amitabh Bachchan and Shashi Kapoor, holds a special place. In the same year in August, the duo delivered another blockbuster in "Sholay".

"Deewaar" was released on 21st January 1975. Theek pachaas saal pehle (exactly 50 years back). How time passes so quietly and so quickly. It is happening all the time but remains

a wonder," wrote the lyricist, who celebrated his 80th birthday recently.

The film, also starring Nirupa Roy, Neetu Singh and Parveen Babi, has stayed in public consciousness through the decades and its dialogues like "mere paas maa hai" and "Davar sahab, main aaj bhi phenke hue paisa nahi uthata" are still oft remembered punch lines.

"Deewaar" revolved around two impoverished brothers struggling to survive in the slums of Mumbai. When they grow up, the elder brother Vijay (Bachchan) turns to crime while the younger one Ravi (Kapoor) becomes an honest police officer. In the Prime Video documentary series "Angry Young Men", which released last year,

Akhtar spoke about how they struggled to crack the climax of the film though they had the perfect script.

"People say 'Deewaar' has a perfect screenplay. We wrote it in 18 days from a small storyline. Then I wrote the dialogue in about 20 days," said Akhtar.

But they were yet to nail 'the end', said Khan.

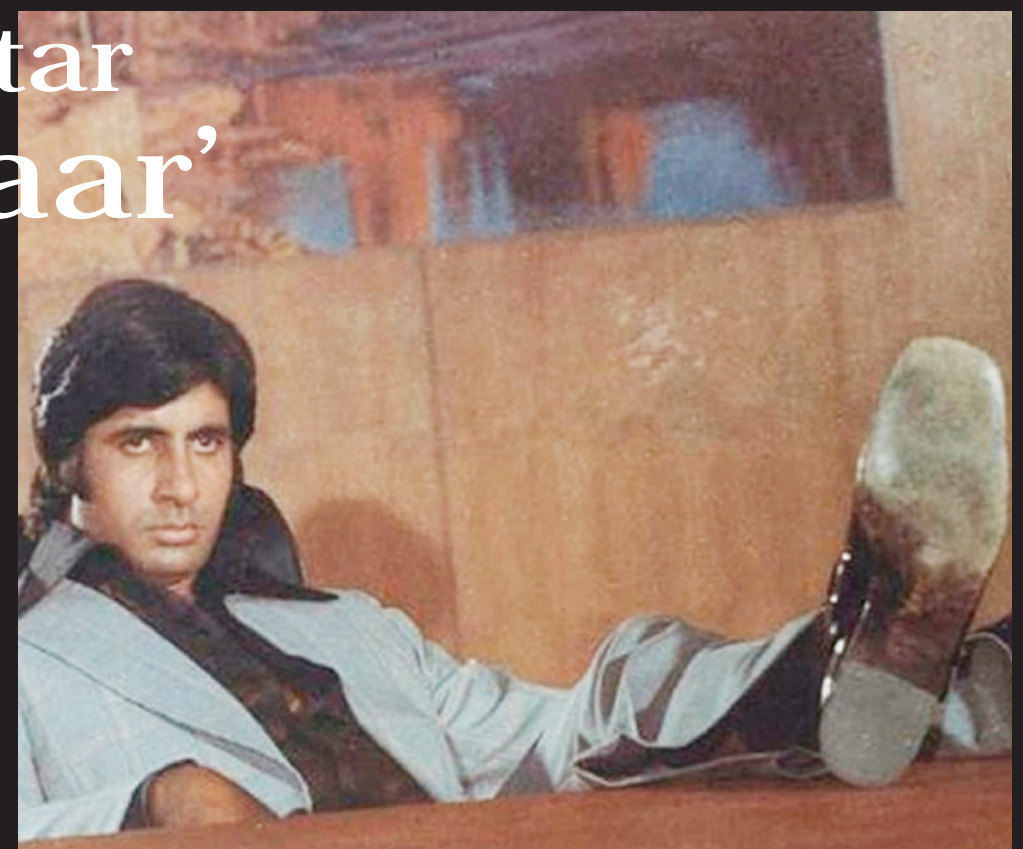
"Once the script was completed, we knew we hadn't cracked the climax. So Javed and I completed it, sitting on the parapet nearby (his Bandra house). Then we went straight to Yash Chopra's house and narrated it. For almost five minutes there was complete silence," Khan recalled in the docu series.

Salim-Javed, who also co-created the 'Angry Young Man'

phenomenon with Bachchan's Vijay in 1973's "Zanjeer", film historians and analysts say, had their finger on the pulse of the country with movies that underscored the deep seated disappointment in masses.

But they were "unaware of all this" while writing, Akhtar said in the documentary.

"Nor did we think our stories had sociopolitical relevance. And it's good. I'm very happy that we were innocent about it. Because we were part of that same society, the same world, and we were breathing the same air. "Without knowing, we were in sync with the rest of the people. But is it really a coincidence that in 1973, we created a vigilante (Vijay from 'Zanjeer') and in 1975, India faced the



Emergency? Are they linked or not?" he said in "Angry Young Men". In the docu series, Bachchan recounted watching the epic temple scene at the premiere night of "Deewaar" in which his character Vijay, who grows up to become an atheist, finds himself in front of god to pray for his ailing mother.

And the opening line goes: "Aaj khush toh bohohong tum." "I do remember the premiere of 'Deewaar' and there was actually a snigger and a gentle laughter in the audience. That was so unexpected and they thought it was some kind of a joke. But within a couple of seconds after that, they just froze," Bachchan said. (PTI)

## WARNER BROS PICTURES ANNOUNCE 2025 SLATE: 'MICKEY 17', 'WICKED: FOR GOOD' AND OTHERS IN LINE UP

**NEW DELHI, Jan 22:** Bong Joon-Ho's "Mickey 17", James Gunn's "Superman" and "Sinners" are some of the big movies from the Warner Bros stable to release in 2025. The company shared its slate for 2025 theatrical releases in India on Tuesday and said that it will be the highest number of theatrical releases in 2025, more than any other studio. Robert Pattinson starrer "Mickey 17", which marks the first film for

Bong Joon-Ho after Oscar-winning "Parasite", will be released on March 7. "A Minecraft Movie", headlined by Jason Momoa and Jack Black, will be out on April 4. Ryan Coogler and Michael B Jordan's "Sinners" has been scheduled for April 18. "Final Destination: Bloodlines", the sixth installment of the supernatural horror franchise, will land in theatres on May 16. Brad Pitt-starrer sports action drama "F1" will also release this year on June 27.

Other big titles include the much-awaited "Superman", starring David Corenswet, releases on July 11, "The Conjuring: Last Rites" on September 5 "The Bride", starring Christian Bale, on September 26 and Ryan Reynolds and Momoa-starrer "Animal Friends" on October 10. "Mortal Combat II", the sequel to 2021's blockbuster, based on the world-famous video game, will be out on October 24.

"We're incredibly proud to present such a dynamic and exciting slate of films for 2025. Working with some of the most talented filmmakers in the world, we're bringing powerful stories and unforgettable characters to the big screen," said Denzil Dias, VP and managing director of India theatrical. "From epic blockbusters to thrilling horrors, heartwarming family adventures to compelling dramas, our diverse lineup from Warner Bros. Discovery and Universal Pictures offers something for every audience, across all ages and genres. (PTI)



## Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 'Padmaavat' to re-release in theatres on Jan 24

**NEW DELHI, Jan 22:** Filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2018 epic film "Padmaavat" is set to re-release in theatres, the makers announced on Wednesday. Bollywood stars Deepika Padukone, Ranveer Singh and Shahid Kapoor feature in lead roles in the movie, which is coming back to theatres on its seventh anniversary.

"Witness the epic tale on the big screen again. #Padmaavat in cinemas on 24th January," Viacom 18 Studios posted on Instagram. "Padmaavat" is a 13th-century tale of Queen Padmavati (Padukone), celebrated for her beauty and wisdom, and her husband, Maharawal Ratan Singh (Kapoor) of Mewar. The story unfolds as Sultan Alauddin Khilji, driven by obsession and ambition, invades Chittor in his quest for Padmavati, who goes to great lengths to protect her kingdom and its values.

Based on "Padmavati" by Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi, the film had sparked a major controversy at the time of its release with several Rajput outfits taking offence over the portrayal of Queen Padmavati.

"Padmaavat" joins the growing list of older films re-released in theatres over the past year. Other titles like "Laila Majnu", "Rockstar", "Gangs of Wasseypur", "Karan Arjun", "Tumbbad" and "Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai" have also made their way back to the big screen. (PTI)

## Ryan Gosling in talks to lead new 'Star Wars' film from Shawn Levy



**LOS ANGELES, Jan 22:** Hollywood star Ryan Gosling is in negotiations to headline a new "Star Wars" movie for Disney-owned Lucasfilm.

Shawn Levy, the director of the 2024 blockbuster Marvel movie "Deadpool & Wolverine", will helm the project, which he has been developing since 2022, according to entertainment news outlet Variety.

Jonathan Tropper, known for his collaborations with Levy on "This Is Where I Leave You" and "The Adam Project", is working on the script.

If the project is finalised, Levy will also produce the film under his 21 Laps banner, alongside "Star Wars" veterans Kathleen Kennedy and Lucasfilm.

Though the plot details have been kept under wraps, the movie is said to be a standalone project and is not connected with the Skywalker Saga, which concluded with 2019's "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker".

Post "The Rise of Skywalker", the Star Wars universe saw the release of its first series "The Mandalorian", followed by shows like "The Book of Boba Fett", "Obi-Wan Kenobi", "Andor" and "Ahsoka".

Levy's film will follow "The Mandalorian & Grogu", the first "Star Wars" movie to receive a greenlight in over five years. Having recently completed principal photography, the Jon Favreau-directed movie is set to premiere in the US on May 22, 2026.

Lucasfilm's film slate also includes movies from filmmakers Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, James Mangold, and Dave Filoni.

Gosling, who most recently starred in Universal's "Fall Guy", is currently working on "Project Hail Mary" from directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller. The film is based on the best-seller novel by author Andy Weir. (PTI)

## TILLOTAMA SHOME'S 'BAKSHO BONDI' TO COMPETE IN PERSPECTIVE SECTION OF BERLINALE 2025



**NEW DELHI, Jan 22:** Actor Tillotama Shome's "Baksho Bondi" will have its world premiere at the 75th Berlin International Film Festival.

The film by first-time filmmakers Tanushree Das and Saumyananda Sahi will be screened as part of the Perspectives section, a new competitive strand aimed at providing a platform to the "exceptional emerging filmmakers from around the world".

The competition, which takes the place of the former Encounters section, comprises 14 debut feature films, competing for the Best First Feature Award at the film gala.

Titled "Shadowbox" in English, the movie is a co-production between India, France, the US and Spain.

In the movie, Shome stars as Maya who discovers that her husband - an ex-soldier who is suffering from PTSD - is the prime suspect in a murder investigation. She and her teenage son are forced to go to extremes to keep the fam-

ily together, according to the official synopsis shared by the festival organisers.

"Baksho Bondi" also stars Chandan Bisht, Sayan Karmakar and Suman Saha in pivotal roles.

Filmmaker Vikramaditya Motwane, who serves as an executive producer on the movie along with Jim Sarbh and Nikhil Advani, shared the news of the film's premiere at Berlinale on Instagram.

"Couldn't be more thrilled to share that our labour of love 'Shadowbox' ('Baksho Bondi'), directed by Tanushree Das @tanushree\_sreenfilms and Saumyananda Sahi @somasahi, has been selected in the new Perspectives Competition at the 75th Berlin International Film Festival," he wrote.

The film is produced by Naren Chandavarkar, Shaunak Sen, Aman Mann and Saumyananda Sahi.

Shome has co-produced the movie along with Dheer Momaya, Sidharth Meer.

Dominique Welinski, Isabelle Glachant, Prashant Nair, Anjali

Patil, Anu Rangachar,

Ishaan Chandhok and Shruti Ganguly. The Perspective section includes five films which are directed or co-directed by women and two by non-binary filmmakers. The lineup also includes "The Settlement" by Mohamed Rashad, "BLKNWS: Terms & Conditions" by Kahlil Joseph, "Where the Night Stands Still" by Liryc Dela Cruz, "The Devil Smokes" by Ernesto Martínez Bucio, "Two Times Joao Liberada" by Paula Tomas Marques, "Eel" by Chu Chun-Teng, "How to Be Normal and the Oddness of the Other World" by Florian Pochlatko and "Little Trouble Girls" by Urska Djukic.

"Mad Bills to Pay" by Joel Alfonso Vargas, "Growing Down" by Balint Daniel Sos, "Punching the World" by Constanze Klaue, "We Believe You" by Arnaud Dufeys and Charlotte Devillers; and "That Summer in Paris" by Valentine Cadic are the other titles.

The 2025 Berlin International Film Festival will be held from February 13-23. (PTI)

# Liverpool beats Lille to reach Champions League round of 16. Barcelona wins 9-goal thriller

**LIVERPOOL, Jan 22:** Liverpool became the first team to guarantee a place in the last 16 of the new Champions League format by beating Lille 2-1 on Tuesday, while Barcelona fought back from two goals down to stun Benfica 5-4 in a thriller.

Harvey Elliott's bouncing, deflected shot gave Liverpool its seventh win from seven games, just after 10-man Lille had equalized following Mohamed Salah's opening goal. Liverpool needed a point at Anfield to be sure of reaching the round of 16 as one of the top eight teams in the league stage, skipping the playoff round for teams ranked ninth to 24th.

Salah raced through in the 34th minute to sweep Liverpool ahead with his 22nd goal in all competitions this season. And when Lille's Aissa Mandi was sent off just before the hour mark, Liverpool looked certain to extend its 100%

record in the league phase.

But Anfield was stunned when Canada striker Jonathan David converted from close range to level the score in the 62nd. It didn't take long for Liverpool to regain the lead through Elliott's deflected effort five minutes later.

"All my life I've dreamt of playing Champions League football, not only for my boyhood club but to play here at Anfield in front of our fans and especially to score, it's kind of a pinch-me moment," Elliott said.

It was a night of high drama in the Champions League with 33 goals scored across nine games. Nine of them came in Barcelona's battle with Benfica.

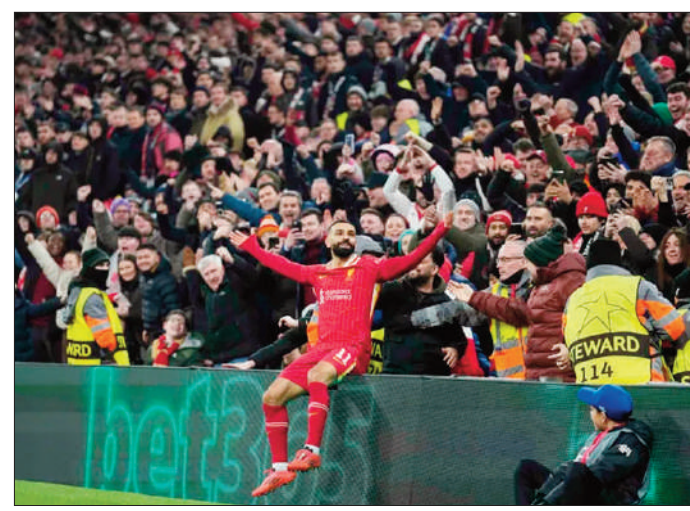
Raphinha scored in stoppage time to complete a rousing comeback as Barcelona won in Lisbon despite having been 4-2 down with less than a quarter of an hour remaining.

Benfica's Vangelis Pavlidis scored the third-fastest hat trick at the start of a Champions League game, with two of his goals coming after errors by Barcelona goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny. Barcelona stays second with 18 points from seven games, and is now unbeaten in six games in all competitions since the new year.

"We came with the mindset that we could turn the game," Raphinha said. "We never gave up and managed to grab a win."

Robert Lewandowski scored two penalties for Barcelona to stay the Champions League's top scorer on nine goals, one ahead of Raphinha, who also scored twice.

Another Spanish club staged a comeback as Julian Alvarez scored a 90th-minute winner to lift Atletico Madrid past Bayer Leverkusen 2-1. Atletico lost Pablo Barrios to a 23rd-minute red card and went into half time 1-0 down



to a Piero Hincapie header for Leverkusen.

Alvarez scored in the 52nd and had the momentum when Hincapie was sent off for a second yellow card, before Alvarez struck again

to take the win and lift Atletico to third.

With Prince William watching on, Aston Villa's hopes of automatic qualification for the round of 16 took a blow after a 1-0 loss to

Monaco.

Villa led the standings early in the league phase of the competition after winning its first three games. But defeat to Monaco left the Premier League club eighth. Wilfried Singo's goal at a corner in the eighth minute was enough to secure the win for ninth-place Monaco.

Borussia Dortmund's 2-1 loss at Bologna increased the pressure on coach Nuri Sahin in Dortmund's fourth consecutive loss at the start of the new year in all competitions. Serhou Guirassy gave Dortmund, last season's runner-up, the lead with a chipped penalty and ran to celebrate with Sahin.

It looked like the Champions League could provide a much-needed boost for a team floundering in the Bundesliga, but two goals in two minutes from Thijs Dallinga and Samuel Iling-Junior changed the game for previously

winless Bologna.

Results elsewhere meant Bologna will be heading out of the competition despite its win, since the Italian club can't finish in the top 24. Sturm Graz and Red Star Belgrade are also out after losing Tuesday. Atalanta beat Graz 5-0, strengthening the Italian club's push to qualify directly for the round of 16. Atalanta finished the evening fourth.

PSV Eindhoven hung on for a 3-2 win at Red Star despite losing defender Flamingo to a red card just after halftime while leading 3-0. Stuttgart eased to a 3-1 win over Slovan Bratislava, which was already eliminated and has lost all seven of its games. Club Brugge and Juventus drew 0-0.

In the only Europa League game of the night, Galatasaray missed a chance to go third in the table, giving up a 3-1 lead to draw 3-3 with last-place Dynamo Kyiv. (AP)

## Dortmund bosses to discuss coach Nuri Sahin's future after yet another defeat

**DORTMUND, Jan 22:** Bologna had never won a game in the Champions League before.

Borussia Dortmund's 2-1 loss to the Italian team Tuesday could be the last for coach Nuri Sahin, who has now overseen four straight defeats this year. Dortmund sporting director Lars Ricken said after the latest loss that the club's bosses will meet Wednesday to discuss how to proceed.

"We need wins. We need results. Now we've won once in nine games," said Ricken, who declined to say the club still had faith in Sahin to turn it around.

"I have a very trusting and good relationship with Nuri. He always has my backing, but of course my statements stand," Ricken said.

Dortmund started 2025 with Bundesliga losses to Bayer Leverkusen (3-2), Holstein Kiel (4-2) and Eintracht Frankfurt (2-0).

Ricken said a decision on Sahin's future would be made before Dortmund — in 10th place in the Bundesliga — hosts Werder Bremen on Saturday.

"We will discuss what is best for Borussia Dortmund and what the solutions are so that we can get back on the path to success," Ricken said.

It's likely to be a painful deci-



sion given the now 36-year-old Sahin's ties to the club.

Sahin was a ball boy at Dortmund before becoming the youngest player to play in the Bundesliga when he made his debut aged 16. He was assistant coach to Edin Terzic last season — when

Dortmund reached the Champions League final, losing to Real Madrid — then promoted in the offseason to coach after Terzic quit.

But Sahin has overseen a noticeable downturn this season.

Former Dortmund player and

coach Matthias Sammer, now employed by the club as an adviser, harshly criticized the team after Tuesday's loss.

"If we look at it analytically, this team is physically and mentally in a state of disrepair," Sammer said. "When you see that (performance)

today, you think the foundation isn't there. Unfortunately the team cannot defend, but it's also unable to attack."

Dortmund only scored through a penalty from Serhou Guirassy in the 15th minute. The Guinea star who joined the club in the offseason is nowhere near replicating the brilliant form he displayed at previous club Stuttgart.

Of his seven goals in the Champions League, four were penalties. In the Bundesliga, he has scored seven goals (including two penalties) in 15 appearances so far this season.

Last season, Guirassy scored 28 goals in 28 Bundesliga games for Stuttgart. Four were penalties.

But Guirassy isn't the only problem. Dortmund has conceded almost as many goals (31) as it has scored (32) in the Bundesliga.

Bologna substitutes Thijs Dallinga and Samuel Iling-Junior scored two goals in two minutes to inflict the team's third loss in the Champions League.

"If a coaching change fixes all the problems, that's absolutely no problem for me," Sahin said afterward. "I'm responsible for the performance we put on. The fact is we've lost four games in a row." (AP)

## Norman says he would win a debate with Woods and McIlroy on LIV making them richer

**NEW YORK, Jan 22:** Greg Norman says he would win a debate with Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy on how Saudi-funded LIV Golf has helped them financially.

And by the sound of his interview with Australian Golf Digest, it wasn't just LIV Golf where the Shark left his teeth marks.

"When I look back on my past 3 1/2 years, from my past 20 years, oh my gosh, I really have changed the game of golf more than what people realize," Norman told the magazine.

He says his tenure with LIV officially ends on Aug. 31. Scott O'Neil, a longtime sports and entertainment executive, has been hired as the new CEO.

Woods and McIlroy were both critical of Norman's combative tone when LIV Golf launched in 2022, backed by the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia that offered enormous bonus money for players to defect to the rival league. Both players said there could be no unification with Norman still involved.

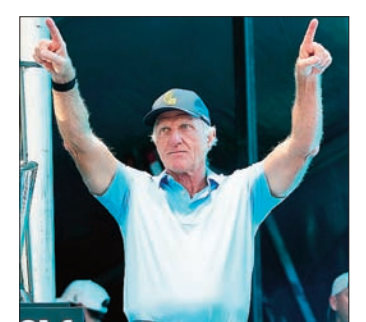
McIlroy said at the end of LIV's first year, "No one is going to talk unless there's an adult in the room that can actually try to mend fences."

Norman said he hasn't watched the indoor TGL backed by McIlroy and Woods because "there's a couple of players who've been very vocal against me."

But then he said he would love to meet with both players to illustrate how they have been helped.

The PGA Tour's response to LIV Golf was to raise prize money with \$20 million signature events and pump more money into the Player Impact Program.

"I would love them to recognize the fact that — like Tiger with his PIP money — that only came because of LIV, right?" Norman said. "So Tiger benefited from that. Rory's definitely benefited from



that. I would love to sit down and talk to them about it, no question about it. Because I'm not a judgmental person and you only learn the facts and truth when you hear the other side of it.

"But, yes, would I like to sit down with them? Sure, absolutely. And you know what? I'd win the debate."

Norman, a two-time British Open champion and the only player to lose all four majors in a playoff following 72 holes, tried to create a world tour some 30 years ago until he lost full support while running into opposition from Arnold Palmer.

That wasn't an issue with the backing of some \$200 billion from the Saudi sovereign wealth fund, PIF and its governor, Yasir Al-Rumayyan, are closing in on a deal to create a minority investor of PGA Tour Enterprises. LIV Golf starts its fourth year next month, and it also has pumped financial support into the Asian Tour.

Norman also referred to TGL as "simulator golf" that will do its part in attracting people to golf.

"Simulator golf is simulator golf. We had putt-putt and all those miniature golf courses we built around the world," he said. "I think innovation is a wonderful thing. I'm not going to belittle that. I wish them all the very best and success because it's the market, right? They're going to be pulling people into the game of golf." (AP)

## Cristiano Ronaldo nets 2 and leads Saudi league in scoring



**DAMMAM (SAUDI ARABIA), Jan 22:** Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice for Al-Nassr in a 3-1 victory over Al-Khaleej on Tuesday to move atop the Saudi Pro League goingscoring standings above Aleksandar Mitrovic and Karim Benzema.

The five-time Ballon D'Or winner fired Al-Nassr into the lead after 65 minutes, finding the net with a low shot from the edge of the area for his 100th goal contribution since joining the Riyadh club in December 2022.

## Erling Haaland loves his massive City contract extension because it is 'a bit unusual'

**PARIS, Jan 22:** Erling Haaland's mammoth contract extension with Manchester City took the soccer world by surprise.

Which suits him just fine.

"Of course it's a bit unusual and it's not normal. But it's something I like. In the end it was an easy choice," Haaland said Tuesday. "I feel so happy, my family is so happy and in the end that's what I really wanted." One of the most lucrative deals in soccer covers 10 years from the start of this season for the 24-year-old Norway striker, who has scored 111 goals in 125 games since joining the club from Borussia Dortmund in 2022.

The deal until 2034 is the longest in the Premier League, with Haaland reportedly earning around 500,000 pounds (\$600,000) per week. The sheer size of it also seems to limit the possibility of him joining an even bigger club like Barcelona or Real Madrid in the years to come, unless one is prepared to pay a fortune.

He's also fine with that.

"In the end I really look forward to spending many more years in Manchester. It's going to be amazing," Haaland said ahead of City's crucial Champions League game against Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday. (AP)

While Al-Khaleej made it 1-1 after 80 minutes, Sultan Al-Ghannam quickly restored the lead for Al-Nassr.

Ronaldo sealed victory eight minutes into stoppage time from close range for his 13th Saudi Pro League goal of the season. He is one ahead of Mitrovic of Al-Hilal and two in front of Benzema of Al-Ittihad. Al-Nassr climbed into third but is 11 points behind Al-Hilal, which later defeated Al-Wehda 4-1 to go three points clear of Al-Ittihad. (AP)

## Mainz signs US midfielder Lennard Maloney from Bundesliga rival Heidenheim

**MAINZ (GERMANY), Jan 22:** German-born U.S. midfielder Lennard Maloney has joined Mainz from Bundesliga rival Heidenheim, where he was dropped last month after expressing his wish to leave.

The 25-year-old Maloney, who had informed Heidenheim he was going to join Mainz when his contract expired at the end of the season, got his wish Tuesday when the clubs agreed on a deal.

"Maloney has been able to prove himself in the Bundesliga over the last year and a half," said Mainz sporting director Niko Bungert said. "His preferred position is as a number six and as a player, he's the perfect fit for Mainz 05. He brings a strong mentality, as well as a willingness to run hard, and is also strong at winning challenges and aerial duels. Lennard will find it easy to fit into our squad with his warm, open

personality."

Maloney signed a contract to 2028.

After 18 rounds of the league, Heidenheim is in the relegation playoff spot while sixth-place Mainz is on course for European qualification.

Heidenheim coach Frank Schmidt said in December he wasn't picking the defensive midfielder because he lacked commitment amid a series of disappointing performances.

"I can only count on players in this phase who are 100% focused on the interests of Heidenheim," Schmidt said. "From a coaching perspective I simply want another focus and another level of performance from my vice-captain."

The Berlin-born Maloney has made two appearances for the United States — both in 2023. (AP)

## Enrique must outwit Guardiola when PSG meets Man City in Champions League

**PARIS, Jan 22:** Luis Enrique credits Pep Guardiola with inventing arguably the "perfect model" of attacking soccer.

He must now outwit him when Paris Saint-Germain faces Manchester City in the Champions League on Wednesday, in a match both teams must win to avoid the prospect of early elimination in the new-look format.

"It's a special game. Not just for the two teams but because I will come across a friend who I shared many great moments with as a player and a person," Enrique said on Tuesday through a translator.

"What brings us closer is our vision of football: To try and be better than the opponent on the ball, to constantly press the opponent. We can fine-tune our game but we have a similar way of seeing things."

Guardiola rose to fame as a coach during a glory era for Barcelona, winning the Champions League twice and multiple other trophies. Guardiola's sides hypnotized opponents with a pulsating brand of attacking soccer led by Lionel Messi that was the envy of Europe. Guardiola then turned City into a Premier League force.

"The 4-3-3 with Barcelona was almost the perfect model. He opened up a different way of playing in England and did so with success, he opened many doors for others," Enrique said. "Pep has innovated throughout his career and is not scared to do so again."

Guardiola won the Champions League again with City in 2023, while Enrique's PSG reached the semifinals last season.

"We were mates in Barcelona and our families are really close friends," Guardiola said. "Our friendship will be eternal. They (Enrique's family) love us (and) I think we have an incredible connection."

Enrique and Guardiola, who both are 54, played together in Barca's midfield from 1996-2001: Enrique the tireless dynamo who scored 109 goals for the club; Guardiola the astute mine-sweeper protecting defense.

As coaches, they are more similar. "If anything can define both Pep and I as coaches (it) is that we like to attack. We like to defend properly but we like to devise our game plan to be better than the opposition," said Enrique, who won the



Champions League with Barca in 2015. "There are a lot of things I must think about when I have my cappuccino tomorrow morning."

Namely that PSG is in danger of going out.

So is City. PSG is 25th out of 36 teams, and City is only one point ahead in 22nd. The bottom 12 are eliminated.

"Everyone has to be ready," Enrique said. "Man City do a lot of things tactically, they switch positions a lot. But we pose a lot of problems. The team that is best prepared or best develops its ideas

will win."

City is turning the corner after a slump that had Guardiola interrogating himself. City has rebounded with 22 goals in the past five games. Attacking midfielder Phil Foden is finding form and prolific striker Erling Haaland has signed a mega-contract until 2034.

"City are also very at ease with a transition game and have very dangerous players in attack," Enrique said. "We will see who makes the most of the possession. We want to keep the ball, it's when you retain possession that you have the most chance of winning."

## Swiatek has not dropped a set so far in the tournament

# Australian Open: Iga Swiatek to face Madison Keys in semifinals

MELBOURNE, Jan 22: Iga Swiatek is dominating her Australian Open opponents the way no one has at Melbourne Park since Maria Sharapova in 2013.

Swiatek's latest lopsided win came via a 6-1, 6-2 score in the quarterfinals against No. 8 seed Emma Navarro on Wednesday.

The No. 2-seeded Swiatek not only has not dropped a set so far in the tournament, but also has lost a grand total of only 14 games as she seeks her first title at Melbourne Park and sixth Grand Slam trophy overall. Sharapova was the last woman to reach the Australian Open semifinals having dropped fewer than 15 games.

"She does everything with 100% conviction and intensity," Navarro said about Swiatek. "She has a different style of movement and play. It's tough to not be sort of affected by that and not feel like, OK, I have to do everything at the same speed that she's doing it." So that was something, for sure, I felt a little bit today."

Swiatek will face No. 19 Madison Keys of the U.S. on Thursday night for a berth in the final. The other women's semifinal is No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka, the two-time defending champion, against her good friend, No. 11 Paula Badosa.

Keys, whose best showing at a major was getting to the title match at the 2017 U.S. Open, was a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 winner against Elina Svitolina and is into her third semifinal in Australia.

"Iga is tough to beat, because she has a lot of spin, kind of naturally, on both sides. She's a good server. She's a good returner. She moves incredibly well," Keys said. "The biggest thing that makes her so difficult to beat is, because she moves so well, if you miss your spot just slightly, she has enough time to recover, and then the point goes back to neutral."



There's an American in the men's semifinals, too: No. 21 Ben Shelton got that far in Melbourne for the first time with an entertaining 6-4, 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (4) win over unseeded Lorenzo Sonego of Italy. Shelton was a semifinalist at the 2023 U.S. Open and now will meet No. 1 Jannik Sinner, the defending champion, on No. 8 Alex de Minaur in that round. Sinner faced de Minaur on Wednesday night.

The other men's semifinal Friday is Novak Djokovic vs. Alexander Zverev.

Against Navarro, Swiatek benefited from a no-call of a double bounce on a point she won in the second set because Navarro con-

tinued playing the point and did not immediately stop to ask for a video review, she wasn't allowed to have the sequence checked.

Either way, Swiatek's dominance was pretty clear, even if she was modest about things afterward.

"Well, I think it was much tougher than the score says," said Swiatek, a 23-year-old from Poland. "Emma's a fighter ... and I wanted to stay focused and keep my intensity."

Swiatek has won four of five career matchups against Keys, 29.

"Madison is a great player and experi-

enced, so you never know," Swiatek said. "I'll be just focused on myself."

Using a new racket this season, Keys is on a 10-match winning streak, including a title at a hard-court tune-up event in Adelaide. Her run to the semifinals in Melbourne includes victories over two past runners-up at the Australian Open, Danielle Collins and Elina Rybakina.

Keys' past losses in the semifinals in Melbourne came against eventual champions Serena Williams in 2015 and Ash Barty in 2022.

"I think I play a little bit smarter for sure ... probably a little bit less fearless," Keys said.

Svitolina, a three-time Slam semifinalist, was in control during the first set. But Keys made some tactical adjustments, including looking for more opportunities to get to the net. She won 23 of the 26 points when she moved forward and ended up with a total of 49 winners, 23 on her powerful forehand side.

The one difficulty Keys had was getting going in her return games. But she finally converted her seventh break chance to lead 4-2 in the second set.

"Getting to the point where I'm starting to appreciate my career for what it has been, and it doesn't have to have a Grand Slam in order for me to look at it and say, I've done a really good job, and I've really left everything out there." Now, while that's obviously still the goal, there have been periods of my career where it felt like if I didn't win one, then I hadn't done enough," Keys said.

"That kind of took a lot of the fun out of the game, and there were times where it felt paralyzing out on the court because it felt as if I needed it to happen, instead of giving myself the opportunity to go out and potentially do it." (AP)

## No one has to tell Rohit what to do, he will get a big one once he gets in: Rahane



MUMBAI, Jan 22: Rohit Sharma doesn't need to be told what to do and he will get a "big one once he gets in", said Mumbai captain Ajinkya Rahane on Wednesday, backing the embattled Indian skipper ahead of his first Ranji Trophy appearance in nearly a decade.

All eyes will be on Rohit and his India opening partner Yashasvi Jaiswal when defending champions Mumbai will take on Jammu and Kashmir here at the BKC Ground on Thursday.

"See, Rohit is Rohit. We all know that. Aapko bhi pata hai Rohit ka character (You also know Rohit's character). I am really happy to have both of them back in the Mumbai dressing room," Rahane told media during Mumbai's training session here on Wednesday.

"Rohit has always been relaxed. Even playing at the international level, his character is similar. His attitude is pretty much relaxed. He knows his game really well so, no one has to tell him what he needs to do.

"Once he gets in, I'm sure he will do well. He has never changed, which is a very good thing," Rahane added.

Form has deserted the 37-year-old Rohit in the past few months with Test losses to New Zealand (at home) and Australia (away) weighing heavily on him currently.

Rahane said every player goes through ups and downs but Rohit has been "really confident."

"What is important is (that) he is hungry, he is determined to do well. I am sure once he gets in, he will get a big one," the veteran, who has shared the Indian dressing room with Rohit, said.

"He batted really well yesterday (in) a couple of sessions so it's part and parcel of a player's career. I am really confident about Rohit."

Rahane, however, said the contest starting on Thursday could be the only match Rohit would play this season.

Rohit will captain India against England in a three-match ODI series starting on February 6 followed by the Champions

Trophy. "I think he's only playing this game; not sure about the next game. His inputs in the next four days will be really important," Rahane said.

Rahane said Jaiswal has shown determination at the highest level which has been the reason for his success in international cricket.

"... (In) the last couple of years, he's been performing well for the Indian team (and) before that, going into the Indian team, he did well for Mumbai as well," he said.

"It's good to have a guy like Yashasvi in the team who is really hungry and determined to score runs. These things will really impact all the youngsters in the dressing room," Rahane added. Rahane lauded both Rohit and Jaiswal for sharing their experiences with the Mumbai teammates.

"As a team, (and) individually, players are going up to them (and) asking questions, learning from them. Once they are on the field, I am sure the players will watch them and they'll learn a lot of things from them," he added.

When asked if Rohit and Jaiswal would open for Mumbai, Rahane quipped "is this even a question?"

"For any cricketer, getting match preparation (and) game-time is really important. Obviously, there is no red-ball (Test) cricket at this moment. But they are going to play white-ball (competitions)," he said.

Rahane, meanwhile, was confident that Mumbai will be able to hit their strides after spending a considerable time in white-ball competitions.

Teams played five Ranji league games before white-ball tournaments -- Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy and Vijay Hazare ODI Trophy -- were conducted. The Ranji season now resumes for its second and final leg.

"The challenge is to adapt quickly as a team because everyone has been playing white-ball cricket since last one-and-a-half-months. For us as a team, it's important to be in the moment, focus on our strengths," Rahane said. (PTI)

## Bumrah continues to top ICC Test ranking for bowlers

DUBAI, Jan 22: India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah continuation to remain the undisputed No. 1 Test bowler, while Ravindra Jadeja maintained his top spot in the all-rounders' category, in the latest ICC rankings released on Wednesday.

Bumrah, who had made history ahead of the fifth and final Border-Gavaskar Test against Australia in January by recording the highest-ever ICC Rankings rating for an Indian bowler at 907 points, is currently on a career-best points tally of 908.

Australia's Pat Cummins (841) and South Africa's Kagiso Rabada (837) are placed second and third respectively.

Pakistan's Noman Ali (761) broke into the top-10 after an impressive six-wicket haul in the first Test against the West Indies in Multan.

There was no movement to the top-10 all-rounders list in the Test format, with Jadeja (400 ratings points) retaining the top spot, followed by South Africa's Marco Jansen (294) and Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan (263). (PTI)

## MI Cape Town close in on maiden SA20 playoffs spot after Kingsmead washout

DURBAN, Jan 22: MI Cape Town took another step towards securing their first-ever SA20 playoffs spot after their match against Durban's Super Giants at Kingsmead was washed out here.

The visitors took two points, which put them level on points with Paarl Royals at the top of the table. The Royals, however, retain the first place having picked up more wins.

Durban's Super Giants, meanwhile, remain rooted to the bottom of the table with eight points after Tuesday's abandoned match.

Last season's runners-up Durban's Super Giants now face a virtual must-win scenario moving forward if they are to qualify for the playoffs.

The match started with Super Giants' captain Keshav Maharaj winning the toss and electing to bowl first.

MI Cape Town opens Ryan Rickelton and Rassie van der Dussen took their team to 34 in just four overs before the former (18 off nine balls) chopped a length delivery from Junior Dala onto his stumps.

Van der Dussen (35 not out, 3x4s, 1x6) maintained the momentum even after the loss of Reeza Hendricks (8) and Colin Ingram (1), who were both caught on the boundary while attempting to sweep spinners Maharaj and Noor Ahmad, respectively.

MI Cape Town promoted captain Rashid Khan to No. 5, and the skipper duly belted a boundary over the covers before the heavens opened up. (PTI)

## KSAFCC shines in Assam Youth League 2025

HT Bureau  
DIPHU, Jan 22: The ongoing Assam Youth League 2025, hosted by the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) at the KASA Stadium, has seen a dominant performance by the host team, KASA Football Coaching Centre (KSAFCC), in both the Under-17 and Under-15 categories.

Organised by the Assam Football Association (AFA), the tournament, which commenced on January 11, will conclude on February 3.

In the Under-17 Group A matches, KSAFCC has emerged as a strong contender, securing 9 points after four group-stage games.

They kicked off their campaign with an emphatic 20-0 victory against Harvest Sports Club (HSC) on January 11, showcasing their dominance.

Their second match on January 16 saw them defeat Pragotyishpur Football Club (PJP) with a 5-1 scoreline.

However, KSAFCC faced a setback in their third match on January 17 against SAI, Guwahati, losing 0-7. Despite the defeat, standout performances from players such as



Archim Hanse, Kaiding Timung, Mirlong Englung, Rosan Dungleung, and Sasang Hengna have kept the team's spirits high.

Group A comprises eight teams: Pragotyishpur Football Club, Guwahati (PJP); Jorhat Town Club (JTC), Harvest Sports Club (HSC), KSAFCC; SAI, Guwahati; Lennuol FC (LFC), Guwahati Town Club (GTC), and Poynt

Sports Academy (PSA).

In the Under-15 Group A category, KSAFCC has also made a promising start.

In their first match on January 19, they defeated Numaligarh Refinery Limited Football Academy (NRL) 3-1.

The team is set to play their second match on Thursday against BNKFC.

Group A in the Under-15 category includes teams such as BNKFC, Dulijan FCC, Immortal Warriors FC, Tezpur, KSAFCC, NRL, Silchar Football Academy, and Morning FC.

With strong performances in both categories, KSAFCC is on a promising trajectory, strengthening their reputation in the Assam Youth League 2025.

USA captain Anika Kolan led the charge with the bat, shoring their innings with an unbeaten 46 off 42 balls.

Bangladesh outlasted Scotland in Group D after managing 121/9 and then restricting the opponents to 103/8 in the allotted overs.

Captain Sumaiya Akter top-scored for Bangladesh with an unbeaten 29 off 36 deliveries. She was supported by Afia Ashima Era (21 off 19) and Juairiya Ferdous (20 off 32).

Scotland were courageous in their chase with Pippa Sproul scoring a 41-ball 43 but they couldn't get over the line.

In another match, New Zealand sealed a 67-run win against tournament newcomers Samoa. (PTI)

## Big wins for England, Australia in U19 Women's T20 World Cup

JOHOR (MALAYSIA), Jan 22: Opener Davina Perrin smashed a fine half-century and Trudy Johnson put up a fine all-round show as England crushed the United States of America (USA) by eight wickets to climb to the top of Pool B in the U19 Women's T20 World Cup, here Wednesday.

Bangladesh, New Zealand and Australia were the other winners on the day. Bangladesh overcame Scotland by 18 runs, New Zealand defeated Samoa by 67 runs, while Australia were menacing in their 83-run win over Nepal.

England flexed their muscle by chasing down 120 in 14.2 overs with opener Perrin scoring a 45-ball 74, studded with nine boundaries and three sixes.

Johnson hit an unbeaten 44 after taking two wickets for 17 runs. Prisha Thanawala (2/20) also contributed

in restricting USA to 119/5.

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In another match, New Zealand sealed a 67-run win against tournament newcomers Samoa. (PTI)

## AB de Villiers hints at comeback, says wants to play casual cricket somewhere

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 22: AB de Villiers wants to play "real cricket" again. Not in the high-pressure environment of IPL but somewhere "casual" to have a bit of fun and please his children. De Villiers retired from all of forms of cricket in November 2021 to spend more time with his family. The 40-year-old former South Africa captain is now involved with multiple projects in charity and broadcasting.

He is also the brand ambassador of the ongoing SA20. But in a chat with Melinda Farrell on her Youtube channel, de Villiers let it slip that he wishes to play the game again.

"I might still play cricket one day. No confirmation whatsoever. My kids are putting me under a bit of pressure and I feel like I could go to the nets with them," de Villiers said referring his three children --

two sons Abraham and John, and daughter Yente.

"My boy could feel me bowling machine balls... maybe I will walk out and play a bit of casual cricket somewhere," he added.

De Villiers hinted at playing proper cricket outside the lens of professional leagues like the IPL.

"I am talking on a more serious note, actually, of playing some real cricket not professional IPL or SA20 stuff but who knows? I have had my fair share (of high pressure cricket), that's done," he said.

A slight challenge to that ambition is his eye sight, especially the "bit blurry" left one.

"...this right one is the dominant one, it is working fine. I am doing it for my kids and see if I can go out there and enjoy cricket again. Even if it is very casual and see where we draw the line. (PTI)

## There was a sense of fear during rehab, but I've crossed that phase: Shami

KOLKATA, Jan 22: Seasoned India pacer Mohammed Shami has revealed that he was gripped by a sense of fear when he began his rehabilitation after a long injury layoff, but managed to overcome that phase by training his mind to stay focussed on the national comeback.

Shami was sidelined after the lost ODI World Cup final against Australia in November 2023 due to an ankle injury that required surgery. The recovery from that was followed by a swelling on his left knee during the domestic comeback some weeks back.

Following his inclusion in India's Champions Trophy squad, his return has garnered national attention. He is also in the squad for the five-match T20I series against England beginning here later this evening.

"I waited for an entire year and I worked very hard (to get back to full fitness). There was a sense of fear (of getting injured during rehabilitation) even while running," Shami said in a video



Shami was gripped by a sense of fear when he began his rehabilitation after a long injury layoff, but managed to overcome that phase by training his mind to stay focussed on the national comeback.

habilitation and then make a comeback," he added.

The cricketer, however, said an athlete is far more determined after deaking with an injury.

"When you go through injuries, I feel you grow stronger as an athlete, this is what I feel. Because you have to repeat a lot of things while being mentally strong."

Shami went through the domestic grind, representing his home state Bengal in the Ranji Trophy, Syed Mushtaq and Vijay Hazare but a swelling in his knee finally ruled him out of the five-match Border-Gavaskar Test series in Australia.

On his competitive return in the Ranji Trophy, he guided Bengal to their first win of the season with a seven-wicket haul.

He followed it up with impressive performances in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (11 wickets) and the Vijay Hazare Trophy (five wickets). Shami's T20I career has been sporadic,

with just 23 appearances since his debut in 2014. His last outing in the format was against England in the 2022 T20 World Cup semifinal.

The 34-year-old said he has overcome the setbacks and is raring to go.

"Whatever is done, is done. I have crossed that (injury) phase. If you work hard you will get the results. That's what I believe in. If you get injured you have to make a comeback for your team for your country. So fight and grow," he said.

"If you are strong and believe in yourself and you have confidence in your abilities, have self-belief, then I don't think you will find any difference. Confidence is important for any task," he added.

Shami said he concentrated on improving his skills with a lot of focus on fitness during his rehabilitation.

"The rhythm is very important. Everything in life has a flow. Whatever it is, your fitness, mindset and skill is important for bowling," he explained. (PTI)