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# Implement north-east peace accords in letter and spirit: Dilip Saikia

Dozen plus accords signed in the past decade with insurgent groups ● Back and forth in Lok Sabha



**NEW DELHI, Feb 11:** BJP member Dilip Saikia on Tuesday urged the government to implement peace accords signed with several extremist outfits in the northeastern region in letter and spirit.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, Saikia said the government has signed more than 12 peace accords with various insurgent groups in the northeast over the past decade.

He claimed that there has been a decline in insurgency related incidents and in casualties of the security forces and civilians.

"I demand that the peace accords be implemented 100 per cent on letter and spirit," Saikia said.

Congress leader Manickam Tagore wanted Railways Minister Ashwini

Vaishnav to take steps to improve safety and security of women passengers of trains. He cited a recent incident of a pregnant woman thrown off a moving train by a man during an attempt to sexually molest her.

Congress member Manish Tewari expressed outrage over return of illegal Indian immigrants from the US in handcuffs.

"The illegal immigrants are not criminals or terrorists. They had only gone abroad to earn a living. Will they be brought back in handcuffs?" Tewari asked. He said there were 7.25 lakh undocumented Indians in the US of which 24,000 were in custody of the American authorities.

Tewari said 487 illegal immigrants have been handed over final deportation

orders of which 287 have been identified as Indian nationals.

BJP member Parshottam Rupala demanded that the Centre and the Gujarat government devise a scheme to ensure that the children of workers employed in the diamond sector in Surat do not face difficulties in education and healthcare due to recession in the industry.

Rupala, a former Union Minister, said that several workers in the diamond industry were facing hardships due to recession in the sector.

BJP member Hemant Savra demanded security, maintenance and public utility facilities at various historical forts in his Palghar constituency. Congress member Varsha Gaikwad demanded that the government re-instate railway concession

# China constructing world's largest dam on Brahmaputra raises serious concerns: Gaurav



**NEW DELHI, Feb 11:** The Brahmaputra is the lifeline of Assam and China's recent decision to construct the world's largest dam over it raises serious concerns about the country's water security, Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said in Parliament on Tuesday.

Speaking during Zero Hour in Lok Sabha, Gogoi said he has written to both Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar regarding the disproportionate control of China over the water flow in the Brahmaputra, which is a major strategic asset of India.

"The Brahmaputra is the lifeline of Assam and a major strategic asset of India. China's recent decision to construct the world's largest dam across the Yarlung Zangbo-Brahmaputra raises serious concerns about India's water security," he said.

The deputy leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha demanded that water-sharing and management be a key component of India's diplomatic engagement with China, especially at the level of the prime minister, the National Security Adviser (NSA) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

"We must have an agreement that China must always share hydrological data supporting flood

forecasting and management. My question is, did this government know that China is constructing such a dam, and what has this government done to raise this issue at the international forum?" he asked.

The Union government has "taken note" of China's announcement of a mega-dam project on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo river in the Tibet Autonomous Region, the Centre informed Parliament on February 6.

Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh, in a written response to a query in Rajya Sabha, also said various issues relating to trans-border rivers are discussed with China under the ambit of an "institutionalised Expert Level Mechanism," which was established in 2006, as well as through diplomatic channels.

The ministry was asked whether China's decision to construct a hydropower dam on the Brahmaputra River, which flows into India and Bangladesh, has raised concerns about its potential impact on millions of people living downstream.

"The Government of India has taken note of China's announcement of a mega-dam project approved on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo (upper reaches of the Brahmaputra) River in the Tibet (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Tribunal reviews ULFA's 'Unlawful Association' status, next hearing on March 4

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Feb 11:** The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal, chaired by Justice Michael Zothankhuma, recently convened a meeting to review the status of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) as an unlawful association under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The said meeting was held on January 28, 2025.

Legal representatives from the Government of India and the state of Assam, alongside officials from the Home and Political Department, Assam Police, and the Judicial Department, participated in the proceedings.

After reviewing the ministry's evidence and considering an adjournment request from the

Assam Government, the Tribunal directed that a notice under Section 4(2) be served to ULFA and its affiliates, requiring a response within 30 days. The notice was disseminated via registered post, newspaper publications, and public announcements.

The next Tribunal hearing is scheduled for March 4, 2025, at 3:00 PM in Court No. 2 (Old Block), Guwahati High Court.

The Government of India had earlier issued a Gazette notification on November 25, 2024, declaring ULFA an unlawful association due to security concerns.

A subsequent notification on December 23, 2024, led to the Tribunal's formation to assess the validity of this declaration.

# Himanta meets Singapore President, discusses state's role in strengthening ties



**GUWAHATI, Feb 11:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday met Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and held discussions on the state's role in strengthening India's ties with the Asian country.

The Chief Minister's Office in a post on X said that Sarma, who is on a two-day visit to Singapore,

called upon Shanmugaratnam and discussed different issues, especially on the upcoming Advantage Assam 2.0 investment summit.

"It was a great honour to meet the President of Singapore, H.E @Tharman\_S, today. Our discussions covered ongoing collaborative projects, with a special emphasis on Assam's role as a key

pillar in the India-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," he said on the microblogging site.

Sarma also recalled Shanmugaratnam's visit to Assam in 2022 and shared the fond memories.

"We deeply appreciate Singapore's partnership in #Advantage-Assam2 and look forward to strengthening our collaboration in emerging sectors such as semiconductors, green energy, and advanced technology," he added.

Later, Sarma met Singaporean Foreign Affairs Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and the discussion focused on strengthening Assam's existing ties with the foreign nation under India's Act East Policy.

"We spoke on deepening the existing partnership between the State of Assam and the Republic of Singapore under the overall framework of India's Act East Policy," he added. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# 'Everything is in BJP high command's hand': Manipur MLAs on selection of new CM

**IMPHAL, Feb 11:** Manipur BJP MLAs Sapam Keba and K Ibomcha on Tuesday said that the party high command will decide on the new chief minister of the state.

The two BJP MLAs, who held a meeting with BJP Northeast in-charge Sambit Patra at a hotel in Imphal on Tuesday afternoon, said they requested the Centre to make efforts to restore peace in the strife-torn state.

Upon being asked by waiting journalists about the selection of a new chief minister, Sapam Keba said, "Everything will be decided by the high command. We urged the Centre through Patra to find ways to restore normalcy in the state. Within a couple of days, the Centre will decide on what things need to be done."

When asked if there is any time frame for the selection of a new chief minister, Keba said, "We didn't have any discussion on that."

Ibomcha said, "Everything is in the hand of the Centre. We cannot make any comment. We were here to make a courtesy call. The only thing we requested him is to bring peace to the state." Patra also met state Forest Minister Th Bishwajit separately at the hotel.

Patra, who has been camping in Imphal since N Biren Singh resigned from the post of chief minister on February 9, had held separate closed-door meetings



with several MLAs, ministers and Speaker Thokchom Satyabrata on Monday.

Restoration of peace in the strife-torn state was discussed during the Monday meetings, while the issue of selecting a new chief minister was "hardly deliberated upon", party sources said.

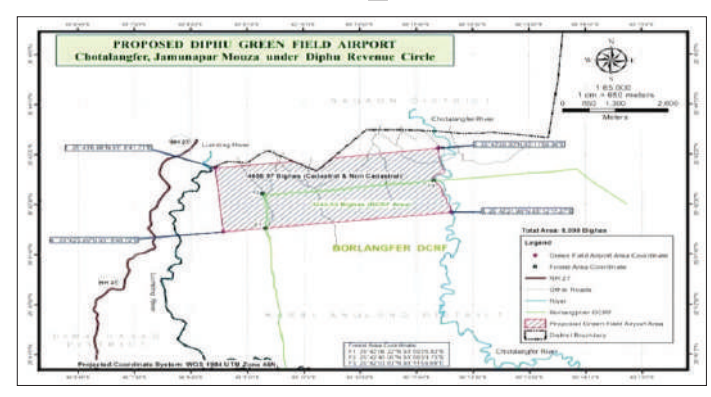
"Most of the closed-door meetings on Monday were focussed on restoring normalcy and ending the conflict," a BJP leader told PTI on condition of anonymity. "The issue of selecting a new chief minister was hardly discussed," another source close to a minister who attended (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Union Ministry of Civil Aviation confirms greenfield airport in KA

**HT Correspondent**  
**KHERONI, Feb 11:** The Union Ministry of Civil Aviation has received a proposal for the construction of a greenfield airport in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, situated just 61 kilometres from Dimapur Airport, marking a significant step toward enhancing air connectivity and economic growth in the northeastern region. The union minister of state for civil aviation, Murlidhar Mohol, disclosed the development on recently while responding to an unstarred question raised by MP Upendra Kushwaha in the Rajya Sabha.

Mohol highlighted that the Government of India has granted in-principle approval for 21 new greenfield airports across the country, with 12 already operationalised.

As defined by the minister, a greenfield airport refers to infrastructure built entirely from scratch



on undeveloped land, emphasising its role in expanding aviation networks without existing constraints.

The proposed airport in Diphu, Karbi Anglong, has advanced significantly, with consultants SRV Techno Engineering Pvt Ltd & DSDNA (New Delhi) submitting the final Detailed Project Report (DPR) to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council's (KAAC)

Chief Executive Member (CEM), Tuliram Ronghang.

The Assam government has already acquired the necessary land for the project, which was facilitated by the KAAC.

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has been entrusted with soil investigation and topographical surveys, with 90% of the allocated funds for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# CEM interaction promises developmental schemes

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Feb 11:** In the ongoing CEM Interaction Programme, an interaction programme was held at Poisa Engti village under Langhin Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituency promising land pattas, school, bridge and office.

Addressing the meeting, the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang made a promise to provide land pattas free of cost to those who yet to get them provided a school at Upper Salavor namely Eklavya School with an estimated cost of ₹ 50 crore. A bridge will be built between Poisa Engti and Dantaghat which has been a long-standing demand of the villagers. The CEM further promised that land would be allotted to build the office of Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) Zonal Committee office. The programme was also attended by MLAs, Darsing Ronghang and Bidya Sing Engleng; local MAC Bili Mohon Khaklary and other KAAC officers.

# The US is world's largest consumer of plastic, oil and gas World must explore solutions to environmental crises without relying on US: Experts

**NEW DELHI, Feb 11:** US President Donald Trump's decision to abandon efforts to curb plastic pollution has raised concerns among experts, who warn that the global progress in tackling the crisis could slow down and suggest the world must now look for solutions without relying on the United States.

Trump, who had already withdrawn the US from the Paris climate agreement, signed an executive order on Monday reversing restrictions on plastic straws, declaring, "Paper straws don't work."

But the move is about more than just straws. It signals a broader setback in the global fight against plastic pollution, especially as countries are negotiating a legally-binding treaty to address the crisis.



According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the world produces more than 430 million tonnes of plastic every year, two-thirds of which are short-lived products that soon become

waste, polluting oceans and even entering the human food chain.

If no urgent action is taken, the global plastic waste could nearly triple to 1.2 billion tonnes by 2060. Chandrabhushan, president and CEO of policy think tank International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology, said Trump's stance is unsurprising. "The US under Trump will walk away from every environmental negotiation. The US is the world's largest consumer of plastic, oil and gas. Under Trump, the progress made in the past 20 years on climate change, plastic pollution and biodiversity conservation will be lost," he said.

He added that rebuilding global trust and momentum will take at least a decade after Trump's tenure. "The US has always been the biggest obstacle in intergovernmental negotiations, whether on climate change, biodiversity loss or plastic (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# PM woos investors in energy sector, says India offers many possibilities in next 5 years

**NEW DELHI, Feb 11:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday invited global investments in India's energy sector, saying the country offers immense possibilities in its pursuit of ambitious renewable energy transition goals in the next five years. Referring to the target of having 500 GW of renewable energy, 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen per annum output by 2030 as well as the launch of fresh bidding rounds for oil and gas assets, the prime minister said "there are possibilities of new investments and I hope that you explore all possibilities in India."

"There are many possibilities of investment in these sectors," Modi said addressing the India Energy Week 2025 (IEW'25) virtually. "You are not just a part of India energy week, you are an important part of India's energy ambitions," Modi told investors.

He further said, "All experts are saying that 21st century is India's century. Bharat is not only driving it's own growth but driving global growth."

India's energy ambitions, he said, are based on five pillars. "We have resources which we are harnessing. We are encouraging our brilliant minds to innovate. Thirdly, we have economic strength and political stability," he said.

Also, he said, India has strategic geography which



makes energy trade easier and more attractive.

Besides, India is committed towards global sustainability and this is aiding new possibilities in the country's energy sector, the prime minister said.

For Viksit Bharat, the next two decades are very crucial, he said, adding that in the next five years we will cross many milestones. "Our energy goals are aligned with the deadline of 2030," he said. By 2030, we want to add 500 GW of RE capacity, Indian Railways will be net zero (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



















# SANYA MALHOTRA REVEALS HER 'RED FLAGS' IN RELATIONSHIPS

**NEW DELHI, Feb 11:** Actor Sanya Malhotra, who is garnering rave reviews for her latest release "Mrs", says while relationships demand numerous compromises, there are certain "red flags" such as disrespect and gaslighting that she would never overlook.

"Mrs" stars Malhotra as Richa, an aspiring dancer who is married off in a patriarchal family where she is reduced to doing household chores but ultimately resists her oppression.

Directed by Arati Kadav of "Cargo" fame and adapted from the hit Malayalam film "The Great Indian Kitchen", the movie is streaming on ZEE5. The actor, also known for films like "Dangal", "Pagglait", and "Kathal - A Jackfruit Mystery", said she has great men like her brother-in-law and friends around her.

"A relationship requires many compromises... There are major red flags which I will avoid like having no respect at all and if somebody is constantly gaslighting me, then no, or someone who's not ready to listen. These are my major red flags,"

Malhotra told PTI in an interview here. Easy communication is a "green flag" for her, she said.

"... When I'm able to communicate any thought that comes up in my head... It shouldn't be like I'm not comfortable talking to my partner about this. An easy, free flowing communication is a green flag. I like to communicate, I love talking... I can talk about my emotions, my career all the time," she added.

As someone who is a public figure, Malhotra said she wants to keep some aspects of her life just to herself.

Unlike other people in the film industry, the 32-year-old isn't a fan of the "hustle culture".

"Hustle culture in this industry... We celebrate it, romanticise it, and we also glorify it. Our industry does that 'Oh! We are ready to die on set!' or that 'We will spend all our life in front of the camera', which I don't believe in. So many people work with that intention. Not a lot of people have that balance in their lives. It becomes a bit difficult to navigate when I want to focus on my personal life, not

just my work. "If I want to grow as an actor, I want to live my life beyond the set. I also want to meet new people who are not from the film industry, who are not connected to this at all, to learn something new. But it's difficult because there is no timetable in our industry. People are working on Saturdays-Sundays, until 12 am, constantly and they are also glorifying that sort of behaviour." At times, Malhotra said one has to really put their "foot down".

"... Like 'I do not work on Saturdays-Sundays' or 'I will not reply to your message after 10-11 pm'. That's important to do... I also want my team to enjoy Saturdays-Sundays, I feel one must get at least two days in a week to have fun and enjoy and then come back to work feeling good," she added. "Mrs", also starring Nishant Dahiya and Kanwaljit Singh, is based on 2021's "The Great Indian Kitchen" directed by Jeo Baby. Malhotra will next be seen in "Sunny Sanskar Ki Tulsi Kumari", "Toaster", and director Anurag Kashyap's currently untitled film. (PTI)



## Trouble mounts for Ranveer Allahbadia: YouTube blocks controversial episode, issue raised in Parliament

**NEW DELHI, Feb 11:** A day after he hit the spotlight with a comment on parents and sex, trouble mounted for influencer Ranveer Allahbadia on Tuesday with Mumbai police at his doorstep, YouTube pulling down the episode of "India's Got Latent" and the issue being raised in Parliament.

The internet personality, with over 16 million followers across social media platforms, landed in soup after the clip with his comments started making the rounds on social media on Monday and led to a massive debate on freedom of speech and what constitutes decency. Allahbadia tried to defuse the situation by issuing a video apology where he called his comment a "lapse in judgment," but the issue has refused to die down.

Raising the matter in Parliament during Zero Hour, Shiv Sena MP Naresh Mhaske called for a law to regulate social media. He said there was a need to enact a law to regulate social media platforms where influencers are posting "all kinds of nonsense" in the name of freedom of speech.

The inappropriate things they said yesterday should be censored. There should be censorship on influencers' content, and today I also raised this issue in Parliament, suggesting that action should be taken against them. If such individuals continue to spread negativity, action should be taken against them," Mhaske told PTI.

The National Commission for Women (NCW) on Tuesday expressed strong concern and asked Allahbadia, Samay Raina, Apoorva Makhija, Jaspreet Singh, and Ashish Chanchalani, as well as the show's producers Tushar Poojari and Saurabh Bothra, to appear before it on February 17 in New Delhi. The summons came after Women and Child Development Minister Annapurna Devi said her ministry will seek a report from the NCW in this regard. The NCW also urged Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav to take immediate regulatory measures to address the prevalence of obscene content on various over-the-top (OTT) platforms and social media streaming sites. Following orders from the government, YouTube India has blocked the episode in which the controversial comment was made. (PTI)



## 'Suzhal - The Vortex' season 2 to premiere on Prime Video on February 28

**NEW DELHI, Feb 11:** Tamil series "Suzhal - The Vortex" will return for its second season on Prime Video on February 28, the streaming platform announced on Tuesday.

The new chapter of the award-winning show, written and created by Pushkar and Gayatri, set against the backdrop of the Ashtakaali festival, an annual festival held in the fictional village of Kaalipattanam in Tamil Nadu. Kathir and Aishwarya Rajesh are returning in lead roles in the second season of "Suzhal - The Vortex", which is directed by Brama and Sarjun KM and produced by Pushkar and Gayatri's Wallwatcher Films. "The new installment picks up from the momentous climax of season one, with Nandini (Aishwarya) staring at an uncertain future in prison, while Sakkarai (Kathir) reaches a mystifying village with a sinister history. But an unexpected murder casts a dark shadow on the village and its natives, spreading far and wide," read the official synopsis.

Pushkar and Gayatri, who also serve as producers on the series, said "Suzhal - The Vortex" delves deeper into an even darker, mysterious, and absorbing crime that is entangled with the lives of the natives of a fictional village and the visually vibrant festival of Ashtakaali.

"Under the masterful direction of Brama and Sarjun, the spectacular performances by Kathir, Aishwarya, and Lal, and the ensemble cast that includes an eclectic mix of experienced and fresh talent, the series highlights the versatility of local storytelling that can appeal to a wider audience." "We are delighted to collaborate with Prime Video to build on the franchise, as they not only empower creators while offering a much larger canvas for their creative vision but are also instrumental in showcasing content to a global audience through their service," they said in a joint statement.

Nikhil Madhok, Head of Originals, Prime Video, India, said the first season of "Suzhal - The Vortex" is a great testament to local stories breaking through at a global level, and winning appreciation from viewers and critics alike. "We're thrilled to bring a second season of this clutter-breaking series, as we build on this very successful collaboration with Wallwatcher Films. Experts at what they do, Pushkar and Gayatri are adept in crafting compelling narratives in the thriller-mystery genre with such rich cultural nuances, and we're confident that the second season too will delight our audiences," Madhok added. (PTI)

## NOT EASY FOR TV ACTORS TO GET INTO FILMS, NEED TO STILL PROVE THEMSELVES: RASHMI DESAI

**MUMBAI, Feb 11:** Popular TV star Rashmi Desai says small screen actors still find it tough to make it to the film industry as they have to convince filmmakers to see them in different roles, which can be a challenge.

Desai, known for starring in popular daily soaps such as "Uttaran" and "Dil Se Dil Tak" as well as reality show "Bigg Boss", said things have improved for better but not much.

"Earlier it was very difficult and even now it's not very easy to get into films. I'll be very honest because it is difficult to convince the other person (producer) as there are too many things that are involved at the end in the making of a film.

"The best way is to audition, but sometimes that also becomes a very lengthy process. After working for so many years, you need to prove yourself, prove that you are best," Desai told PTI.

"In TV, you have your commitment every day with your audience, when you're doing a reality show. As an actor, you want to go and convince people that I really want to try something new but it becomes a lengthy process," she added.

Despite the struggles, Desai said she is grateful for good projects she

has been a part of, including the feature film "Hisaab Barabar", in which she shares screen space with R Madhavan.

"Hisaab Barabar" is a satirical drama film, which was released on streaming service ZEE5 recently.

It revolves around Radhe Mohan Sharma (Madhavan), a railway ticket checker who uncovers a small discrepancy in his bank account. It soon leads to a dangerous journey filled with fraud, deceit and corruption.

Desai, who earlier had a cameo appearance in "Dabangg 2", and also acted in Gujarati films like "Supertar" and "Mom Tane Nai Samaj", essays the role of Madhavan's neighbour in the movie.

"My character is different, she is a practical person... In this film, I've grey mindset, and they've shown it in a beautiful and comic way. I have really wanted to do a comedy for a long time, and I'm glad I got to play this role," she said.

Also starring Kirti Kulhari and Neil Nitin Mukesh, "Hisaab Barabar" is directed by Ashwini Dhir.

The film, which was released in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu, is produced by Jio Studios and SP Cinecorp. (PTI)



### Complaint filed against Allahbadia in Indore over 'obscene' comments

**INDORE (MP), Feb 11:** A complaint was filed at a police station here on Tuesday against social media influencer Ranveer Allahbadia over his 'obscene and vulgar' comments in comedian Samay Raina's YouTube reality show "India's Got Latent", the police said. No First Information Report (FIR) has been registered yet, said Tukoganj police station in-charge Jitendra Singh Yadav. The complaint was filed by Aman Malviya, a local lawyer, Yadav told PTI. "No case has been registered. The complaint will be investigated and after that appropriate action will be taken," he said. Malviya said Allahbadia, Raina and other celebrities who featured in the show crossed all limits of indecency by misusing the freedom of expression. A few other lawyers also accompanied Malviya to the police station, demanding action against Allahbadia and Raina, and a ban on the show. Allahbadia, 31, stirred a major controversy with distasteful comments on parents and sex on Raina's show that went viral on social media on Monday. (PTI)

# Mumbai City look to prevail over FC Goa and move up in ISL points table

**MUMBAI, Feb 11:** Unbeaten in 13 matches against FC Goa in the Indian Super League (ISL), Mumbai City FC would look to prevail over their west coast rivals and move up to top-four in the points table in a crucial game here on Wednesday.

The Islanders will aim to extend their stranglehold against the Gaurs as their impressive unbeaten record in previous 13 ISL encounters includes eight wins and five draws.

A triumph on Wednesday will have Mumbai City cap off the league double over FC Goa for the fourth time, having done so earlier in 2017-18, 2021-22, and 2022-23.

FC Goa are placed second in the points table with 36 points from 19 matches, winning 10 games and drawing six. However, they faced their first away loss of the season when Jamshedpur FC beat the side 3-1 earlier this month.

As the ISL nears its business end, both these sides have different objectives coming into this match. FC Goa are 10 points behind the top-placed Mohun Bagan Super Giant (46), but their key objective right now is to safeguard their standing in the second spot.

A second place finish will mean that they qualify straight for the semi-finals and would not have to play the single-legged eliminator in the play-offs. For that, they would have to fend off competition from the third-placed Jamshedpur FC (34), with both sides having played the same number of games (19).

Mumbai City, fifth in the



standings, have 31 points from 19 matches and they will move up to top four if they win on Wednesday. Their nearest challengers, NorthEast United FC have accumulated 29 points from 20 games. The home side will want to avoid any late slips to secure a place in the top six. Furthermore, the contest on Wednesday can have a huge im-

portance on the eventual title race. If FC Goa lose against Mumbai City, and Mohun Bagan Super Giant beat Kerala Blasters away on February 15, the Mariners will become the ISL 2024-25 League winners.

The two teams have played 27 matches against each other in the ISL, with Mumbai City winning 12 times and FC Goa

emerging victorious in seven games. Eight games have produced draws.

Mumbai City FC head coach Petr Kratky laid out the way he wants his team to approach the match against FC Goa.

"We want to keep the ball, be creative, and be dynamic and we need to continue working hard for that," he said.

FC Goa head coach Manolo Marquez refused to look too far ahead in the league stages at the moment.

"The most important thing for us right now is the next game, and not the ones that follow. It doesn't matter what happened in the past. We need to consider the circumstances around this match," he said. (PTI)

## Consistency and Candidates qualification on Vaishali's wish-list for 2025

**NEW DELHI, Feb 11:** Unbothered by the drama over a handshake, focussed on being more consistent and determined to secure a spot in the Candidates -- R Vaishali has her priorities sorted for 2025 and the Indian Grandmaster says she would not let anything distract her from those goals.

The past year has already proven to be a remarkable chapter in the 23-year-old's career, with a series of career-defining milestones. These include becoming only the third woman from India to earn the Grandmaster title, playing a vital role in the country's gold medal-winning performance at the Chess Olympiad, and clinching a bronze medal at the World Blitz Championship.

"My main goal is to show consistent performance and play some good games," the 23-year-old told PTI. A slight blip came recently when she finished ninth in the Tata Steel Chess Tournament's challengers' section.

More than the performance, she hit the headlines for a declined handshake with Uzbek Grandmaster Nodirbek Yakubboev. Following a wave of criticism, Yakubboev apologised to her with chocolate and flowers for refusing to shake hands due to his religious beliefs before a match between the two.

"I didn't know it was a big thing back in India. I was focused on the games and didn't know what was going on in the social media," she said of the episode.

"Later I got to know, and okay, we all know what happened. It didn't affect me in any way," she added. What did affect her was her

inability to latch on to chances at the tournament.

"Tata Steel is a strong tournament, and I think my performance was decent," she said.

"Surely I could have scored a few points more, like I had some good positions, I failed to convert them, which I'll work on and try to improve. Going forward, I want to focus on showing more consistent performance."

The Women's Candidates Tournament determines the challenger for the World Chess Championship. The next edition is to be held in 2026 with the qualification process set for this year in which rankings will be of significance.

"Of course, by the end of the year, I aim to qualify for the Candidates Tournament. I had the opportunity to play in the Candidates last year, and I hope to qualify for it again," she said. Reflecting on her bronze at the Blitz World Championship last year, Vaishali said the result was important for her confidence, following some disappointing results. "It was an important result for my confidence especially, because I had a few bad tournaments in a row and it was nice to end finally with a good result last year," she said in a rather a modest assessment of her performance.

Vaishali endured her fair share of lows that cost her valuable rating points but she views these challenges as valuable learning experiences.

"I would say it was a mixed year. I achieved some good results, but I also lost some rating points. It was a very interesting experience," she reflected. (PTI)

# All nine finishers in women's 10km race walk event better National Games record

**DEHRADUN, Feb 11:** In an unprecedented result, all the nine competitors who on Tuesday finished the women's 10km race walk event in the National Games here bettered the earlier Games record set 26 years ago.

Eleven athletes started the race but two could not finish. National record holder Priyanka Goswami entered her name but did not start the race, which returned to the National Games for the first time after the 1999 edition in Manipur.

Haryana's Ravina, who had won the National Inter-State and National Open Championships last year in 20km event, clinched the gold with a time 45.52 seconds, bettering the earlier Games record of 51.56 seconds set by Y Bala Devi of Manipur in the 1999 Games in Imphal. All the other eight athletes who followed Ravina at the finish line also clocked better times than the earlier Games record of 51.56 seconds.

They are Shalini (46.12 seconds) of Uttarakhand, Munita Prajapati (46:23) of Uttar Pradesh, Mokavi Muthurathinam (46:23) of Tamil Nadu, Payal (47.36) of Uttarakhand,



Reshma Patel (48.16) of Uttar Pradesh, Mansi Negi (48.32) of Uttarakhand, Sejal Singh (49.33) of Maharashtra and Monika (51.45) of Haryana.

Only Ravina's timing will, however, be considered as the new national record in the record books.

In the men's 20km event, six competitors out of 10 who finished the race bettered the earlier Games record of 1 hour, 23 minutes and 26 seconds set by

took the silver with a time of 1:21:34, while Amanjot Singh of Punjab secured the bronze, clocking 1:21:42.

Paramjeet Singh Bisht of Services, who competed in the Paris Olympics 20km race walk event, was fourth with a time of 1:22:02. Ram Baboo of Uttar Pradesh, who won a bronze in mixed 35km race walk at the 2022 Asian Games, was fifth with 1:22:26, while Mukesh Nitharwal of Rajasthan sixth with 1:22:52.

In fact, the race walk events were initially not in the 38th National Games here as the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) had decided to exclude them because it wanted the elite race walkers to participate in select competitions so that they could achieve their peak in major international events.

Later, on the request from the Games organisers, the AFI reversed its decision and included the race walk events. But, instead of the women's 20km event, which has been held in the past seven editions, the AFI decided to have the 10km event.

The men's 20km event was kept unchanged. (PTI)

## Assam's 10-year-old Viraj bags Silver at Bangkok Rapid Chess C'ship

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 11:** Viraj Sarangi, a grade 5 student at Royal Global School in Guwahati, has emerged as a rising chess talent, showcasing his skills at the prestigious Bangkok Rapid Chess Championship.

The tournament, held on Sunday at Kings College, Bang Phong Phang, Bangkok, witnessed the participation of around 250 players from seven countries, making it a highly competitive international platform.

Competing in the Under-12 category, Viraj secured an impressive silver medal, amassing 5.5 points out of 6 rounds. His performance was particularly noteworthy as he entered the event as an unrated player but managed to defeat two seasoned FIDE-rated opponents, Kultungkijaree Poom (1502) and Juntongjin Prin (1496). His only loss came against the tournament's ultimate champion, Ayan Mukherjee (1596).

Viraj's success at the Bangkok Rapid Chess Championship is a testament to his dedication, sharp tactical play, and unwavering fighting spirit. He draws inspiration from Grandmaster D Gukesh and aspires to follow in his footsteps, aiming to become a world champion one day.

Viraj's journey has been guided by renowned coaches Durga Nagesh Guttula and Shrikanth Malladi, who have played a crucial role in honing his skills and nurturing his talent.

Coach Durga Nagesh Guttula praised Viraj's natural talent and fearless approach to the game, stating, "Viraj is a natural talent with a fearless approach to the game. His ability to take on experienced, rated players with confidence speaks volumes about his potential. We are proud of his achievements and believe he has a bright future ahead."

Viraj's performance at the Bangkok Rapid Chess Championship has not only brought recognition to his talent but has also highlighted Assam's growing chess prowess. His achievement serves as an inspiration for aspiring chess players in the region and across the country. With his sights set on the upcoming Abu Dhabi Junior Chess Championship in August, Viraj is determined to continue his winning streak and make India proud on the international stage. His dedication, coupled with the guidance of his coaches, positions him as a promising young talent in the world of chess.



ACA Secretary Tridib Konwar and Treasurer Chiranjit Langthasa chaired a joint meeting of the Senior Tournament Committee, Tour, Fixture & Technical Committee, and Members Coordination Committee of the Assam Cricket Association on Tuesday at the ACA Stadium office to finalise the venue and fixture for the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the APCC Tournament 2024-25 and the 4<sup>th</sup> Nilay Dutta Inter-University Cricket Tournament. The meeting was attended by the Chairman of the Tour, Fixture & Technical Committee, Sankar Dutta Lahakar, ACA Chief Executive Officer Pritom Mahanta, Member of the Tournament Committee, ACA Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa, and other members. HT photo

# Putting an end to cash rewards for attaining GM, IM titles not ideal: Arjun Erigaisi

**NEW DELHI, Feb 11:** Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi believes the government's recent decision to stop cash rewards for attaining GM and International Master titles is "not ideal" for the parents of chess players as such incentives ease the financial strain on them.

Starting this month, the sports ministry has eliminated the reward system for chess players, who were earlier receiving Rs four lakh for achieving a Grandmaster title and Rs 1.5 lakh for attaining an International Master or International Women Master (IWM) title. Prize money will now only be given for winning world-level competitions.

"If it is actually the case that it is stopped now, then it's definitely not something that would demotivate a lot of young children as they don't care about the money aspect," Erigaisi told PTI.

"But it is maybe (demotivating) for the parents. When they

have to make some financial calls, then what would happen after becoming a Grandmaster would be a question.

"And if there is some motivation like this, then there are more chances that they would encourage their children if they have to make a call between chess and studies. It's not something ideal."

After a remarkable 2024, in which he became the second Indian after Vishwanathan Anand to achieve a 2800 ELO rating and won the men's Olympiad gold, the 21-year-old from Warangal has had a less-than-ideal start to 2025. Erigaisi finished 10th in the recently concluded Tata Steel Chess tournament.

"It was a very good year and I'm happy with the way things went, like with everything basically and this year hasn't been a good start but I hope to do better in the coming months."

One factor that has contributed to his recent slump is



his penchant for taking risks, a style that has also brought him success.

"I was taking too many risks

and I should be careful. I will tone it down but it doesn't mean that I won't take risks rather I'll take them less rashly because

some of my risks were way too rash which just got punished. So I'll be taking risks but in a more balanced way."

Although the tournament didn't pan out the way he wanted it, Erigaisi did sign off from Tata Steel chess on a high -- defeating reigning world champion D Gukesh.

His victory against Gukesh brought R Praggnanandhaa into the equation, who eventually went on to win the tournament.

Praggnanandhaa later joked that he would get a gift for Erigaisi and true to his word, he brought him his favourite chips.

"He brought me paprika flavoured Pringles. It's my favourite flavour and once I was looking for it at some airport and he was there with me and I couldn't find it. He remembered it and we bought it there," Erigaisi said with a smile on his face.

Erigaisi dropped as many as 29 rating points in 10 days when he struggled to win games in the

Tata Steel event but the youngster is not bothered about his declining rating.

"I don't care about rating points much, it's about mainly trying to qualify for the Candidates. And of course no one likes to lose ratings."

The 21-year-old is keen to take part in the Norway Chess tournament as it gives him the opportunity to rub shoulders with the likes of five-time world champion Magnus Carlsen and world number two and three Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura in the classical format.

"I'm very much looking forward to it. Magnus, I played him last in Classical in 2023 so it's been a long time.

"And Hikaru I've played only once (in classical). And Fabi also, realistically I played only once. So most of these top players I haven't played them that many times in Classical. So I'm quite looking forward to it," he added. (PTI)

# Kohli's form in focus as India eye ODI clean-sweep over England

AHMEDABAD, Feb 11: A big knock from Virat Kohli's currently silent bat along with a series clean-sweep over England will be on Team India's wish-list when the two teams square off in the third and final ODI here on Wednesday, marking the end of their Champions Trophy build-up.

While India hold an unassailable 2-0 lead with identical four-wicket wins in each of the first two ODIs, Rohit Sharma's men will be extra motivated to get a win here at the Narendra Modi Stadium where they had suffered a crushing ODI World Cup final loss in 2023.

Needless to say, having their batting mainstay Kohli among runs and a win would be perfect culmination to the home side's Champions Trophy preparations. The eight-team competition gets underway from February 19 in Karachi with India starting against Bangladesh the next day in Dubai as per a hybrid model of hosting.

The team has already got a shot in the arm by Rohit's return to form. His 90-ball 119 in the second ODI was a source of relief to both the side and to him after a prolonged run of poor scores.

Kohli hasn't looked completely out of touch but hasn't stayed at the crease for long enough to give himself a chance for a big knock either.

If he manages to click, Kohli is in with a chance create another record. He is 89 runs short of becoming only the third batter in history to score 14,000 runs in the format which arguably has been the run-machine's favourite.

India don't seem to have put a foot wrong in this series as they continue to make the most of their rich reservoir of talent.

The addition of Varun Chakravarty has given additional ammunition to their lethal spin attack which will be vital for the Champions Trophy and Mohammed Shami's return after lengthy injury layoff has been



seamless too.

Shami's successful comeback has certainly been assuring given that the Indian team management will spend an anxious day on Tuesday awaiting news on their premier fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah, whose availability for the Champions Trophy is still under doubt.

As per the original time-line, Bumrah was slated for a comeback in the Ahmedabad ODI, but the ace pacer is currently toiling at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru under the watchful eyes of specialists aiming to make the final squad that is set to be unveiled on Wednesday.

Bumrah's guile on varied pitches and conditions is something that no team across the world possesses and India would be desperate to have their trump card back in the mix as they chase another ICC trophy.

Both India and England will enjoy an off day on Tuesday as they have skipped training and other pre-match routines to rest and recuperate.

Having ended his troubled run with the bat with a characteristic hundred in Cuttack, Rohit's confidence will certainly rub off on the rest of the side.

While Yashasvi Jaiswal could continue to warm the bench, India will expect better application and results from wicketkeeper-batter KL Rahul, who is going through a lean patch himself.

But it would not be a surprise if India give the flamboyant Rishabh Pant a crack to get some game time and have another left-handed batter in the mix to try out additional combinations.

India will need Shreyas Iyer's presence in the middle-order which has been bolstered by robust batting performances from

Axar Patel. The 31-year-old all-rounder has shown immense maturity at No.5 in pressure situations of both the ODIs so far with knocks of 52 and 41 not out.

Patel's exploits with the bat have taken some pressure off Ravindra Jadeja, who has chipped away at England with six wickets so far, exploiting the spin-friendly conditions perfectly to warm-up for similar set-ups in the Champions Trophy.

But for Jos Buttler's England, this tour has raised more questions than they would have expected.

England have suffered repeated implosions in their core batting line-up across the T20Is and ODIs which has undone the impressive work that the opening pair of Phil Salt and Ben Duckett has been putting up.

Buttler maintains his team remains a work in progress but exit of the talented Jacob Bethell due to injury hampers them further.

Harry Brook has blown hot and cold in ideal conditions for batting and Joe Root's impressive returns haven't got the adequate support from others.

Among bowlers, Adil Rashid has exploited the conditions perfectly but the onus will be on England batters to produce a unified show.

#### Teams:

**India:** Rohit Sharma (c), Shubman Gill (vc), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (wk), Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh and Varun Chakravarty.

**England:** Jos Buttler (c&wk), Harry Brook, Ben Duckett, Joe Root, Philip Salt, Jamie Smith (wk), Tom Banton, Brydon Carse, Liam Livingstone, Jamie Overton, Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Saqib Mahmood, Adil Rashid and Mark Wood.

Match starts at 1:30pm IST. (PTI)

# Rahane's century, Dias' five-wicket burst put Mumbai in Ranji Trophy semifinal



KOLKATA, Feb 11: Skipper Ajinkya Rahane conjured a typically gritty hundred and pacer Royston Dias supported his effort with a five-wicket haul as defending champions Mumbai completed a fine escape act, scripting a commanding 152-run over Haryana here on Tuesday.

Rahane, resuming on 88, wasted no time in the morning to notch 108 (180 balls; 13x4) -- his 41st first-class century, that guided Mumbai to 339 in the second innings for an overall lead of 353 runs.

Chasing 354, Haryana crumbled against left-arm pacer Dias (5/39) and Shardul Thakur (3/26), as the veteran quick completed a creditable nine-wicket haul for the match.

They were bowled out for 201 as the joyous Mumbai dressing room might have forgotten that worrisome period when they were 65/5 in the first innings.

Rahane made a bright beginning in the first session, as two exquisite boundaries off Sumit Kumar and

Anshul Kamboj took him to 99, before a nudged single towards midwicket carried him past the milestone off 160 balls.

The Mumbai stalwart took his helmet off, looked skyward and seemed emotionally relieved as it was his first hundred of the season.

However, Mumbai, resuming from 278/4, crumbled after his dismissal.

Shivam Dube (44 overnight) fell two runs short of a fifty, and Mumbai lost their remaining five wickets for just 25 runs in under 10 overs.

Anuj Thakral (4/70) led Haryana's charge, while Kamboj, Sumit and Jayant Yadav chipped in with two wickets each.

But Haryana failed to replicate that spirit in their chase.

Barring a Lakshay Dalal and Sumit Kumar sixth-wicket partnership worth 90 runs, Haryana's chase never gathered momentum, as they folded in 57.3 overs on a day when the play was agreed upon to be extended because of good light and also because of Haryana losing nine wickets.

Haryana's last five wickets tumbled in the final hour, with Dias producing a career-best 5/39 in 10.3 overs -- his maiden five-wicket haul.

Shardul, who had taken six wickets in the first innings, was the first to strike. Steaming in from the High Court end, he extracted lateral movement on a docile pitch, bowling a relentless 10-over spell across two sessions that read 10-3-26-3.

From the Pavilion end, Dias provided perfect support, returning 6-2-12-2 in his first spell.

Just as it seemed Mumbai would wrap things up early, Haryana's Lakshay (64 off 130; 9x4) and Sumit (62 off 96; 10x4) dug in, stitching a doughty stand against the run of play.

On an eased-out fourth-day pitch, Sumit counterattacked, stepping out to Shams Mulani to negate the turn.

Rahane turned to Dube's military medium pace, but Mumbai remained frustrated as misfields crept in, offering easy singles, though the steep target remained their advantage.

Sumit soon reached his seventh first-class fifty in 72 balls, Rahane's sharp captaincy changed the game.

The breakthrough came via off-spinner Tanush Kotian, who struck in his very first over.

Lakshay, attempting to drag a ball from outside, gloved it faintly to the keeper.

The umpire wasn't convinced, but Rahane immediately called for DRS and the UltraEdge showed a clear deflection.

Dias then delivered another blow, as Rahane's astute bowling change ended Sumit's counterattacking knock.

#### Brief Scores

Mumbai 315 and 339 in 85.3 overs (Ajinkya Rahane 108, Suryakumar Yadav 70, Shivam Dube 48). Haryana 201; 57.3 overs (Lakshay Dalal 64, Sumit Kumar 62; Royston Dias 5/39, Shardul Thakur 3/26). Mumbai won by 152 runs. (PTI)



অসম চৰকাৰ

## চিলাৰায় দিবস

১২ ফেব্ৰুৱাৰী ২০২৫



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