Vol.No. XXVI

 At least 19 killed, mostly women, in car bomb explosion in northern Syria

Denmark's leader seeks support from EU partners

Oppn MPs in LS seek accountability from govt over Kumbh stampede

JP Nadda attacks AAP over scams, calls for 'Viksit Delhi'

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PAGES 12

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Voice of the hills people

Himanta thanks Modi, FM for urea plant announcement in Union budget

RNI-ASSENG/2000/12862

PM to attend 'Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit'

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Union ministers, including Nirmala Sitharaman, and discussed with them various issues concerning the state.

Sarma also expressed his heartfelt gratitude on behalf of people of Assam to Prime Minister Modi for approving an urea plant in Namrup, terming the Centre's decision as a "game-changer in the state's developmental journey", an official statement said.

The upcoming 'Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit', an initiative to attract investments, also came up for discussion with the chief minister acknowledging the valuable guidance he received from the



A mega 'Jhumur' performance, a dance form of the state's Adivasi

community, will also be staged a day before the investment and in-

Modi will attend the Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit as a chief guest on February 25 and also the Jhumur dance performance at Sarusajai stadium in Guwahati, the statement said.

Sarma said Union ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Jyotiraditya Scindia, and Hardeep Singh Puri will chair separate sessions in the investment summit.

The chief minister invited Scindia to chair a session on the 'Role of I-Ways in Viksit Assam'. Union Minister Shri @JM_Scindia

"Glad to have met Hon'ble ji in Delhi today. I am happy to share that he will chair a session on the role of 'I-Ways in Viksit Assam' during #AdvantageAssam2. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

WHO chief asks countries to push Washington to reconsider its withdrawal

GENEVA, Feb 3: The World Ble." For 2024-2025, the US is Health Organisation chief asked WHO's biggest donor by far, putglobal leaders to lean on Washington to reverse President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the ÛN lion budget. A budget document health agency, insisting in a closedpresented at the meeting showed door meeting with diplomats

last week that the US will miss out on critiinformation cash. about global disfunctions" WHO's Europe ofease outbreaks.

also pressed WHO at a key budget meeting Wednesday about how it might cope with the exit of its biggest donor, according to internal meeting materials obtained by The

Associated Press. A German envoy, Bjorn Kummel, warned: "The roof is on fire, and we need to stop the fire as soon as possi-

But countries

WHO's biggest donor by far, putting in an estimated \$988 million, roughly 14% of WHO's \$6.9 bil-

> WHO's health emergencies program has a "heavy reliance" on American "Readiness

fice were more than 80% reliant on the \$154 million the US contributes. The document said US funding "provides

the backbone of many of WHO's large-scale emergency operations," covering up to 40%. It said responses in the Middle East, Ukraine and Sudan were at risk, in addition to hundreds of millions of dollars lost (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SC seeks forensic report over audio clips against CM

Manipur violence

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Saying the state was "limping back to normalcy", the Supreme Court on Monday sought a sealed-cover forensic report on the authenticity of leaked audio clips alleging the role of Manipur Chief Minister Biren Singh in the ethnic violence.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar sought the report from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) within six weeks and posted the plea by the Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHUR) on March 24.

KOHUR, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, sought a court-monitored SIT probe into the alleged role of the chief minister in the ethnic violence.

Justice Sanjay Kumar, who was the chief justice of the Manipur High Court before being elevated to the top court, said, "The chief minister of Manipur had hosted a dinner for me when I was elevated to this court, so if you have an issue with me hearing the matter then you can tell me..

Bhushan said he did not have a problem at all. "The state is gradually limping back to normalcy and we will keep it (the matter) on hold at the moment," the CJI said. The bench would later see whether the top court or the high court should hear the case.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state, was in

agreement with the observations. Bhushan, however, termed the contents of the audio leaks a "very serious matter" and said in the clips the chief minister was purportedly (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Humsing Bey elected as president IIT Guwahati develops multi-stage clinical of Karbi Cultural Society

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Feb 3: Humsing Bey, who has been associated with the Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) for a long time and held significant positions, was elected president of the organisation, defeating the popular Chandra Kanta Terang.

On the other hand, Sunil Tokbi, an active member of KCS, was elected uncontested as the general secretary in an election held at the KCS central committee office in Taralangso on Monday.

It is worth noting that the 10th general conference of KCS was held from January 29 to 31 at Taralangso, where new central executive committee members were elected. Of the 56 candidates, 25 were elected through the voting process, while another 31 members were selected from a panel.

A total of 56 executive members cast their votes to elect the new president and secretary. In the election for general secretary, Tokbi was elected uncontested, as there

were no other candidates. For the post of president, there were two contesting candidates: Chandra Kanta Terang and Humsing Bey.

In the election, Bey secured 46 votes, while Terang received 7 votes. Bey won by a margin of 39 votes and was elected as the new president of KCS. It is worth mentioning that the outgoing KCS president, Chandrasing Kro, who has held the prestigious post for nearly two decades, did not contest the election (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

trial method for personalised medical care

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati, National University of Singapore and University of Michigan have developed an innovative multi-stage clinical trial method aimed at revolutionising personalised medical care.

According to officials, the research adapts treatment plans in real-time based on each patient's unique responses during trials, enabling highly tailored and effective healthcare solutions.

The findings of the research have been published in the esteemed journal Biometrics in a paper co authored by Palash Ghosh and Rik Ghosh from IIT Guwahati, Bibhas Chakraborty from Duke-NUS Medical School, National University of Singapore, along with Inbal Nahum-Shani and Megan E Patrick from University of Michigan, USA.

The research focuses on Dynamic Treatment Regimes (DTRs) designed through Sequential Multiple Assignment Randomised Trials (SMARTs). Together, these frameworks tackle the critical challenge of optimising treatment strategies, a sequence of treatments, for patients with varying responses to therapies over time, they said.

DTRs are advanced decision rules that adapt treatments dynamically as a patient's condition evolves. For example, if a diabetes patient does not respond well to an initial medication, the DTR might recommend switching drugs or (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



RBI may cut interest rate by 25 bps on Friday, say experts

likely to reduce the key interest rate by 25 basis points this week after keeping it on hold for two years, complementing the Union Budget initiatives to push consumption-led demand, though the sliding rupee continues to be a concern.

THE HILLS TIMES

As the retail inflation has remained within the Reserve Bank's comfort zone (less than 6 per cent) for most of the year, the central bank can take rate action to boost growth hit by sluggish consumption, opined experts. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the repo rate (short-term lending rate) unchanged at 6.5 per cent since February 2023. The last time the RBI had reduced the rate was during the Covid times (May 2020) and thereafter, it was gradually raised to 6.5 per cent.

Newly appointed Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra will be chairing his first Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting starting Wednesday

The decision of the six-member

PhysicsWallah awards

₹2.2 crore to 1,581 top

PWNSAT 2024

performers nationwide

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 3: PhysicsWallah, (PW),

an education platform, honored 1,581 students

who emerged as top performers in the National

Scholarship Admission Test (PWNSAT) 2024

dents. As part of its pursuit to make education

accessible, PW awarded these students a total

of ₹2.2 crore in cash prizes at the felicitation

ceremony, recognising their academic achieve-

ments," said an official statement on Monday.

SAT 2024, with over 15.5 lakh students appear-

ing for the exam, making it a significant

make education accessible and affordable.

PWNSAT 2024 is one of the ways we try so

that financial constraints are not a hurdle for

talented students. This ₹250 crore scholarship

amount isn't just a number, it represents our com-

mitment to help a students' future. The 1,581 stu-

dents we are felicitating today have worked hard,

and this is our way of recognizing their efforts.

The real success will be when they achieve

their dreams and help others do the same," said

PW to assist students gain access to coaching

without the burden of tuition fees. Through PWNSAT 2024 the aim is to provide JEE and

NEET aspirants the access to the faculties, resources, and learning environment. The schol-

arship program is extended beyond financial

assistance, offering accommodation support,

and mentorship, allowing meritorious students

to pursue their academic goals. This year, over

The felicitation ceremony was an event cel-

ebrating the perseverance, dedication, and

achievements of these students. It brought to-

gether students, parents, educators, and aca-

demic leaders to recognise and reward

exceptional talent. With this initiative, PW con-

tinues to redefine access to education in India,

and reinforce its aim to make learning equi-

5 lakh students received at least a 50% schol-

The PWNSAT 2024 scholarship fund, amounting to ₹250 crore, represents a vision by

AlakhPandey, Founder & CEO of PW.

scholarship initiative in the country.

The event marked the culmination of PWN-

"When we started, the aim was simple, to

"In Guwahati alone, PW felicitated 11 stu-

from all over the country



panel will be announced on Friday

(February 7) "There is a higher probability of a rate cut this time for two reasons. First, the RBI has already announced liquidity enhancement measures, which have improved conditions in the market. This appeared to be a prerequisite for cutting rates," said Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

Sabnavis further said the Union Budget has provided a boost and it may be appropriate to lower the repo rate in tandem to support the same. The Reserve Bank has announced measures to infuse ₹ 1.5 lakh crore worth of liquidity in the

banking system on January 27.

"We can expect some changes in the forecast on growth in particular as the NSO had projected 6.4 per cent for the year. It would be interesting to see if the RBI would provide a forecast for growth in FY26,

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist and Head -- Research and Outreach at Icra, opined that the growth inflation dynamics have improved since the December 2025 policy meeting.

"We don't assess the fiscal stimulus provided by the Union Budget to have a significant bearing on inflation. Accordingly, we think the balance is tilted in favour of a rate cut in the February 2025 policy review," she said.

However, if global factors cause a further material weakening in the INR/USD cross rate over the course of this week, then the anticipated rate cut may get delayed to April 2025, Nayar added.

On Monday, the rupee plunged 55 paise to close at an all-time low of 87.17 (provisional) against the US dollar.

The Union Budget presented in Parliament on Saturday has announced major income tax concessions to spur consumption especially for the middle class with

though this normally is published a view to boost demand. (PTI) Budget gave non-inflationary stimulus to economy, will push growth: Finance Secy

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Fi- 12 lakh per year will not pay nance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Monday said the FY26 Budget has given sufficient non-inflationary stimulus to the economy which will

promote incremental growth. He said the Budget has a balanced "growth and inflation mix", while keeping exchange rates, macroeconomic stability in mind and controlling the fiscal consolidation

"We also have sufficient stimulus in the economy, a non-inflationary stimulus, which will promote savings, investment and growth. It will push incremental growth, work on the demand side and work on the supply side," Pandey said at Ficci post-budget interactive session

mala Sitharaman in the FY26 Budget had hiked the income tax rebate limit to ₹ 12 lakh, effectively meaning that indi-

any income tax. This move was aimed at increasing disposable income in the hands of taxpayers to spur either savings or investment or consumption. The Budget pegged a fiscal deficit of 4.4 per cent of GDP for FY26 and lowered the target for FY25 by 10 basis

to balance the competing imperatives. "We have to have fiscal consolidation on the one hand because we don't want to be

points to 4.8 per cent of GDP.

Pandey said the Budget had

inflationary in our approach. If we try to stimulate (the economy) when we should not, it may turn inflationary and will reverse the very process of in-

imperatives while we control

the fiscal consolidation," Pandey added.

The Budget has several demand-side measures and several supply-side measures, including the agriculture sector, Pandey said.

"Food inflation, for example, if we are not able to really address some of those structural supply factors it will keep hurting us year after year and it will keep our interest rates high. It doesn't help industry, doesn't help the middle class, because people end up higher equated monthly instalments.'

"But then if you have inflation, then you cannot have proper growth. You have to have inflation under control." So, therefore, the growth and

flation control that we have inflation mix needs to be con-Union Finance Minister Nirbeen working at and will be sidered together, keeping our counterproductive. exchange rates and macroeco-"So, the Budget we have nomic stability in mind. So all come out with, in terms of varthese factors we have taken on ious things, balances all these board while trying to balance.

India's avg customs duty cut to 10.66% from 11.65%, now moving towards ASEAN level: CBIC

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: India has significantly The 10-nation bloc ASEAN (Association of reduced its average customs duty rate to 10.66 Southeast Asian Nations) countries are Brunei, per cent from 11.65 per cent and is now moving towards the same levels as prevalent in the Southeast Asian countries, a senior government official said on Monday

CBIC (Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs) Chairman Sanjay Kumar Agarwal said the rate rationalisation exercise was carried out with the objective of making the tariff structure simple, ensuring competitiveness of Indian industry and simplifying the tax regime.

"Now the average customs rate in India has come down from 11.65 per cent to 10.66 per cent and we are now moving towards the average rate in ASEAN countries," he said here at an interaction with industry representatives.

Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The exercise was also important for dispelling the narrative of developed countries like the US that India has one of the highest tariffs. The US President Donald Trump's administration has accused India of being "tariff king" and "tariff abuser".

He noted that in the high duty brackets from 25 per cent to 150 per cent, only a few products are available in the country. "There are very few items on these high rates...rates are otherwise in the narrow band of zero to 10 per cent," he said, adding that steps have also been announced in the Budget 2025-26 in this direction. (PTI)

table, affordable, and empowering. Govt working on uniform toll policy to provide relief to commuters on NH: Gadkari

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: The road transport ministry is working on a uniform toll policy to benefit national highway users, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on

Gadkari also asserted that now India's highway infrastructure matches that of the US.

"We are working on a uniform toll policy. It will address the problem faced by the commuters," he told PTI in an interview, without elaborating further.

Gadkari was responding to a question on simmering discontent among users of National Highways on account of high toll charges and sub-par road-user experience.

The longest-serving road transport and highways minister said that the ministry has decided to initially implement a barrier-less global navigation satellite system (GNSS)-based toll collection system on national highways.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Gadkari said, has been taking the complaints made by commuters on social media very seriously and is taking strong action against contractors involved.

At present, while private cars constitute about 60 per cent of the traffic on national highways, the share of toll revenue from these

vehicles is barely 20-26 per cent. Toll charges have increased on highways even as more and more



period.

stretches have come under the tolling system over the past 10 years, often leading to rising user discontent.

Total toll collection in India touched ₹ 64,809.86 crore in 2023-24, a 35 per cent rise over the previous year. The collection was ₹ 27,503 crore in 2019-20.

All user fee plazas on National Highways are established as per the provision of National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008 and the respective Concession Agreement. Gadkari expressed confidence that in the current financial year, the highways ministry will surpass the previous record of 37 km per day highways construction in 2020-21 financial year.

Around 7,000 km highways been constructed so far in the current financial year. Traditionally,

the pace of highways construction is higher in the February-March

The pace of highways construction in the country has touched a record 37 km per day in financial year 2020-21.

The highways ministry had constructed 13,435.4 kilometres in 2020-21; 10,457.2 km in 2021-22; 10,331 km in 2022-23, and 12,349 km in 2023-24.

Gadkari also said this financial year, the ministry will award highways projects of 13,000 km. The ministry had awarded high-

ways project of 8,580.5 km in 2023-24. The pace of highway project awards has slowed down considerably in the absence of a new scheme to replace the Bharatmala Pariyojana.

According to Gadkari, under the Bharatmala Pariyojana, the ministry had the power to award highway projects of up to ₹ 3,000 crore, now the ministry cannot approve any fresh projects under the Bharatmala Pariyojana.

"For any project worth above ₹ 1,000 crore, now we need to take the approval of the Cabinet. So, we have sent projects worth ₹ 50,000-₹ 60,000 crore to the Cabinet for approval," he said

'Once we get clearance, we will start working on those projects," the minister added.

With an aim to reduce delay cost overrun and disputes, an inter-ministerial panel that appraises major highway projects has told the ministry to accept bids only after acquiring 90 per cent of the land required for the projects and getting all statutory projects such as forest and environment.

"This condition has affected the pace of award of highway projects," Gadkari said.

The government approved Bharatmala Pariyojana in 2017, covering a length of 34,800 km to improve connectivity and reduce logistic costs in the country.

As of October 31, 2024, projects covering a total length of 26,425 km have been awarded and 18,714 km has been constructed.

India has the second largest road network and its National Highways span a total length of 1,46,195 km, forming the primary arterial network of the country. (PTI)

Gopal Vittal appointed as acting chair of GSMA board

GUWAHATI, Feb 3: Gopal Vittal, vice chairman & MD, Bharti Airtel and deputy chair GSMA has been ment said. appointed as the acting chair of the GSMA board following the resignation of José Maria Álvares-Pallete,

chairman & CEO, Telefónica from the company. "By virtue of this resignation, he is no longer able to continue in the position of the chair of the GSMA. Gopal was recently re-elected as the deputy chair of

key member for the term 2019-2020," an official state-

GSMA represents the global telecommunications industry with over 1100 companies from the telecom ecosystem across the world including telecom service providers, handset and device makers, software companies, equipment providers and internet companies, as well as organizations in adjacent industry sectors.

Contd. from Page 1...

PM to attend 'Advantage

"This session will bring together key stakeholders and the best minds in the communication and tech industry to help us formulate a Assam specific strategy on building Information Highways in the State," he wrote on X'. Sarma also met Sitharaman and congratulated her for presenting "one of the finest budgets in India's history that kept the middle class and small businesses at the core of government's agenda"

He thanked Sitharaman for announcing a new urea facility in Assam that will give a big impetus to an Aatmanirbhar Bharat. "I congratulated Hon'ble Union Minister Smt @nsitharaman Ji for presenting one of the finest budgets in India's history - a budget which has kept the middle class and small businesses at the heart of the government's agenda. I thanked her for announcing a new Urea facility in Assam, a big step towards an Atmanirbhar Bharat. "We also spoke about the upcoming #AdvantageAssam2 summit in which the Hon'ble Minister has kindly consented to Chair the valedictory session," Sarma said in his post.

The chief minister also met Petroleum Minister Puri at Parliament House. On the request of Sarma, Puri accepted the invitation to grace the session on hydrocarbons and energy at the Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit.

"Had an excellent conversation with Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @HardeepSPuri Ji. We are grateful for his consent to drive forward the session on Hyrdocarbons and Energy at #AdvantageAssam2. We spoke at length on how Assam had an early mover advantage in the oil industry but the full potential remains untapped.

"Our joint effort is to ensure #AdvantageAssam2 serves as the enabling platform to harness Assam's energy potential in a sustainable manner through cross collaboration between key stakeholders," the chief minister said. Sarma later met Commerce and Industries minister Piyush Goyal who also consented to head discussions on leveraging exports as a growth engine for Assam at the summit. "Pleased to have met Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @PiyushGoyal Ji at his office this afternoon. The Hon'ble Minister will lead discussions on leveraging exports as a growth engine for Assam, further advancing the vision of a Viksit Bharat at the upcoming #AdvantageAssam2 Summit. We eagerly await his insightful thoughts during the Summit," he said. (PTI)

WHO chief asks countries

by polio-eradication and HIV programs. The US also covers 95% of WHO's tuberculosis work in Europe and more than 60% of TB efforts in Africa, the Western Pacific and at the agency headquarters in Geneva, the document said.

At a separate private meeting on the impact of the US exit last Wednesday, WHO finance director George Kyriacou said if the agency spends at its current rate, the organization would "be very much in a hand-to-mouth type situation when it comes to our cash flows" in the first half of 2026. He added the current rate of spending is "something we're not going to do," according to a recording obtained by the AP.

Since Trump's executive order, WHO has attempted to withdraw funds from the US for past expenses, Kyriacou said, but most of those "have not been accepted." The US also has yet to settle its owed contributions to WHO for 2024, pushing the agency into a deficit, he added.

WHO's leader wants to bring back the US

Last week, officials at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were instructed to stop working with WHO immediately. WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the attendees at the budget meeting that the agency is still providing U.S. scientists with some data — though it isn't known what data.

"We continue to give them information because they need it," Tedros said, urging member countries to contact US officials. "We would appreciate it if you continue to push and reach out to them to reconsider."

Among other health crises, WHO is currently working to stop outbreaks of Marburg virus in Tanzania, Ebola in Uganda and mpox in Congo.

Tedros rebutted Trump's three stated reasons for leaving the agency in the executive order signed on Jan. 20 -Trump's first day back in office. In the order, the president said WHO mishandled the COVID-19 pandemic that began in China, failed to adopt needed reforms and that U.S. membership required "unfairly onerous payments." Tedros said WHO alerted the world in January 2020 about the potential dangers of the coronavirus and has made dozens of reforms since — including efforts to expand its donor base.

Tedros also said he believed the US departure was "not about the money" but more about the "void" in outbreak details and other critical health information that the United States would face in the future

"Bringing the US back will be very important," he told meeting attendees. "And on that, I think all of you can play a role.

Experts say US benefits from WHO

Some experts said that while the departure of the US was a major crisis, it might also serve as an opportunity to reshape global public health. Less than 1% of the US health budget goes to WHO, said Matthew Kavanagh, director of Georgetown University's Center for Global Health Policy and Politics. In exchange, the US gets "a wide variety of benefits to Americans that matter quite a bit," he said. That includes intelligence about disease epidemics globally and virus samples for vaccines.

Kavanagh also said the WHO is "massively underfunded," describing the contributions from rich countries

Humsing Bey elected as president

to make way for new leadership. Similarly, the outgoing general secretary, Bidyasing Rongpi, also refrained from contesting, believing that fresh leadership was necessary for the advancement of Karbi culture.

"I cannot say that I am simply winning the election; rather, a greater responsibility has been entrusted to me I will continue to carry forward the work left by my predecessors for the development and promotion of Karbi culture. I will do my best, with the support of all members," said president-elect Bey.

Similar sentiments were expressed by General Secretary-elect Tokbi. He extended his heartfelt thanks to the electors for choosing him unanimously and said he would take the advice of former leaders and rely on the support of all members.

Incumbent KCS president Kro praised both Bey and Tokbi as capable individuals and expressed confidence that, under their leadership, the Karbi culture and identity would reach greater heights.

"I am stepping down to make way for new faces, and I believe in the capabilities of Bey and Tokbi to continue the development and promotion of our culture," Kro said. The newly formed Executive Committee of KCS, with its president and general secretary-elect, will officially take charge during the 51st Karbi Youth Festival, to be held from February 15 to 19 at Taralangso.

IIT Guwahati develops multi-stage

combining therapies. By incorporating intermediate outcomes, such as changes in blood sugar levels, DTRs move beyond the one-size-fits-all model, tailoring care to individual progress and needs. "Multi-stage clinical trials are essential for developing effective DTRs, and SMART methodology enables researchers to test various treatment sequences to find the best fit for each patient. Unlike traditional trials, SMART involves multiple stages of treatment, where patients are reassigned based on their responses to earlier interventions," said Palash Ghosh, assistant professor, Department of Mathematics, IIT Guwahati.

"Traditional SMART trials assign patients to treatment arms in equal numbers, even when some treatments prove less effective, based on interim data. This often leads to unnecessary treatment failures. We have developed an adaptive randomisation method that dynamically assigns patients to treatment arms based on real-time trial data by optimally changing the patient allocation ratios in favor of a better-performing treatment sequence at that point of time of the trial," he added. Ghosh explained the innovation will ensure that more patients receive effective treatments while maintaining scientific rigor.

"By focusing on both short-term and long-term outcomes, the method will improve the entire treatment process, reducing failures and enhancing patient care. Adaptive designs like this would encourage more patient participation in clinical trials like SMART. When patients see they are receiving treatments tailored to their needs, they are more likely to stay engaged. "This approach also has vast potential for public health interventions such as tailoring substance abuse recovery plans to individual needs as well as in other chronic diseases," he said. The research team is now collaborating with the Indian medical institutions to conduct SMART trials for the effective management of mental health issues using traditional Indian medicines. (PTI)

SC seeks forensic report over

saying that Meitei groups were allowed to loot arms and ammunition of the state government. "I have annexed transcripts of tape recordings," he added. The solicitor general said the petitioner had "ideological inclinations" and there was a report by the three high court judges' committee stating there were efforts to keep the "pot boiling". "A truth lab confirmed that 93 per cent it is the voice of the chief minister," said Bhushan, "and truth labs are far more reliable that the FSL reports." The law officer questioned the veracity of the report of the truth lab. On November 8, last year, a bench headed by former CJI D Y Chandrachud directed the Kuki organisation to produce material to indicate authenticity of some leaked audio clips. "Before the court can consider the submissions which have been made on the basis of an audio clip, we deem it appropriate to grant the petitioners an opportunity to file before this court material indicating the authenticity of the clip," it said.

Bhushan had said he would also file a copy of the tape in a CD format. Mehta however said the plea could be filed in the high court under Article 226 of the Constitution. Over 200 people were killed and thousands rendered homeless after Meitei and Kuki communities clashed with each other in May last year.

Bhushan alleged the recorded conversation prima facie showed the complicity and the involvement of the

state machinery in violence against the Kuki Zo community. He said the clips had "disturbing conversations" and the chief minister could be heard instigating the violence and protecting the attackers while fuelling the violence aside from allowing arms and ammunition to be looted. The solicitor general opposed the plea, saying the organisation should moved the Manipur High Court and

said if the apex court entertained the matter, the "majesty of the high court would be undermined". Attorney general R Venkataramani also opposed the petition and said the state government should be given leeway to restore peace. The Kuki organisation's plea alleged the chief minister of Manipur was instrumental in "inciting, organising and thereafter centrally orchestrating the large-scale murder, destruction and other forms of violence against the Kuki dominated areas in Manipur"

"Petitioner is praying for a court-monitored investigation by special investigation team into the leaked audio tape clips as there is clear and strong prima facie evidence showing involvement of highest functionary, i.e., chief minister of a state. The investigation would need to unearth the conspiracy which appears to involve the highest functionary of state," it added. (PTI)

Children and teachers alike sought blessings from Maa Saraswati

Saraswati Puja celebrated across state with mega-celebrations

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Feb 3: On the auspicious occasion of Vasant Panchami, the much-awaited Saraswati Puja was celebrated with great fervour across the state and country on Monday.

Amidst hundreds of schools and colleges celebrating, one particular school in Diphu town was Klirdap Sankar Dev Shishu Vidya Niketan, Thana Road, where students and teachers offered puja to Goddess Saraswati. Unlike other days, the school students were dressed in their finest traditional attire and were early to reach the school.

At the school, the idol of Saraswati was placed on a decorated platform with plantain trees on four sides. Children and teachers gathered in front of the Saraswati idol as the priest performed puja. Children in the most respectful manner bowed before the idol of Saraswati to seek her blessings. Fruits. flowers and sweets were placed before the Saraswati idol as

The president of the School Managing Committee (SMC), Birendra Hanse said, "Saraswati puja is celebrated every year in the school. The puja is organised to enable the students to seek the gift of knowledge and wisdom from Saraswati. Not only to prosper in studies but in all fronts.

He also said that every day in the morning assembly, prayer is offered to Saraswati. "With the blessing of Saraswati, the students of this school have been able to bring good results in the HSLC examination. There have been all Assam toppers

from this school," he added. A student, Smriti Das said, "I feel very happy to participate in the Saraswati puja organised in my school. It was a pleasant day with a



religious atmosphere. This time I am appearing for my HSLC examination and I sought the blessings of Maa Saraswati so that I can prepare well for my examination and bring good results.

Another Class 10 student expressed her joy on Saraswati puja saying, "I am very thrilled being associated with all students and my teachers to participate in the puja. I enjoyed a lot with my friends and prayed to Saraswati for good health and to overcome all difficulties in

The school principal, Srawanjit Teron and vice president, SMC, Toroni Rongpi joined in the puja. Soon after the puja ended khichdi was served to students and teachers.

Our Biswanath Chariali correspondent adds: In Biswanath Chariali, Saraswati Puja was observed with a major celebration like the previous years on Monday.

The goddess of knowledge, Saraswati, has been worshipped in various educational institutions of the greater Biswanath Chariali to

mark the special day.

The educational institutions of the greater Biswanath Chariali area, such as Biswanath College, Chariali HS & MP School, Chariali Girls' HS, and DIET besides other educational institutions observed the Saraswati Puja amid religious rites. Teachers and students offered prayer to the goddess Saraswati.

It is to be mentioned here that some of the educational institutions have observed Saraswati Puja on

Our Margherita correspon**dent adds:** The much-anticipated Saraswati Puja was celebrated with immense joy for two straight days at the ST. James School in Margherita.

The school, located at Hill View,

organised a grand ceremony for the second successive year.

REGION

The two-day event saw enthusiastic participation from students, guardians, and local residents with over 4,000 people attending the puia venue each day.

"ST. James is the largest English medium school in Margherita region having more than 750 enrollment from nursery to 10. In the year 2024 for the first time, Saraswati Puja was celebrated at our school campus and this shall continue," said Sushil Kalita, co-owner of ST. James School, Margherita.

Saraswati Puja was celebrated at all schools, higher secondary schools, colleges, and technical institutes under Margherita Co-District with fervour and harmony where all walks of people irrespective of caste, creed, race, language, and religion attended large gather-

Educational standards set to rise in Cachar with Gunotsav 2025

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 3: In a determined push to enhance educational standards and improve learning outcomes, the Cachar district administration, under the leadership of District Commissioner Mridul Yadav, is all set to implement Gunotsav 2025.

Expressing confidence in the initiative, Cachar DC Mridul Yadav said, "While the progress so far has been commendable, the ultimate goal remains to ensure that every school meets the highest standards of education. The inclusion of new evaluation criteria and the integration of technology will strengthen the assessment framework and help address previous shortcomings more effectively."

This ambitious initiative, spearheaded by the Government of Assam, marks the sixth edition of the state's flagship program aimed at comprehensive evaluation and academic excellence.

Gunotsav 2025 will unfold in three meticulously planned phases, covering all 35 districts of Assam. Schools will first conduct selfevaluations, followed by rigorous external assessments to ensure a holistic and transparent appraisal of their performance.

The final phase of this largescale assessment is scheduled to commence on February 4, with external evaluations spanning from February 5 to 7 across 10 districts, including Cachar, Dibrugarh, and Nalbari. In Cachar alone, an impressive 2,175 schools and over 2.34 lakh students will actively participate, reaffirming the state's commitment to fostering a robust education system

The Cachar Administration has undertaken extensive preparations to ensure the smooth execution of Gunotsav 2025. In Cachar district, 550 external evaluators are required, with 444 evaluators already

Work for conference of Srimanta Sankardev Sangha at full swing



confirmed from Hailakandi and Karimganj. A meticulous strategy is in place to bridge the remaining gap, ensuring a fair, transparent, and efficient evaluation process. The administration's unwavering focus on educational transformation underscores its determination to uplift academic standards across the district.

Notably, the past editions of Gunotsav have yielded positive results, with the Cachar district showing a steady improvement in school performance. In 2023, only 34.38% of schools achieved an 'A' grade, but this figure rose to 44.54% in 2024, indicating significant progress.

With Gunotsav 2025, the district administration is committed to further elevating educational outcomes, setting even higher benchmarks for excellence.

This year's edition of Gunotsav introduces several key innovations aimed at refining the evaluation process. A dedicated mobile application and digital portal have been launched to facilitate seamless data collection and reporting.

Additionally, for the first time, schools will be assessed on the quality and consistency of student uniforms, as per the directive of chief minister Himanta Biswa

congregation. "We are working

pected to visit the congregation on

Sarma. Another significant addition is the "Transparency Award," which will recognise districts demonstrating the highest levels of fairness and integrity in their evaluation procedures.

Furthermore, schools will be held accountable for effectively addressing concerns highlighted in previous Gunotsav reports, ensuring a continuous cycle of improve-

With a renewed commitment to academic excellence, Gunotsav 2025 is poised to bring about a transformative impact on Assam's education system. The rigorous evaluation framework, strengthened by technological advancements and a steadfast commitment to transparency, underscores Assam's vision of providing quality education for all. Enthusiasm runs high among educators, students, and administrators, as they prepare to embrace this landmark initiative with dedication and re-

As the countdown to Gunotsav 2025 begins, the Cachar district stands at the forefront of this educational revolution, ready to make meaningful strides toward a brighter future where no child is left behind in the pursuit of knowledge and academic excellence.

Bus accident in Diphu: 30 passengers injured

HT Bureau DIPHU, Feb 3: A bus carrying

passengers back from a picnic at the Umrangso Golf Field met with an accident at Longku, leaving 30 injured out of the 60 passengers. The injured were immediately rushed to the Umrangso Community Health Centre for medical treatment

The critically injured were later transferred to Hojai HAMM Hospital and Diphu Medical College and Hospital

According to eyewitnesses, the bus, registration AS-09BC-1477, was travelling from Umrangso Golf Field to Hamren, West Karbi Anglong, when the accident took place. Initial investigation says that the cause of the accident is a technical fault.

Member of Autonomous Council (MAC), Headsing Rongpar visited Hojai HAMM Hospital to check on the accident victims who are villagers of Uzandongka, Hemari Teron Village Umrangso.

AIUDF's Balapara Anchalik Committee formed

HT Correspondent
GOSSAIGAON, Feb 3: To strengthen the roots in the BTC

area on the eve of BTC General, the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) formed Balapara Anchalik Committee under Guma BTC Constituency recently in the presence of District Committee president Khalilur Rahman and executive president Rejowan Khan. Khalilur Rahman, president, of

Gossaigaon District Committee, AUIDF while forming the Balapara Anchalik Committee asserted that that the political parties of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) have only used the voters of the Guma constituency and Balapara area as a vote bank. Since 2003, various political parties have deceived the people of the Guma constituency and secured their positions without considering the region's development or its people's unliftment.

He further alleged that for 17 years, Hagrama Mohilary deceived the people of Guma constituency, and for the past four years, under the leadership of Pramod Boro, the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and the double-engine government of the BJP have been exploiting and engaging in corruption across BTR under the guise of development.

"However, this time, AIUDF is determined to contest the upcoming 2025 BTR council elections in the Guma constituency with the full strength and support of the voters. With the people's blessings, AIUDF aims to hoist its victory flag and address all the problems faced by the people of Guma constituency," adds Rahman.

ADG BSF reviews operational preparedness on Indo-B'desh border

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 3: Ravi

Gandhi, Additional Director General (ADG), BSF Eastern Command, Kolkata, during his 3-day visit to the area of responsibility of Guwahati frontier reviewed the operational preparedness and prevailing security scenario along the Indo-Bangladesh international

border in Coochbehar (WB). On the first day of his visit to Sector Headquarters Coochbehar, Gandhi was briefed by Sanjay Gaur, Inspector General (IG) of Guwahati Frontier, along with senior staff officers.

The briefing focused on the current security challenges posed by unrest in Bangladesh and the necessary measures being taken to combat these issues. The discussions highlighted strategies to prevent any form of infiltration and to control trans-border crimes, ensuring the safety and security of the border areas.

Gandhi also visited Border Out Posts (BOPs) along the IndoBangladesh international border under the jurisdiction of Sector HQ Coochbehar. He interacted with field commanders, thoroughly reviewing the border domination plan and assessing the operational preparedness to counter any threats.

The ADG emphasised the importance of maintaining peace and tranquillity along the border, ensuring the safety of local populations while keeping the border crime-free.

He praised the tireless efforts and unwavering dedication of the BSF personnel in safeguarding the nation's borders. He commended the Guwahati Frontier's initiatives in controlling crime along the Indo-Bangladesh border and lauded the effective and efficient guarding of the international boundary by the BSF

He urged all personnel to remain vigilant and continue their exemplary work in maintaining the integrity of the Indo-Bangladesh international border.

OBITUARY

etired District Education Officer Binanda Baruah (90) of Ushapur, Maranhat, Charideo district, passed

away at OIL Hospital in the Duliajan recently. Baruah had joined

spector of Schools in Dibrugarh while serving as Vice-Principal of Maran Higher Secondary School. His predeceased wife Dr Sukha Baruah was a former president of Sadao Assam

Lekhika Samaroh Samiti and founding principal of Maran Women's College. Former Union minister Pawan Singh Ghatowar, Assam Cabinet minister Yogen Mohan, Dr Anil Shaikia, All Assam Rural Journalists Association, Ushapur Namghar, Maran Higher Secondary School and Maran Women's College and many others mourned his death. The funeral was held at the Shantiban Public Cemetery in Maran Baruah is survived by two sons and a daughter and their families.

HT Correspondent A reception committee member said that the committee including Cabinet minister Ajanta Neog, who is **JORHAT, Feb 3:** Work is in full swing to host the 94th conference of Srimanta Sankardev Sangha to be held also the guardian minister of Jorhat, as working president has 38 sub-committees under it and all of them were monitoring the works being carried out under their responsibilities. He said that people not only from across the State but across the country are expected to attend the four-day

at Eraltoli Pathar, Mohbandha here from February 6 to 9. On Monday afternoon, the minister for agriculture and several other departments Atul Bora visited the venue to take stock of the preparations for the session. Hundreds of workers are working almost round the

clock along with members of the organising committee, government officials of different departments, district administration supervising the construction works of the pandals, and other related structures like camps to accommodate Sangha members from across Community kitchens, an audito-

rium, stalls for books and trade fair, naatshala, where ankiya naats will be staged are also being erected.

Other arrangements like providing electricity, installation of tube wells, deep tube wells, water reservoirs, sanitation, and toilet facilities roads with pavers block, etc are in the final stage at the venue named 'Vaishnay Pandit Sonaram Chutia Samannay Kshetra'.

Thirteen tourans (gates) were being set up across the venue in memory of 13 eminent persons who were from the Jorhat district who had held the Padadhikar of the religious and cultural body (Srimanta Sankardev Sangha).

A depiction of village life by having a cowshed, weaver loom shade, rice pounder and instruments used by farmers too are being set up.



He said altogether 25000 Seva Bahinni (volunteers) - 10000 from the district and the rest from other districts - would be engaged to enable the smooth organising of the meet. About 200 camps to accommodate devotees, along with putting up 200 chaukas (cooking ovens) with arrangements to provide food to 15000 people at

the four days

once, pandals for organising different programmes and stalls for exhibition purposes were nearing completion. Several VVIPs including the chief minister are scheduled to attend the event with the CM expected to address the open session.

A souvenir titled 'Banikantha Kusum' of 600 pages would also be released at the session, the member

It may be mentioned here that the laikhuta (the main pillar) of the entire pandal set-up was erected on No-

Event will feature engaging discussions, readings, and interactive sessions

Dibrugarh University International Literature Festival 2.0 to commence from tomorrow

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Feb 3: Dibrugarh University, in collaboration with the Foundation for Culture, Arts & Literature (FOCAL), is set to host the highly anticipated Dibrugarh University International Literature Festival 2.0 from February 5 to 8, 2025, at the university campus.

This grand literary event will welcome over 120 writers from more than 25 countries, fostering a rich exchange of ideas and cultural perspectives.

With over 50 sessions and workshops, the festival will provide a platform for renowned authors, poets, and scholars to share their insights, experiences, and literary wisdom.

The event will feature engaging discussions, readings, and interactive sessions that celebrate the power of literature in shaping society and fostering global con-

The festival will see participation from acclaimed international writers, including Abdulai Sila (Guinea-Bissau), Alvydas Šlepikas (Lithuania), Ann Morgan (United Kingdom), Anna Maria Gehnyei (Italy), Carla Marisa Fernandes (Portugal), Diana Mickevičienė (Lithuania), Firat Sunel (Turkey), Gaston Dorren (Netherlands), Hamid Ismailov (Uzbekistan), Inga Simpson (Australia), Kateryna Babkina (Ukraine), Kunzang Choden (Bhutan), Lucy Caldwell (Northern Ireland), Nanjala Nyabola (Kenya), Raïs Neza Boneza (Democratic Republic of the



Congo), Samson Kambalu (Malawi). Siphiwo Mahala (South Africa), and Tété-Michel Kpomassie (Togo).

The festival will also feature an impressive lineup of Indian authors, including A. R. Venkatachalapathy, Abdullah Khan, Abhay K, A. J. Thomas, Ajit Prasad Rout, Amish Raj Mulmi, Anju Ranjan, Annie Zaidi, Anuradha Mascarenhas, Arjun Sengupta, Damodar Mauzo, Dnyaneshwar Mulay, Jairam N. Menon, K. Vaishali, Kanishka Gupta, Karthika V.K., Kiran Khalap, Krishnan Srinivasan, K. S. Nair, Lakshmi Puri, Lekha Rai, Manu Dash, Meeran Chadha Borwankar, Megha Rao, Nandini Oberoi, Pallavi Mansingh, Paramita Satpathy, Pankaj Thapa, Rabindra K. Swain, Rahul Soni, Ranjit Rae, Sadhna Shanker, Saikat Majumdar, Salma (Rajathi Samsudeen), Satya Mohanty,

Shaneel Mukerji, Smriti Ravindra, Soma Das, Sunitha Krishnan, Thomas Mathew, Vikas Swarup, Vivek Menezes, and Yojna

A strong contingent of writers from the Northeast will also be present, including G. Kanato Chophy, Jatwang Wangsa, Joy L. K. Pachuau (Mizoram), Kallol Bhattacherjee, Linthoi Chanu, Lt. Gen. Konsam Himalay Singh, Mamang Dai, Martin Thokchom, Oken Tayeng, Paul Lyngdoh, Ravikant Singh (Ibohal Kshetrimayum), Robin S. Ngangom, and Vanlalruata Ralte.

Prominent Assamese writers participat-

ing in the festival include Anuradha Sarma Pujari, Arupa Patangia Kalita, Barnali Patowary, Bipul Deuri, Brigadier Ranjit Barthakur, Dhruba Hazarika, Dhrubajyoti Bora, Dibyajyoti Sarma, Harsita Hiya, Indrani Baruah, Indrani Laskar, Jahnu Barua, Jayanto Narayan Choud-Kalyan Bhuyan, Kalyan Chakravarthy, Karabi Deka Hazarika, Kaustubh Deka, Kishor Mohan Bhattacharyya, Kuladhar Saikia, Lt. Gen. Rana Pratap Kalita, Madhurima Baruah, Mridul Bordoloi, Nabin Baruah, Nasmeem F. Akhtar, Pradipta Sankar Hazarika, Pradipta Borgohain, Prakalpa Ranjan Bhagawati, Rahul Jain, Ranjit Barthakur, Rashmi Narzary, Ritushmita Sharma, and Shiuli Barua.

Dr. Paramananda Sonowal, Registrar of Dibrugarh University, expects full participation from the people of Assam and the journalistic fraternity of the state.

Topcem Cement hosts 8th free Cataract and Eye Check-Up camp



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 3: Topcem Cement, a leading cement brand in Northeast India, has organised its 8th Free Cataract Surgery and Eye Check-Up Camp in partnership with Eye Doctors - An Eye Clinic & Surgery Centre, Guwahati.

Starting from February 1, 2025, the camp is conducting comprehensive rural eye screening camps in Darrang, Udalguri, Barpeta, and Kamrup districts over 15 days. Approximately 250 patients will be screened for various eye conditions, including cataracts, refractive errors, and other vision impairments, by a team of experienced ophthalmologists from Eye Doctors – An Eye Clinic & Surgery Centre.

Topcem Cement will support 50 patients for free cataract surgeries at the Eye Doctors Institute & Surgery Centre, providing them with a new lease on life. The company's support will cover all expenses related to the surgeries, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder access to

essential eve care

Dr Anil Kapur, Sr President, sales & marketing, Meghalaya Cements Ltd., stated, "Topcem Cement is dedicated to supporting social causes that contribute to societal development. This initiative aligns with our mission to improve the lives of marginalised communities, promote healthy living, and foster a culture of social responsibility

Since 2018, Topcem Cement's Free Cataract Surgery initiative has supported the Government of India's National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment. The company has successfully completed 200 surgeries till 2024, restoring vision and transforming

By providing accessible eye healthcare solutions, Topcem Cement reaffirms its commitment to community well-being, improving eye health in the region, and promoting a healthier, more productive

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference. - Winston Churchill

Talks only way forward

Turkey's proxy groups like the Syrian National Army (SNA) which is also part of a coalition of Syrian opposition groups led by Hayat Taheer Al-Sham (HTS) have been attacking the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in North Syrian since December 2024. In particular, fierce fighting along the Tishreen Dam has become the focal point. The dam has not functioned since December 10, when it was damaged during clashes, depriving over 413,000 people of water and electricity in the Manbij and Kobani areas, according to the Northeast Syria (NES) NGO Forum, a coalition of international organizations operating in the northeast. On the direct orders of Turkey SNA is carrying out these attacks. In addition to instructing its proxy forces to attack Kurdish-controlled areas in North Syria. Turkey is also using its diplomatic weight to restrict any meaningful representation for Kurds in the new political setup. Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and National Intelligence Agency (MİT) Chief İbrahim Kalın held key meetings in Damascus and Baghdad. Central to Ankara's strategy is preventing the integration of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) into Syria's military in any form, while also ensuring that the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) ceases to exist. The AANES has advocated for a political settlement to bring stability to Syria, including the incorporation of its military arm SDF into a unified national military structure.

Ankara is opposed to this plan and reportedly requested the Syrian new interim government led by HTS to block such integration, which it views as a step towards Kurdish autonomy. Turkish proxy forces in North Syria want to create military pressure on the SDF to enforce the will of the Turks. The Turkish army through artillery shelling and airstrikes against SDF's targets wholeheartedly supported groups like SNA in conflict with SDF. Turks are also hoping for potential rebellion among Arab tribes and Arab factions within the SDF. Unfortunately, new policymakers in Damascus are of the view that strengthening ties with Turks is more important than getting all the Syrian political groups on board. Also, Damascus thinks that with the combined military pressure from SNA and Turkish armed forces, the SDF will surrender their arms and disband. But this is a mere illusion nothing else. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is the key powerbroker in north-eastern Syria and has a formidable fighting force and support from the local population. Even if new Syrian authorities somehow managed to capture territory held by the SDF currently through a joint military campaign with Turks.

They will have to face a deadly Kurdish insurgency in the northeast of the country and that's the last thing worn-torn Syria requires. SDF has established itself as the West's main partner in the fight against the Islamic State (ISIS) if HTS can accommodate SDF in the current interim government. This will give a diplomatic boost to the new Syrian government, especially among Western countries, and can work as a catalyst in the removal of sanctions imposed on Syria. All the major parties in Syria must ensure that all unresolved matters should only be sorted through talks and fighting is no longer the option.

A new Palestine, free of Palestinians, says Trump

Like many of his recent illogical Presidential orders or statements, President Trump is trying to drive out Palestinians from the occupied territories, into other Arab nations. But the story has a twist, as it has emerged that the Palestinian land in the West Bank is being sold illegally to American far-right Jews by Jerusalembased companies, violating several laws

he 47th American President Donald Trump, in the first week of his second term as president, has issued various contentious executive orders and given his longwinded view on many international issues. One such issue is the rehabilitation of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, after the recent ceasefire.

Trump said on Saturday (24 January) that we just clean out that whole thing," referring to Gaza and asking Jordan and Egypt to take Palestinians from Gaza.

Trump's proposal to "clean out" the Gaza Strip by moving more than a million Palestinians to neighbouring countries has drawn sharp criticism, with opponents condemning it as ethnic cleansing and warning of regional chaos.

Apparently, he told reporters aboard Air Force One, "You're talking about million and a half people, and we just clean out that

whole thing, The potential transfer, he said, "could be temporary" or "could be

By: Asad Mirza

long-term. The proposal marks a sharp break from the Biden and earlier American administration's stance that Gaza should not be depopulated, and this could signal a shift from a longstanding US position that Gaza should be part of a future Palestinian state. It would also align the Trump administration with Israel's most radical far-right politicians, who advocate transferring Palestinians out of the territory to make way for Jewish settlements

While there has been no response from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, the idea was applauded by far-right Israeli politi-

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who leads the Religious Zionism party, said Trump has recognised that Gaza was "a breeding ground for terror," and "there is no doubt that in the long run, encouraging migration is the only solution that will bring peace and security to the residents of Israel and alleviate the suffering of Gaza's Arab residents.

Jordan, Egypt, and PA's re-

Meanwhile, Egypt and Jordanian leaders have rejected Trump's suggestion to take in Palestinians. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Jordan's King Abdullah have rejected any forced displacement of Palestinians, days after United States President Donald Trump suggested that Arab countries take in Palestinians from the war-torn

"Regarding what is being said about the displacement of Palestinians, it can never be tolerated or allowed because of its impact on Egyptian national security," el-Sisi told a press conference on

A statement issued by the Palestinian Authority's President Mahmoud Abbas, based in the West Bank, said, "We DEGREE OF THOUGHT will not allow the

repetition of the catastrophes that befell our people

in 1948 and 1967. The former date is known to Palestinians as the Nakba, or "catastrophe," which refers to the 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were driven out of what is now Israel before and during the War of Independence in 1948, after the UN-proposed division of Mandatory Palestine was rejected by Arabs in Palestine and Arab states, who invaded Israel.

The 1967 war, during which Israel captured East Jerusalem including Muslim and Christian sites there, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights, saw further several hundred thousand more displaced from those territories, and is also referred as Al Naksa, meaning "the setback."

Abbas also rejected what he called "any policy that undermines the unity of the Palestinian land in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.'

Earlier, the UN's top court, the International Court of Justice at The Hague in a July 2024 ruling had said Israel's occupation of



Palestinian territories is against in-

ternational law. Illegal sale of land in West Bank to American Zionists

Meanwhile, there have been reports that real estate firms based in Israel are selling land parcels and flats in the West Bank, urging the investors to buy a piece of the Promised Land (apparently illegal). Majority of the buyers are far right Orthodox Jews.

These events have been organised in many US cities, where the invitees are handpicked, based on their religious affiliation.

Journalist Marc Steiner in his podcastNot In Our Name on the US-basedThe Real News Network, invited Eleanor Goldfield, a creative activist and a journalist, to get more details about this new business

According to Eleanor, the potential buyers are cherry picked, she said, "Some folks were saying when they tried to register for the event, they had to do a Zoom call with the organiser and the organiser asked to see their bookcase to see if there were Jewish books on there. They demanded to know where they daven (where they pray), who their rabbi was. And finally, only the far-right ultra-Orthodox Jews were invited to events in Baltimore, USA."

Reportedly, these events have been held in New York, New Jersev, Baltimore and many other US

Rich Segal, a resident of Teaneck, New Jersey told Al Jazeera's Kevin Herten on his podcastThe Takethat he first became aware that there were such real estate events here in Teaneck back in 2007 and he only became aware because he happened to be reading the Jewish newspapers, and saw this advertisement for a real estate event. He investigated the event a little bit and found out that the promoters are actually selling

New Jersey. Rich further said that he thought that this has to be illegal and certainly immoral, and he has to try to stop it, and he did. So that was the first time that he organised a demonstration, he tried to stop it in other ways too, made calls to everyone from the local police to the FBI and found out that absolutely nobody was interested to

West Bank settlement homes di-

rectly to Jews here in Teaneck,

investigate this matter. According to Richrecently, meaning after October 7, 2024, things boiled over in Teaneck, New Jersey, when he tried to organise demonstrations against these real estate shows, after he and one of his colleagues were thrown out ceremoniously from one of them when they disclosed their identities. Rich himself is a Jew but says that only ultra rightwing orthodox Jews are invited to these shows, confirming Eleanor's observation, who too is a Jew. He said further that in Teaneck synagogues are hosting real estate fairs encouraging members to buy property in Israel and occupied West Bank settlements. They call it redemption of the land or coming back home.

According to Eleanor groups like Jewish Voice for Peace, CARE, and PAL - the Palestinian Association for Liberation organised demonstrations against these shows, but to no avail.

The Gameplan Now, one just needs to link these two apparently unconnected but really intertwined issues. Trump is urging to get Gaza and West Bank free of Palestinians, while at the same time the Israeli companies are flouting a total of 22 international, American, and Israeli laws, selling the land in West

Jews, according to Rich. Trump, as is commonly known is a property developer, he, and his son-in law Jared Kushner, own a large number of companies in Israel and ultimately, they and their band of followers will be the op-

Bank to the orthodox and fanatic

portune gainers in this deal. However, what is heartening is the fact that actions against these illegal activities are being organised by Jews themselves, particularly those who denounce Zionism, like Eleanor and Rich,

But at the same time what worries one is that this issue is missing from many western news outlets, except some independent ones like, the Real News Network. What is needed is that more people report this and media should highlight it, demanding a proper investigation into these murky illegal land deals. Moreover, the manner in which this idea has been floated by Trump and the clandestine sale of land in Israel may prove to be part of the old Israeli plan to create a Greater Israel. (The author is a New Delhi-based senior commentator on national, international, defence and strategic affairs, environmental issues, an interfaith practitioner, and a media consult-

Can Asom Sahitya Sabha regain its lost dignity?

he Asom Sahitya Sabha, established in 1917, has long been regarded as the foremost cultural and literary institution in Assam, playing a pivotal role in preserving and promoting the Assamese language, literature, and cultural heritage. For over a century, it has been a symbol of pride and unity for the Assamese people, fostering a sense of identity and belonging. However, in recent years, there has been growing concern among intellectuals, cultural enthusiasts, and the general public about whether the Sabha is losing its dignity and relevance in contemporary times. This concern stems from various factors, including internal conflicts, political interference, a perceived decline in literary standards, and a failure to adapt to the changing socio-cultural landscape of Assam.

One of the primary reasons for the perceived decline in the dignity of the Asom Sahitya Sabha is the increasing politicization of the institution. Historically, the Sabha has maintained a non-political stance, focusing solely on literary and cultural matters. However, in recent years, there have been allegations of political interference in the functioning of the Sabha. Political parties and leaders have been accused of using the Sabha as a platform to further their agendas, thereby compromising its integrity. This politicization has led to a loss of trust among the people, who view the Sabha as a sacred institution that should remain above partisan politics. The involvement of politicians in the Sabha's elections and decision-making processes has further eroded its credibility, raising questions about its autonomy and impartiality. Another factor contributing to the decline in the Sabha's dignity is the internal conflicts and factionalism within the

been reports of infighting among mem- culture, there is a need for the Sabha to bers, with disputes over leadership posi- adopt a more inclusive approach, embractions and ideological differences taking ing the linguistic and cultural diversity of center stage. These conflicts have often played out in public, tarnishing the Sabha's image and diverting attention from its core mission. Instead of focusing on literary and cultural activities, the Sabha has become embroiled in controversies, leading to a sense of disillusionment among its members and supporters. The lack of unity and cohesion within the organization has weakened its ability to effectively carry out its objectives, further

diminishing its stature. The perceived decline in literary standards is another issue that has raised concerns about the Sabha's relevance in contemporary times. The Sabha was once known for its high literary standards and its ability to attract some of the finest writers, poets, and scholars in Assam. However, in recent years, there has been criticism that the quality of literary works and discussions at the Sabha's events has declined. Some argue that the Sabha has become more focused on quantity rather than quality, with an emphasis on organizing large-scale events rather than nurturing literary talent. This shift in focus has led to a dilution of the Sabha's intellectual rigor, making it less appealing to serious writers and scholars.

Moreover, the Sabha's failure to adapt to the changing socio-cultural landscape of Assam has also contributed to its perceived decline. Assam is a diverse state with multiple ethnic groups, each with its own language, culture, and traditions. In recent years, there has been a growing demand for the recognition and promotion of these indigenous languages and cultures. However, the Sabha has been criticized for not doing enough to address these demands. While it has traditionally

the state. By failing to do so, the Sabha risks alienating a significant portion of the population and losing its relevance in a rapidly changing society.

The rise of digital technology and social media has also posed challenges to the Sabha's traditional mode of functioning. In the past, the Sabha's annual conferences and literary events were major cultural milestones, attracting large audiences and generating widespread interest. However, with the advent of digital platforms, people now have access to a wealth of literary and cultural content at their fingertips. This has led to a decline in the popularity of traditional literary events, as younger generations increasingly turn to online platforms for their cultural consumption. The Sabha has been slow to adapt to this digital shift, and its efforts to engage with a younger, techsavvy audience have been limited. This has further contributed to the perception that the Sabha is losing its relevance in the digital age

Despite these challenges, it is important to acknowledge that the Asom Sahitya Sabha still holds a special place in the hearts of the Assamese people. Its contributions to the preservation and promotion of the Assamese language and culture are undeniable, and it continues to play a vital role in shaping the cultural identity of Assam. However, for the Sabha to regain its lost dignity and relevance, it must address the issues that have led to its decline. This requires a renewed commitment to its core mission, free from political interference and internal conflicts. The Sabha must also strive to uphold high literary standards and embrace the linguistic and cultural diversity of Assam. Additionally, it must adapt to the changing times by leveraging digital technology to reach a wider audience and engage with younger

While the Asom Sahitya Sabha is facing challenges that have led to concerns about its dignity and relevance, it is not too late for the institution to reclaim its former glory. By addressing the issues of politicization, internal conflicts, declining literary standards, and a lack of inclusivity, the Sabha can once again become a beacon of cultural and literary excellence in Assam. It must also embrace the opportunities presented by digital technology to stay relevant in a rapidly changing world. The Asom Sahitya Sabha has a rich legacy and a proud history, and with the right reforms and a renewed sense of purpose, it can continue to play a vital role in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Assam for generations to come.

Budget 2025: Weaving growth through demand revival and economic resilience

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Union Budget 2025 unfolded like a carefully woven tapestry, reflecting both classical macroeco-nomic fundamentals and a contemporary shift in priorities. Much like the Finance Minister's sari—a tesnment to tradition and innovation—the Budget straddled the line between past strategies and a recalibrated approach aimed at bolstering consumption-led growth. It marked a pivotal departure from the investment-led growth narrative that defined the post-Covid-19 recovery phase, embracing instead the idea of stimulating demand to catalyze economic expansion.

consumption, constituting over 60% of India's GDP, has witnessed tepid growth, hovering at around 4% in FY 2023-24. Recognizing this, the Finance Minister has laid out a framework to address under-consumption, injecting an additional Rs 1 lakherore into the economy. Central to this approach is the increase in the tax-free income threshold to Rs 12 lakh, a bold move designed to raise net disposable incomes, especially for the middle class. By putting more money in the hands of consumers, the government aims to spur demand across key sectors such s automobiles, real estate, and consumer goods, thereby etting the stage for a broader economic revival

A Delicate Balancing Act: Growth vs. Inflation The Finance Minister has taken a calculated risk by eaning toward growth in the classic "growth-inflation" trade-off. This decision comes against a backdrop of heightened inflationary pressures that have eroded real incomes, both in rural and urban India. The depreciation of the rupee—down 3% in the first nine months of the current fiscal—has further complicated matters by increasing import costs and contributing to inflation. Additionally, the growing trade deficit and volatile global conditions have added layers of uncertainty, making it

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) now finds itself in a crucial role, tasked with aligning monetary policy with the fiscal priorities outlined in the Budget. While an accommodative stance may appear inevitable, the RBI is expected to bide its time before implementing rate cuts, illowing the fiscal stimulus to permeate the economy. Targeted liquidity measures, such as selective repo operations, could enhance the velocity of money circulation and stimulate borrowing for productive investments without exacerbating inflationary pressures. The proposal to channel the RBI's burgeoning dividend—estimated at Rs 2.11 lakhcrore—into risk capital rather than remitting it to the government could also serve as a catalyst for eco-

Addressing the Demand-Supply Disconnect Despite the emphasis on consumption-led growth, the Budget does not entirely abandon supply-side reforms. The government's 2019 corporate tax break and other initiatives aimed at incentivizing private investment have yet to yield significant results, largely due to persistent ow demand and underutilized capacities in the private ector. The Budget seeks to bridge this gap by simultaneously addressing demand-side constraints and reinforcng public investment in infrastructure.

The Rs 1.5 lakhcroreallocation for 50-year interest-free loans to states for capital expenditure signals a collaborative federal approach. This funding, along with a three-



year pipeline of public-private partnership (PPP) projects and the development of 50 tourist destinations, under scores the government's commitment to leveraging state level initiatives for national growth. However, the success of these measures hinges on the states' capacity to implement complementary reforms, particularly in regulatory governance and the ease of doing business. Global Uncertainties and Trade Challenges

The international economic landscape adds another layer of complexity to the Budget's objectives. Trade tensions, evolving US policies, and President Trump's tariff threats under his "America First" agenda have compelled nations to reconsider their duty structures. While the Budget has signaled tariff adjustments aimed at reducing import dependence and boosting export competitiveness. it stops short of providing a comprehensive roadmap to navigate these global challenges. Outlining contingency measures to address such uncertainties could have instilled greater confidence in domestic markets and global

The Road Ahead: A Blended Model of Growth

Budget 2025 exemplifies the government's attempt to integrate demand and supply-led strategies into a cohesive economic model. Structural reforms and corporate incentives remain pivotal, but they are now comple mented by measures aimed at boosting consumer demand such as direct benefit transfers, enhanced social safety nets. and increased disposable incomes. The success of this dua approach will depend on its execution and the ability to balance short-term growth imperatives with long-term economic resilience. While the Budget rightly emphasizes domestic consumption as a driver of growth, its broa bition must extend to addressing systemic inefficiencies and fostering a more inclusive economic framework. The collaborative intent with states, particularly in areas like infrastructure development and regulatory reforms, holds significant promise but requires robust coordination and state-level accountability.

In many ways, Budget 2025 is a step forward—a recognition of the need to adapt strategies to evolving economic realities. Yet, it is not without its shortcomings The lack of immediate structural reforms to address in flation, trade deficits, and global uncertainties leaves critof the Finance Minister's sari, the Budget presents a complex interlacing of ideas, some bold and forward-looking. others cautious and conventional. Whether this intricate design will hold under the weight of economic challenges remains to be seen.(The writer can be reached at di-pakkurmiglpltd@gmail.com)



How a good night's sleep may help us restrict bad memories

By: Maria Cohut

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t is becoming increasingly obvious that sleep plays a range of crucial roles in helping our bodies maintain various aspects of health, including brain health and mental

A new study from the Universities of York and East Anglia in the United Kingdom whose findings appear in PNAS — now looks at an even more intriguing aspect of the relationship between sleep, the brain, and mental health.

The study found that disrupted sleep affected the brain's ability to restrict intrusive memories, which could contribute to conditions including anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Study co-author Marcus Harrington, PhD, a lecturer in psychology at the University of East Anglia who specializes in sleep, memory, emotion, and mental health, told Medical News Today that he and his colleagues conducted this study because they were keen to find out more about why some people might find it more difficult to overcome traumatic experiences than others.

He told us: "Most people will have a traumatic experience at some point in their lives, but only a small proportion will go on to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Why do some people recover from trauma effectively whereas others are left with debilitating symptoms? Answering this challenging question is a major goal in clinical psychology. One factor that we know increases the likelihood of developing PTSD in the aftermath of trauma is poor sleep. However, we don't know what it is about sleep loss that seems to make people vulnerable to PTSD and other mental health problems.

Disrupted sleep prevents the brain from suppressing bad memories

For this study, the researchers recruited 85 healthy adults ages 18–30 years — of whom 30 were male and the rest female — whom they asked to spend one night in the sleep laboratory. Around half of the cohort (43 participants) had to stay awake all night, while the rest had a healthy night's sleep.

To see how sleep or the lack thereof might influence the brain's ability to suppress unwanted memories and thoughts, the researchers had previously

asked the participants to undertake an exercise: They had to look at pictures of faces, some of which appeared in the context of negative scenes, such as a car crash.

Following the night of sleep or sleep disruption, all participants had to either recall the scene associated with a specific face or suppress the memory of a scene with a negative association. The researchers used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans to investigate the participants' brain activity at this time.

When asked to recall unpleasant memories, it became apparent that participants who had undergone a sleepless night had less activation of the right dorsolateral prefrontal cortex region of the brain, which is associated with emotional regulation and the inhibition of intrusive thoughts. By contrast, the well-rested participants had higher activity in this brain region and less activity in the hippocampus, which is associated with memory recall.

In their study paper, the researchers explained that this suggested that well-rested participants were better able to restrict unwanted memories—a function called "memory suppression." Conversely, this function was impaired in the brains of participants who had spent a sleepless night.

The fact that sleep deprivation thus appears to affect the ability to suppress intrusive memories and possibly other intrusive thoughts could have important implications for mood disorders like depression and anxiety and conditions like PTSD, they further suggested.

We have known for a long time that when people are sleep-deprived, they're less effective at inhibiting external actions, such as pressing a button," Harrington told MNT, and the current study also confirmed that sleep deprivation negatively affects our control over unwanted memories.

However, the researcher added, "understanding how sleep deprivation affects the subjective experience of trying to keep unwanted memories from intruding into conscious awareness is only half the battle - we were also interested in understanding what goes on in people's brains when they try to suppress memories under conditions of sleep loss.'

"That's why we used functional MRI to take images of our participants' brains as they engaged in memory suppres-



sion. The additional insight offered by neuroimaging allows us to create a more holistic picture of how poor sleep might pave the way to mental health problems," he went on to say.

Commenting on the study results, Caroline Horton, PhD, professor of sleep and cognition at Bishop Grosseteste University in Lincoln, U.K., who was not involved in this research, told MNT:

"This is a high-quality study that will, I suspect, initiate a wave of experimental work exploring links between sleep and inhibition, which is very welcome. The experimental methods used in the study are analogies for more pervasive mental health disorders, and serve as a useful model for thinking about how sleep can help to keep unwanted or damaging emotional material at bay, but does not yet demonstrate precisely how disturbed sleep over longer timeframes can impact on specific mental health conditions, such as PTSD."

Why is memory suppression important for mental

There is plenty of research concerned with the ways in which a good night's sleep helps support our memory function, due to concerns around cognitive decline risk in an increasingly aging population. There is also accumulating evidence that getting more deep sleep is important in supporting the formation of new memories.

However, memory suppression also plays a key role in health, particularly mental health. "In our daily lives, we can often be reminded of unpleasant past experiences. For example, somebody might see a red car driving too quickly and it causes them to automatically retrieve memories about a car accident they were once involved in," Harrington ex-

plained to MNT. "When this happens, people often engage in memory suppression, which allows them to keep the unwanted memories about the car accident out of mind. If the memory suppression function fails, intrusive thoughts can flood conscious awareness, which may be distracting, distressing, or even debilitating," he said, speaking of this brain function's short-term

benefits. He also told us that "memory suppression can also have lasting benefits" when it comes to mental health in the long run.

The researcher went on to note that "suppressing an unwanted memory weakens its underlying memory trace, reducing the likelihood of that memory intruding into consciousness again in the future."

"Moreover, repeatedly suppressing emotionally negative memories can make those memories seem less unpleasant when they are revisited in the future. These far-reaching benefits of memory suppression are believed to make it a fundamental component of healthy emotion regulation." — Marcus Harrington, PhD.

What is the link between sleep deprivation and poor mental health?

'We know a great deal about the integral role that sleep plays in regulating our emotions, ensuring that our responses are proportionate to stimuli and the environment, keeping general anxieties at bay, and allowing us to cope in a wide range of situations," said Horton. "Moreover, sleep distur-

bances are associated with every psychiatric syndrome that you could think of," she pointed out.

Studies from the past year have added to the evidence surrounding the relationship between mental health and sleep. One large study, for instance,

found that people who go to bed late, past 1 a.m., are more likely to experience mental ill health, including conditions indicate a bidirectional relationsuch as depression and anxiety.

While the study did not prove a causal relationship, its authors suggested that later bedtimes may result in less rapid-eye movement (REM) sleep — the type of deep sleep within which most dreams occur, and which helps maintain the brain

What role does REM sleep play in mental health?

In the current study, the researchers further found that participants who had spent more time in REM sleep later had better activation of the right dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, which more effectively sup-

ported memory suppression. "The dorsolateral prefrontal context, the area of the brain demonstrated to be impaired following a night of sleep deprivation, is interestingly an area that has been shown to be relatively inactive during REM sleep relative to wake," said Horton.

"Work from my own lab has demonstrated that, during dreaming, we experience a range of heightened emotional experiences, likely as a result of this area of the brain effectively turning its activity down, that ordinarily prevents us from thinking about such emotions. Taken together, it is plausible that we experience these emotional scenarios during sleep, when it is safe to do so, leading to a well-regulated ability to engage that inhibition action when we are awake." - Caroline Horton, PhD

"When we don't have the ability to experience those emotional experiences during sleep, then we do so when we are awake - hence the intrusions of memories and experiences that are pervasive, emotional, and likely highly unpleasant," Horton added.

The issue that arises is that people with diagnosed mental health conditions — such as anxiety and depression - tend to have more difficulty in obtaining uninterrupted sleep. And, since insomnia can be a symptom of poor mental health, this could reinforce a vicious cycle that disrupts crucial brain functions, such as that of memory suppression.

"The relationship between disturbed sleep and mental ill health is almost certainly cyclical," Horton told us. "It is very difficult to establish definitively whether disturbed sleep causes maladaptive emotional responses, or vice versa, but a range of research approaches ship, whereby poor sleep may worsen existing maladaptive thinking, and maladaptive thinking leads to disturbed sleep." "Poor sleep leads to intrusive thoughts that may further obstruct the sleep needed to support recovery, creating a vicious cycle of distressing thought intrusions and chronic sleeplessness, which could plausibly culminate in mental

Can restoring sleep restore key brain functions?

further explained.

health problems," Harrington

The good news is that restoring deep sleep could help redress some of these issues:

"An important finding in our study was that rapid eye movement (REM) sleep was associated with the overnight restoration of the brain mechanisms that drive memory suppression. Sleep researchers are currently developing strategies to enhance REM sleep using methods such as auditory brain stimulation." — Marcus Harrington, PhD

Harrington said this could improve therapeutic approaches in the future: "Future studies could investigate whether directly manipulating REM sleep could help people to keep intrusive thoughts out of mind, and if so, whether it can be used in the treatment of mental health problems associated with intrusive thoughts.

However, he also cautioned that, for now, "this line of research is still in its infancy patient studies are required to bridge the gap between our research and clinical practice."

What is most important, Harrington emphasized, is actively working to improve our sleep hygiene now, in order to prevent becoming seriously affected by the disruptions poor sleep causes in our brains. "Another possible applica-

tion of our research is in the prevention of mental health problems," he told MNT. "Recent studies from Professor Michael Anderson's lab at the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit in Cambridge suggests that thought suppression is a skill that can be trained, and that such training can benefit mental health." "It would be useful to find

out if such training works in people with insomnia. If it does, thought suppression training could potentially be used as a therapeutic tool targeted at preventing people with sleep issues from developing mental health problems." — Marcus Harrington, PhD.

Tips to improve your sleep Horton emphasized that sleeping well is a lifelong habit and, as such, will take a little time to learn and perfect." She thus advised that we should not feel discouraged if we do not see immediate results when we set out to improve our sleep.

"[I]t's important to appreciate that great sleep might not appear on night one, and even the best sleepers have bad nights sometimes," she told us.

With that in mind, the first step toward achieving better sleep is to pay attention to our sleep routines and plan our bedtimes according to our individual needs, the expert advised:

"Make a note of when you yawn, for instance. Are you regularly feeling sleepy at 10.30 p.m.? If so, it would make sense to be in bed by that time! Plan, as best you can, some regular bed- and risetimes, allowing at least 8 hours in bed, which should allow you time to sleep for around 7.5 hours, plus a little more for getting to sleep and getting up. Of course, those times can be adjusted depending on how long you take to get to sleep."

Then, she added, "There are endless so-called sleep hygiene recommendations available, including refraining from caffeine and/or alcohol, not eating within 3 hours of going to bed, and ensuring your bedroom sleep environment is conducive to relaxing and switching off."

"All of these are evidencebased and can help individuals," said Horton, "but alone, they may only have a small impact on sleep quality."

The key is, once again, "customizing" our habits to our individual requirements, and making small, gradual changes: "Think about your own needs and, rather than making lots of changes at once, try to make small changes and see how they go. We are more likely to stick with a new behaviour if it can align with our values and existing habits." "Finally, consistency is key," Horton stressed. 'It may be tempting to stay up late on a Friday night and sleep in at weekends, but that confuses your body and brain. meaning it will be extra difficult to rise early in the week." "Evidence shows that catch-

ing up at weekends does not compensate for the damage caused by sleeping too little in the week, and it also prevents a regular routine from developing," she concluded. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

How to replace doomscrolling What really happened at the with a mindful hobby Maha Kumbh stampede?

By: Emma Palmer-Cooper

t's a familiar picture for many of us: after a long day at work, we find our-Leselves glued to the couch, phone in hand. Maybe even for hours at a time. What starts as a way to mentally unwind or catch up on the news quickly becomes hours spent compulsively "doomscrolling" - the act of spending an excessive amount of time on social media scrolling through overwhelmingly negative content. A fear of missing out is what drives many of us to continue our repetitive scroll.

While it might feel like doomscrolling helps you to stay informed, research shows that this habit often results in considerable psychological distress. This ultimately leads to lower mental wellbeing, poorer life satisfaction, and reduced engagement at work.

The good news is there are many ways to break this bad habit – and one way people have successfully replaced time on their phones is with a hobby.

By making a conscious decision to change a habit – such as picking up your phone and doomscrolling for hours – you can replace it with one that's more fulfilling. Having an after-work hobby is linked to better wellbeing and may play a part in reducing work-related stress.

Creative activities in particular are known to encourage a sense of personal fulfilment through developing new skills. Personal fulfilment is important for emotional resilience.

Some of the most beneficial hobbies to try in order to break your doomscrolling habit are those that encourage mindfulness. Doing a hobby mindfully simply means paying attention to what you're doing and being in the moment – whether that's colouring, knitting or sewing.

Mindfulness is the practice of focusing your attention on the present moment and experiencing your thoughts and feelings without judgment. It's not necessarily about clearing your mind, but about engaging in an activity with your full attention, and not being distracted by other

Here are just a few ways that mindful hobbies can help you break your doom-

1. They hold positive attention When you're focused on a craft, your hands are busy, so you'll be too engaged to reach for your phone. Creative hobbies that require attention, such as knitting or colouring, can also act as a "flow activity", where you lose track of time and feel fully immersed in what you're doing. This can be a great antidote to losing hours doomscrolling.

2. They're calming Many people who have a creative hobby say the physical repetitive actions are meditative and calming. Crafts can also support healthy emotion regulation - our ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences. Soothing your

triggered by doomscrolling.

nervous system can counteract tension

3. Sense of achievement Doomscrolling can leave people feeling a loss of control, whereas mindful



hobbies provide a sense of control along with tangible results: a colourful drawing, a knitted scarf or perhaps an embroidered

Achievement is considered one of the core ingredients of psychological wellbeing – and is a key remedy to distress.

4. Reduce stress and anxiety Mindful crafting offers a break from

ruminating. Just ten minutes of regular mindful colouring – at least three times a week for two weeks - can reduce stress, anxiety and feelings of low mood, alongside improving quality of life.

Creative hobbies can also significantly lower levels of our stress hormone, cortisol, which promotes a sense relaxation.

5. Offer a sense of belonging By engaging in a new hobby you also join a community of people with similar interests. This opens you up to more positive social interactions, and a sense of belonging is linked to better wellbeing. **Choosing the right hobby**

Activities such as colouring, knitting, sewing and crochet are a good place to start as they involve repetitive, soothing movements along with a sense of achievement. Of course, you should choose a hobby you think you'll enjoy, as you won't build new habits doing activi-

Here are some other things you can do when getting started to give you the best chance of success.

ties you don't want to do.

Start small. Actively setting a small and achievable change in behaviour can increase your success in building new, positive habits. So to begin with, choose a simple project that's not too hard to complete – such as colouring a single page or knitting a small square. Or, set a

goal to spend 10-20 minutes a day on your hobby after work before reaching for your phone. Early, achievable wins lead to a sense of achievement, and keep you motivated.

Set boundaries around phone use. Create a "no phone zone" and make time for your hobby. This will help remove temptation to scroll and make a more calm environment for you to craft in. Be present. Notice the colours,

extures and movements involved in what you're doing. If your mind starts to wander, gently bring your focus back to your activity. Join a community. Whether online or in person, connecting with others who do the same hobby can increase your sense of belonging and make it even more enjoyable. This can also promote more positive on-

line interactions. Breaking your doomscrolling habit doesn't mean you have to abandon social media entirely. But swapping scrolling for mindful hobbies in your free time allows you to set meaningful boundaries and build positive habits. By prioritising your wellbeing and engaging with information in a balanced way, your brain gets a "mental break" from all the negative content. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

By: Raaz Dheeraj Sharma

he Mahakumbh at Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, stands as a moment of pride for every individual in this nation. The festival, a significant spiritual event, draws millions from across the country to take part in the holy ritual of "snan" (ritual dip) at the Triveni Sangam, Known for its grandeur and significance, the Maha Kumbh Mela, which occurs once every 144 years, is unique. It is marked by the rare alignment of four planets, making the overall experience deeply significant for devotees.

From January 13, the influx of visitors to the Kumbh Mela was enormous, with the government estimating arrangements to accommodate a staggering 1 billion people. The atmosphere was filled with devotion as thousands followed their faith until January 29, 2024.

However, tragedy struck during the Maunsi Amavasya Snan, when numerous devotees, eager to partake in the "Amrit snan," became involved in a stam-

pede. According to government records, 30 lives were lost in this tragic incident. Additionally, a second crowd crush occurred at Jhusi, yet it received minimal coverage from major media outlets, except for a report by "The Lallantop."

The disturbing reality surrounding these incidents raises serious questions. Did the authorities truly lack knowledge of the escalations? First and foremost, the media's failure to cover the true nature of these incidents has raised serious questions. Why was the narrative distorted, and why has the administration chosen not to speak up? Where was the administration during the second stampede? These are critical questions that demand urgent answers.

Despite claims from the administration that the Mela police had no prior information about the incidents, we

have seen evidence to the contrary. A viral video shows one police officer stating, "Sir, I cannot explain everything on video... Please send in more forces." If the police on the ground were aware of the situation, how can we accept that the administration was not informed? This inconsistency is alarming and suggests a gross failure in communication and responsibility.

A tractor might cover up physical things-clothing, sandals, and personal belongings—but it cannot erase the memories and trauma experienced by evewitnesses. The horrifying reality of what transpired cannot be scrubbed away or ignored. It is diffi-

cult to hold back tears as we reflect on

the experiences of those who were

present. We cannot even begin to

imagine the fear, pain, and confusion

Eyewitness accounts describe hor-

rifying scenes, and testimonies from

individuals, including a Haldiram

store owner and influencer Tanya

Mittal, reflect the chaos and despair

encountered when lives were at stake.

While she attempted to aid those in

distress, her shop was looted for cash

during the pandemonium—a grim in-

sight into human behavior during

The delay in acknowledging the

loss of life—18 hours—has led to

public outcry. Why did the authorities

initially claim that no one was in se-

rious condition? The opposition has

criticized the administration for fail-

ing to disclose the full extent of the

casualties in a timely manner. This is

that unfolded in those moments.

not merely a matter of assigning blame; rather, it highlights a critical failure of sensitivity and empathy in managing such a colossal event. As devotees flock to the Triveni

Sangam in pursuit of spiritual fulfillment, we need to reflect on the importance of communal support during challenging times. The deaths resulting from the stampede serve as a solemn reminder that every life matters. Each loss is a tragedy that resonates deeply within families and the broader community.

It is essential for the administration to address the current situation transparently and effectively. Families

searching for their loved ones deserve accurate information about their whereabouts and well-being. For the future, we must ensure that safety takes precedence, and management plans are crafted with a thorough understanding of the dynamics at play during such significant gatherings.

As we honor the auspiciousness of the Mahakumbh, we are reminded

to also uphold the values of compassion and unity. Let us strive to support one another, take our dips with pure intentions, and ensure that in the pursuit of faith, we do not lose sight of our responsibility for each other's safety and well-being. The real essence of such gatherings should reflect not only our devotion to the divine but also our commitment to humanity itself.

The pain of loss and the suffering of victims should not be swept under the rug or minimized. It is high time that we demand acknowledgment of the truth and that those in positions of authority take responsibility for their actions and failures. The people affected by these tragedies need to be heard, and their stories must be told. Only then can we hope to move towards healing and prevention of such incidents in the future. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

At least 19 killed, mostly women, in car bomb explosion in northern Syria

DAMASCUS (SYRIA), Feb 3: A car bomb exploded on the outskirts of a northern Syrian city on Monday, killing at least 19 people, all but one of them women, and leaving more than a dozen wounded, hospital workers said.

The car detonated next to a vehicle carrying mostly female agricultural workers on the outskirts of the city of Manbij.

The dead included 18 women and one man, a nurse at the hospital, Mohammad Ahmad, told The Associated Press. Another 15 women were wounded, some of them in critical condition, according to the local Syrian civil de-

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the explosion. It was the seventh car bomb explosion in Manbij in just over a

month, said Munir Mustafa, the deputy director of civil defence. Manbij in northeastern Aleppo olence even after the downfall of President Bashar Assad in De-

Turkish-backed factions. known as the Syrian National Army, have clashed with the USbacked Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. The factions took the city from the SDF in early Deprovince continues to witness vi- cember during a lightning insurgency that toppled President

Bashar Assad. A resident said the car that detonated was parked on the roadside. The recurring attacks have forced residents to become more vigilant, he said

There are efforts from the people of Manbij to focus on protect-

in the main neighbourhoods of the city," Jameel al-Sayyed, a Manbij activist and journalist said.

Mustafa warned that the attacks in Aleppo province near Syria's second city are a threat to Syria's progress to bring about post-war security and economic recovery. Most of the explosions took place

"The continued attacks on Syrian civilian areas and targeting civilians while they are trying to recover from the effects of the war of the defunct Assad regime

threaten their lives, deepens their humanitarian tragedy, undermines educational and agricultural activities and livelihoods, and worsens the humanitarian situation in Syria," Mustafa said.

A car bombing in Manbij on Saturday killed four civilians and wounded nine, state news agency SANA reported, citing civil defense officials. (AP)

Faced with Trump's threats over Greenland, Denmark's leader seeks support from her EU partners

EU leaders

retreat

BRUSSELS, Feb 3: Denmark's prime minister insisted on Monday that Greenland is not for sale and called for a robust response from her European Union partners should US President Donald Trump press ahead with his threat to take control of the island.

"I will never support the idea of fighting allies. But of course, if the US puts tough terms on Europe, we need a collective and robust response," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen told reporters in Brussels as EU leaders gathered for defense talks.

Greenland, home to a large US military base, is an autonomous territory of Denmark, a longtime US ally. Last month, Trump left open the possibility that the American military might be used to secure Greenland, as well as the Panama Canal. "We need Greenland for national security purposes," he said.

Frederiksen said she has "great support" from her EU partners on the fact "that everybody has to respect the sovereignty of all national states in the world, and that Greenland is today a part of the Kingdom of Denmark. It's part of our territory and it's not for sale.'

She acknowledged US concerns about security in the Arctic Region, where Russia and China have been increasingly active.

"I totally agree with the Americans that the High North, that the Arctic region is becoming more and more important when we are talking about defence and security and deterrence," Frederiksen said, adding that the US and Denmark could have "stronger footprints" in Greenland, in security terms.

"They are already there and they can have more possibilities," she said, underlining that Denmark itself can also "scale up" its security presence. "If this is about securing our part of the world, we can find a way forward," Frederiksen said.

Last week, her government announced a roughly 14.6 billion kroner (nearly \$2 billion) agreement with parties including the governments of Greenland and the Faeroe Islands to "improve capabilities for surveillance and maintaining sovereignty in the region.'

It would include three new Arctic naval vessels, two additional long-range surveillance drones and satellite capacity, the Defence Ministry in Copenhagen said.

Frederiksen's remarks came as EU leaders met for defence talks but with no clear sign yet from Trump about how he intends to try to end Russia's war on Ukraine. The Europeans fear that any attempt to pull together a quick deal

would not be favourable to

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte were set to join the bloc's 27 leaders at a selfstyled "retreat" at Egmont Place in the Belgian capital. The summit agenda focuses on EU-US cooperation, military spending and ramping up Europe's defense industry.

The meeting comes as Europe's biggest land conflict since World War II approaches its third anniversary, and with confidence in Trump shaky as he threatens his allies with tariffs. Trump already slapped duties on European steel and aluminum during his first

"We were listening carefully to those words, and of course we are preparing also on our side," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. But, she underlined, "there are no winners in trade wars. If ... the US starts a trade war, then the one laughing on the side is China. We are very interlinked." (AP)

Pakistan witnesses sharp increase in terror attacks in Jan 2025

sharp increase in terror attacks in January 2025, surging by 42 per cent compared to the previous month, a think tank has said.

Quoting the data released by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), Dawn reported on Monday that at least 74 militant attacks were recorded nationwide, resulting in 91 fatalities, including 35 security personnel, 20 civilians and 36 militants.

Another 117 individuals suffered injuries, including 53 security forces personnel, 54 civilians and 10 militants

The report highlighted an intensified counterterrorism campaign by security forces, which led to elimination of at least 185 militants in January, making it the second deadliest month for militant casualties since 2016.

The highest number of militants killed in a single month since 2016 was recorded in December 2024, when security forces neutralised 190 militants.

The combined toll of militant attacks and security operations in January stood at 245 fatalities, comprising 185 militants, 40 security forces personnel and 20 civilians.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) remained the worst-affected province, followed by Balo-chistan. In KP's settled districts, insurgents carried out 27 attacks, resulting in 19 fatalities, including 11 security personnel, six civilians, and two militants.

The tribal districts of KP (erstwhile Fata) witnessed 19 attacks, leading to 46 deaths, including 13 security personnel, eight civilians, and 25 militants. Balochistan also experienced

ISLAMABAD, Feb 3: Pakistan witnessed a a surge in militant activity, with at least 24 attacks, which claimed 26 lives, including 11 security personnel, six civilians, and nine

> In Punjab, two militant attacks were reported, leaving one security official injured. On the last day of January, militants launched a major assault on a police check post in DG Khan's Jhangi area, but security forces repelled the attack without any casualties

> Sindh and the federal capital, Islamabad, each witnessed one attack, though neither resulted in fatalities.

> The month also saw two suicide bombings, both in Baloc-histan. The banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for one, while the proscribed Balochistan Liberation Army took credit for the other.

Additionally, the report observed a concerning spike in kidnappings, with militants abducting at least 37 individuals.

Of these, 22 were taken in five incidents across KP's Lakki Marwat and Tank districts, while 15 were kidnapped in North and Waziristan districts. The surge in abductions in southern KP reflects a deteriorating security situation in the region, it stated.

Meanwhile, security forces intensified operations across KP and Balochistan, eliminating 67 militants in the tribal districts of KP (erstwhile Fata), 71 in its settled areas, and 47 in

Counterterrorism raids were reported in multiple parts of both provinces as authorities sought to curb the growing militant threat, ac-

South Korean appeals court upholds acquittal of Samsung chief Lee

SEOUL, **Feb 3:** A South Korean appeals court on Monday upheld a lower court's ruling that acquitted Samsung Electronics Chairman Lee Jae-yong of financial criminal charges over a contentious merger between Samsung affiliates that cemented his grip over the biggest South Korean company.

The Seoul High Court rejected an appeal by prosecutors. You Jin Kim, Lee's lawyer, welcomed the ruling, saying he hopes that Lee would now focus on his company following Monday's verdict. Prosecutors can again appeal to the Supreme Court, whose rulings are final

In February 2024, the Seoul Central District Court said the prosecution failed to sufficiently prove the merger between Samsung C&T and Cheil Industries was unlawfully conducted with an aim to strengthen Lee's control over Samsung Electronics.

Lee, a third-generation corporate heir who was officially appointed chairman of Samsung Electronics in October 2022, has led the Samsung group of companies since 2014, when his late father, former chairman Lee Kun-hee, suffered a heart attack.

Lee Jae-yong served 18 months in prison after being convicted in 2017 over separate bribery charges related to the 2015 deal

He was originally sentenced to five years in prison for offering bribes to then-President Park Geun-hye and her close confidante to win government support for the 2015 merger, which was key to strengthening his control over the Samsung business empire and solidifying the father-to-son leadership succession.

Lee was released on parole in 2021, and pardoned by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol in August

Some shareholders had opposed the 2015 merger, saying it unfairly benefited the Lee family while hurt-

Emergency crews deployed on Santorini as earthquake swarm worries Greek experts

citizens to strictly adhere to safety

recommendations to minimise

SANTORINI (GREECE), Feb 3: Schools were closed and emergency crews deployed on the volcanic Greek island of Santorini on Monday after a spike in seismic activity raised concerns about a potentially powerful earthquake.

Precautions were also ordered on several nearby Aegean Sea islands all popular summer vacation destinations — after more than 200 earthquakes were undersea recorded in the area over the past three days.

"These measures are precautionary, and authorities will remain vigilant," Civil Protection Minister Vasilis Kikilias said late Sunday following an emergency governrisk." While Greek experts say the quakes, measuring up to magnitude 4.7, are not linked to Santorini's volcano, they acknowledge that the pattern of seismic activity is cause for concern. Government officials met with

scientists throughout the weekend and on Monday to assess the situation, while schools were ordered shut on the nearby islands of Amorgos, Anafi and Ios. On Santorini, residents and visi-

tors were advised to avoid large indoor gatherings and areas where rock slides could occur, while hotels were instructed to drain swimming pools to reduce potential building damage from an earth-Fire Service rescuers who arrived

on the island on Sunday set up yellow tents as a staging area inside a basketball court next to the island's main hospital. "We arrived last night, a 26-member team of rescuers and one rescue dog," said fire brigadier Ioannis Billias.

Quakes continued rattling the island through the night and on Monday morning, many over magnitude 4.0, and Billias said many residents, including entire families, spent the night in their cars. Crescent-shaped Santorini is a premier tourism destination with daily arrivals via commercial flights, ferries, and cruise

Pakistan President Zardari to visit

ISLAMABAD, Feb 3: President Asif Ali Zardari will travel to China on Tuesday on a five-day state visit during which he will discuss a broad spectrum of bilateral relations with the Chinese leaders, with a focus on economic and trade cooperation, security collaboration, and the multibillion dollar economic corridor (CPEC).

The Foreign Office said on Monday that President Zardari, who is visiting Beijing at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, will hold high-level meetings with the President, Premier Li Qiang, and other

Their "discussions will encompass the full spectrum of Pakistan-China relations, with a particular focus on economic and trade cooperation; counter-terrorism and security collaboration, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and future connectivity initiatives," state-run Radio Pakistan quoted the Foreign Office as saying.

litical developments and cooperation in multilateral forums, it added. The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is seen as an attempt by China to further its influence abroad with infrastructure projects funded by Chi-

The two sides will also exchange views on regional and global geopo-

nese investments across the world. Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects under the aegis of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic

Trump plans to cut US funding to China on Tuesday on five-day state visit South Africa over contentious land law

CAPE TOWN, Feb 3: US President Donald Trump has said he will cut all funding to South Africa and has launched an investigation into the country's polices, claiming a "massive" human rights violation is happening over a new land expropriation law

Trump made the pledge to stop all future funding on his Truth Social platform on Sunday, writing: South Africa is confiscating land, and treating certain classes of people VERY BADLY.'

In South Africa, Trump wrote, a "massive Human Rights VIOLATION, at a minimum, is happening for all to see. The United States won't stand for it, we will act. Also, I will be cutting off all future funding to South Africa until a full investigation of this situation has been completed!"

The South African government said Monday that the Trump administration needed to have a better understanding of the new law, which is meant to help redress the impact of decades of white minority rule in South Africa under the apartheid regime, which ended in 1994. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said in a statement that "the South African government has not confiscated any land.'

During apartheid, land was taken from South Africa's Black majority, who were forced to live in areas designated for Blacks only.

Billionaire Elon Musk, who is one of Trump's close allies, was born and raised in South Africa and has also targeted Ramaphosa's government, accusing it of being anti-white and claiming in 2023 it was allowing a "genocide" against white farmers.

Experts in South Africa say that while there are cases of white farmers being killed, it is rather a reflection of the country's desperately high levels of violent crime across the board, which are some of the worst in the world.

In comments to reporters, Trump said Sunday "they're taking away land, they're confiscating land and actually they're doing things that are perhaps far worse than that '

Trump didn't say exactly which policy he was referring to, or which people were being mistreated. But his comments appeared to be in reaction to the new land law South Africa passed last month that gives the government scope to acquire land from private parties if it is in the public interest. (AP)

Officials say remains of 55 of 67 victims of midair collision have been recovered and identified

ARLINGTON, Feb 3: Authorities said Sunday they have recovered the remains of 55 of the 67 people killed in the deadliest US air disaster since 2001

Washington, D.C. Fire and EMS Chief John Donnelly said at a news conference that divers still need to find the bodies of 12 more victims and are committed to the dignified recovery of remains as they prepare to lift wreckage from the Potomac River as early as Monday morning.

"Reuniting those lost in this tragic incident is really what keeps us all going," said Colonel Francis B. Pera of the Army Corps of Engineers. Portions of the aircraft will be loaded onto flatbed trucks and taken to a hangar for further inves-

They spoke hours after families of the victims visited the crash site just outside Washington, D.C., walking along the banks of the Potomac River near Reagan National Airport to memorialize their loved

Dozens of people arrived in buses with a police escort close to where an American Airlines jet and an Army Black Hawk helicopter collided Wednesday, killing all 67 aboard the two aircraft. Federal investigators were working to piece together the events that led to the crash while recovery crews were set to pull more wreckage from the chilly water.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy on Sunday said he wanted to leave federal aviation investigators space to conduct their inquiry.

But he posed a range of questions about the crash while appearing on morning TV news programs.

"What was happening inside the towers? Were they understaffed? ... The position of the Black Hawk, the elevation of the Black Hawk, were the pilots of the Black Hawk wearing night vision goggles?" Duffy asked on CNN.

The American Airlines flight with 64 people on board was preparing to land from Wichita, Kansas. The Army Black Hawk heliconter was on a training mission and had three soldiers on board. Both aircraft plunged into the Potomac River after colliding.

The plane's passengers included figure skaters returning from the

2025 U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Wichita, Kansas, and a group of hunters returning from a guided trip.

Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Austin O'Hara, 28, of Lilburn, Georgia; Chief Warrant Officer 2 Andrew Loyd Eaves, 39, of Great Mills, Maryland; and Cpt. Rebecca M. Lobach, of Durham, North Carolina, were killed in the helicopter.

The National Transportation Safety Board said Saturday that preliminary data showed conflicting readings about the altitudes of the airliner and the Army helicopter.

Investigators also said that about second before impact, the jet's flight recorder showed a change in its pitch. But they did not say whether that change in angle meant that pilots were trying to perform an evasive maneuver to avoid the

Data from the jet's flight recorder showed its altitude as 325 feet (99 meters), plus or minus 25 feet (7.6 meters), when the crash happened Wednesday night, NTSB officials told reporters. Data in the control tower, though, showed the Black Hawk at 200 feet (61 meters), the maximum allowed altitude for helicopters in the area.

The discrepancy has yet to be explained.

Investigators said they hoped to reconcile the difference with data from the helicopter's black box, which is taking more time to retrieve because it became waterlogged after the Black Hawk plunged into the Potomac. They also said they plan to refine the tower data, which can be less reliable. "That's what our job is, to figure that out," NTSB member Todd Inman said.

"This is a complex investigation," investigator in charge Brice Banning said. "There are a lot of pieces here. Our team is working hard to gather this data.'

Banning said the jet's cockpit voice recorder captured sound moments before the crash.

"The crew had a verbal reaction," Banning said, and the flight data recorder showed "the airplane beginning to increase its pitch. Sounds of impact were audible about one second later, followed by the end of

the recording." (AP)

USAID security leaders on leave after trying to keep Musk's DOĞE from classified info, officials say WASHINGTON, Feb 3: The Medicare customer payment sys-

Trump administration has placed two top security chiefs at the US Agency for International Development (USAID) on leave after they refused to turn over classified material in restricted areas to Elon Musk's government-inspection teams, a current and a former US official told The Associated Press on Sunday. Members of Musk's Department

of Government Efficiency, known as DOGE, eventually did gain access Saturday to the aid agency's classified information, which includes intelligence reports, the former official said. Musk's DOGE crew lacked high

enough security clearance to ac-

cess that information, so the two

USAID security officials — John

Voorhees and deputy Brian McGill

 believed themselves legally obligated to deny access. The current and former US officials had knowledge of the incident and spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to share the informa-



ing, "USAID is a criminal organisation. Time for it to die." He followed with additional posts on

X about the aid agency. Early Monday, Musk held a live session on X Spaces, previously known as Twitter Spaces, to talk about DOGE's accomplishments. Musk said that he spoke in detail about USAID with the president. "He agreed we should shut it down," Musk said

"It became apparent that its not

an apple with a worm it in," Musk said. "What we have is just a ball of worms. You've got to basically get rid of the whole thing. It's beyond repair.'

advisory board for DOGE, said in a separate post that no classified material was accessed "without proper security clearances.' It comes a day after DOGE car-

ried out a similar operation at the

Treasury Department, gaining ac-

cess to sensitive information in-

cluding the Social Security and

Kate Miller, who serves on an

The Washington Post reported that a senior Treasury official had resigned over Musk's team access-

ing sensitive information. Musk formed DOGE in cooperation with the Trump administration with the stated goal of finding ways to fire federal workers, cut

programmes and slash federal reg-

USAID, whose website vanished Saturday without explanation, has been one of the federal agencies most targeted by the Trump administration in an escalating crackdown on the federal government and many of its pro-

"It's been run by a bunch of radical lunatics. And we're getting them out," Trump said to reporters about USAID on Sunday night.

The Trump administration and Secretary of State Marco Rubio have imposed an unprecedented freeze on foreign assistance that has shut down much of USAID's humanitarian, development and security programmes worldwide —

compelling thousands of layoffs by aid organisations - and ordered furloughs and leaves that have gutted the agency's leadership and staff in Washington. The US is by far the world's

largest donor of humanitarian aid, with USAID administering billions of dollars in humanitarian, development and security assistance in more than 100 countries. Peter Marocco, a returning political appointee from Trump's first term, was a leader in enforcing the

shutdown. USAID staffers say

they believe that agency outsiders

with visitors badges asking questions of employees inside the Washington headquarters are members of Musk's DOGE team. Democratic Sen Elizabeth Warren said in a post on Sunday that Trump was allowing Musk to access people's personal information

"We must do everything in our power to push back and protect people from harm," the Massachusetts senator said, without giving details. (AP)

and shut down government fund-



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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025



IMPHAL, Feb 3: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Monday said that despite challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic and ethnic violence, the BJP-led government has been putting all efforts to bring development in both hills and valley regions of the state since 2017.

Singh became the chief minister of the northeastern state for the first time in 2017. During his second term, more than 250 people were killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic clashes between valley-based Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups, who are in majority in the hill districts, since May 3, 2023.

"Almost two and half years were lost to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite the challenges, the government had made some big achievements. After we returned for the second term with the love of the people, we lost nearly two years due to the present

"But the government has not stopped. It has continued with developmental projects in the hills and the valley. At the same time, it

A lot of time was also lost because of the long rainy season of the state, he said while speaking at the foundation stone laying ceremony for construction of multistoried government quarters at Langol in Imphal West district.

Similar buildings will also be built for government employees at New Checkon area in the state capital. Singh said.

The CM appealed to the people to care for nature, maintain cleanliness and ensure that drains are not blocked.

He also said developmental project are being taken up to rejuvenate Lamphalpat wetlands and said on its completion it can be used as recreational spot.

Singh directed contractors to work hard for timely completion of the projects.

In another programme, Singh inaugurated the Art and Culture building and an Open Gym and laid foundation stones for a 33/11 KVA Sub Station and swimming pool inside the Manipur University campus at Canchipur in Imphal East district.

He asked students of all educational institutes to contribute to society after passing out.

Singh also expressed the need to conduct a proper discussion on the present situation with faculties, teachers, researchers and students in the university to understand the core issues of the ethnic conflict.

Singh also said that educational institutions should be free from

BJP leader Molin Kumar Chakma to be sworn in as CEM of Chakma council



AIZAWL, Feb 3: BJP leader Molin Kumar Chakma will be sworn in as the chief executive member (CEM) of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in Mizoram on Tuesday, a party leader said. BJP leader Durjya Dhan Chakma said that the oath-taking ceremony will be held at the CADC headquarters in Kamalanagar at

noon on Tuesday. Lawngtlai district additional deputy commissioner Zoramsiama Hmar will administer the oath of office and secrecy to Molin Kumar Chakma as deputy commissioner Cheemala Siva Gopal Reddy is cur-

rently out of station, he said. After the swearing-in ceremony, Molin Kumar Chakma will announce the names of executive members and submit a list to the governor for his approval, he said. This is for the first time in the history of the CADC that BJP is ruling the council with an absolute ma-

jority, Durjya Dhan Chakma said. The CADC witnessed a stalemate after the removal of the Mizo National Front (MNF) government headed by former CEM Rasik

Mohan Chakma through a no-confidence motion moved in the council's session on December 11.

Subsequently, eight MNF members defected to the BJP and another five members, including the council chairman Mohan Chakma, joined the Zoram People's Movement

After the defections, ZPM had 10 members, BJP nine and MNF one, with none having the majority to form the executive body

On December 16, 10 ZPM members led by their legislature party leader Mohan Chakma met the then Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati and submitted a letter asserting their majority in the council.

However, subsequently, four ZPM members joined the BJP, raising the party's tally from nine to 13. Eleven seats are required to form an executive body in the 20-mem-

ber council. Molin Kumar Chakma, who staked claim to form the next government in the CADC on December year, was appointed as the CEM by Governor Vijay Kumar Singh with effect from January 28, according to a notification issued by state District Council and Minority

Affairs Secretary Sangchhin Chin-

zah on January 31. The MNF, which initially secured 10 seats in the May 9, 2023 elections and gained support from four members of the district council (MDCs), has now been reduced to a single member, Rasik Mohan Chakma, while the ZPM now has six members. (PTI)

State level committee discusses technical education in Nagaland

HT Correspondent **DIMAPUR, Feb 3:** The 4th state level committee (SLC), an executive body of the State Council for Technical Education, at a meeting on Monday examined in detail the intrinsic factors determining the landscape of technical education in Nagaland.

The committee at the meeting held in the conference hall of the directorate of technical education riculum designed in line with the National Education Policy 2020, its implications and preparedness for implementation, NBA accreditation of all the polytechnics in Nagaland, the need of degree engineering college in the state and internship opportunities for students. The meeting was convened by commissioner and secretary, higher and technical education and chairman of the SLC, Rajesh

KHADC urges Centre to expand tribal areas, strengthen Sixth Schedule 'Recent meeting between the ten ADCs and Union Home minister Amit Shah was a positive one'

SHILLONG, Feb 3: Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) chief Pyniaid Sing Syiem on Monday said the NPP-led executive committee, in its proposal for the amendment of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, has urged the Centre to consider expansion of the tribal

"The KHADC along with PN Syiem and Titosstarwell Chyne have conducted a follow up and we have urged the Centre on the need to expand the tribal areas. As of now, we still have the municipal areas in Khasi and Jaintia Hills region. Therefore, we insisted that there will be no more municipal areas and that all should be covered under the Sixth Schedule," Syiem told reporters after filing his nomination papers from Nongthymmai constituency at the ISBT, Maw-

We also seek deletion of para 12 (A) so that there is no clash between the ADCs and the state government especially in terms of



legislation," he added

Syiem, who is also convener of the Confederation of the North East Councils representing the ten autonomous district councils (ADCs) in the North East region was accompanied by chief executive member (CEM) of Bodoland Territorial Council and representatives of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tripura Territorial Council besides party workers

He informed that the recent meeting between the ten ADCs and Union Home minister Amit Shah was a positive one.

"He (Shah) has assured that the 125th constitutional amendment will likely be introduced in the current budget session of the union parliament. If it is being introduced it will be a victory to the people of Meghalaya and other Sixth Schedule states because in this proposed

there are number of provisions which seeks to further strengthen the ADCs in terms of land, tradition and customs and direct funding under Article 280 of the finance commission," he said.

Syiem said that the present tenure of the KHADC was able to bring many legislations within a short span of six years.

"I feel there are still many issues which need to be addressed by the district council. However, we have tried to bring many legislations within this short span of six years because we are empowered to make laws on various subjects as per provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India," he

He also said as many as six bills passed by the KHADC received the Governor's assent last year. These include: the Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Elaka) (Amendment) Bill, 2023, the KHAD (Nomination and Election of the Lyngdoh, Myntri, Lyngdoh Raid and Sordar Shnong and Administration of Sohiong Lyngdohship, 2023, the KHAD (Regulation and Administration of Land) Rules, 2023, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District Fishery (Amendment) Bill, 2023, the KHAD (Khasi Social Custom of Lineage) (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and the KHAD (Trading by Non-Tribals) (Amendment) Rules, 2023.

"Our efforts made during the last six years have really been a blessing to the indigenous people. We have got the Land Act, 2021, Amendment of Elaka Administration Act, 2023 which seeks to recognize the women and youth organizations in the village dorbar and their administration. This will help address many social evils from society as the government alone cannot do it.

The Social Custom of Lineage Act, 2023 is also to further strengthen our matrilineal society. We also seek to strengthen the tribal clans. Recently, a book by Raphael Warjri stated that there are over 5000 tribal clans," he added. (NNN)

CM threatened against moving noconfidence motion: Manipur Cong

IMPHAL, Feb 3: Manipur Congress Legislature Party leader Okram Ibobi Singh on Monday alleged that Chief Minister N Biren Singh had threatened MLAs that if a no-confidence motion is moved against his government, the member concerned would be unable to live in the house after being chased by the public

Senior BJP leaders said they might issue a statement on the accusations of the Congress leader

Ibobi Singh, a former four-time CM, claimed that the statement made last month was unbecoming of the leader of the House and against the privilege and rights of the members granted by the Con-

The Congress leader alleged that nearly two years have passed since the ethnic conflict began in the state but the BJP-led government is not fulfilling its responsibilities.

"Chief Minister N Biren Singh had said if a no-confidence motion is moved at the upcoming assembly session against the state government by any member, the MLA would be chased by the people and won't be able to stay at home,"



Ibobi Singh told reporters after meeting Governor Ajay Kumar

The CM made the comment during a programme related to Samvidhan Gaurav Abhivan at the state BJP headquarters on January 14, he said adding that he apprised the governor about the issue. The saffron party had observed

the Abhiyan last month to celebrate the Constitution, spread awareness about its values and highlight the contributions of its architect, BR Ambedkar, in the lead-up to Republic Day. "Such a statement is uncivilised

and unbecoming of the leader of

the House. It also goes against the privileges and rights of a member granted by the constitution. It is a mockery of the opposition," Ibobi Singh said.

He said the no-confidence motion is generally decided and moved by the opposition.

"What the chief minister had said is against the members and is a threat. We will not be cowed down by such threats. We will carry out our duties in the public interest. It's almost two years since the conflict began, but the state government is not fulfilling its responsibilities," the Congress leader

Mizoram minister denies breaching model code of conduct

ELECTION COMMIS MIZORAM

D SECRETARIAT BUILDING-II, TREASURY SQUARE, AIZA

AIZAWL, Feb 3: Mizoram Sports Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar on Monday denied the allegation that he violated the model code of conduct (MCC) in force ahead of the Village Council and Local Council polls scheduled to be held on February 12.

The State Election Commission had served Hmar and PWD Minister Vanlalhlana show-cause notices and asked them to provide their explanations by Monday after the opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) filed a complaint accusing the two Ministers of breaching the

The MNF alleged that Vanlalhlana has violated MCC provision for virtually campaigning from his ministerial office for Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) party candidates in Aizawl's Durtlang local council, a video clip of which has

been circulated on social media. The MNF also alleged that

Hmar had announced development plans and upcoming projects while meeting ZPM candidates in his constituency on January 27, which contravened the MCC provision. Addressing a function at the

ZPM office in Aizawl on Monday, Hmar claimed that he did not announce any new projects which contravened the provisions of

All these projects are already approved by the government and they are not new projects, he

Hmar and Vanlalhlana submitted their explanations to the state election commission on Monday.

State Election Commissioner H Lalthlangliana told PTI that they are examining the explanations and will decide on the matter soon. (PTI)

Free textbooks, uniforms distributed



GANGTOK, Feb 3: The Sikkim education department on Monday distributed textbooks and uniforms for free among students of all government schools in the state on the first day of the new academic session, officials

As many as 40,968 students of 767 schools received free textbooks and uniforms, they said.

"The government of Sikkim has successfully distributed free textbooks and uniforms among students of all government schools across the state on the first day of the new academic session to ensure that every student starts the year with essential learning materials," an education department official said.

All monastic schools and Sanskrit pathshalas were also included in the initiative, reinforcing the state government's commitment to provide an inclusive and holistic education, another official said.

tion Department, including the secretary, the principal director and district CEOs, were deployed to various schools across the state. They actively participated in the distribution and attended the first-day

To oversee and facilitate the distribu-

tion process, all officials of the Educa-

'zero period' sessions, engaging with students and teachers to mark the beginning of the new academic year. It is the second successive year that

the state government distributed free textbooks, exercise copies and uniforms to students of government schools in Sikkim on the first day of the new academic session

This initiative is a significant step towards strengthening the education system in Sikkim by reducing the financial burden on families and ensuring that every student, regardless of background, gets access to quality ed-

Indian Army conducts among students in Sikkim govt schools dental camp at Kigwema

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 3: Indian Army organised a Dental Hygiene & Check-up Camp at Kigwema Village in Kohima district of Nagaland on May

The initiative was conducted as a part of Army Dental Corps Raising Day being observed annually on February 1. The camp aimed at promoting oral health awareness and providing essential dental care to the local population. The camp benefitted more than 200 residents from Kigwema and nearby villages, including Zakhama, Viswema, and Khuzama, availing free dental consultations and treatments.

A team of two specialists dentists from the Army Dental Corps conducted comprehensive oral examinations, provided preventive dental care, and distributed essential hygiene kits as-



sisted by nursing and technical staff. Villagers were also educated on best oral hygiene practices, emphasising the long-term benefits of good dental health. The initiative not only addressed immediate dental concerns but also reinforced the Indian Army's dedication to fostering healthier communities and strengthening its bond with the local populace.

No. D1/TB/NIT/UMD/2024-25/1

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders in prescribed form affixing non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs 8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty five Paise) only are hereby invited by the office of the undersigned from the eligible registered contractors for the year 2024-25 of Irrigation department of Assar & BTC for the following work which will be received upto 1.30 P.M. on 14/02/2025 & will be opened at 2.30 P.M .on the same date by the undersigned or Officers authorized to open in presence of the intending tenderers or their authorized agents. If the Office remained close or that day due to some unforeseen reason the Tender will be received and opened by the nex available working day in the same place and time. The Tender subsequently be drawn up in P.W.D. F-2 tender form.

Name of work: - Silt clearance and canal lining at Silpoata FIS from ch 0.00m to ch 1500.00m under M& R for the year 2024-25

Name of Work - Orang DTW Scheme under M & R for the year 2024-25

Name of Work- Construction of Solar MDTW Scheme (1 Point) at Dumurgura Tepaghat in Dakhin Naoherua village under Mazbat LAC under TSP for the year

Name of Work -River training and protection work at Lakhsmi FIS under SOPD (BTC) for the year 2024-25

Name of Work-Repairing of breached embankment of K3M canal at Lising village at ch 1730.00m to 1800.00m of DIP under M & R for the year 2024-25

Name of Work-Repairing of breach canal embankment at different chainages of DIF under SDRF for the year 2022-23

Name of Work-Construction of extended approach road along with office development works under MDTW (3 points) of NABARD XXIX Name of Work- Breached and C.C. lining damaged at ch 1330.00m to 1380.00m of

D2B1M canal of DIP under SOPD-FDR for the year 2022-23 Construction of Box culvert at approach road of Udalguri -Mazbat Division, Irrigation

office at Udalguri under SOPD (BTC) (M&R) for the year 2024-25 Approx. Value of Work: - Rs 114.63 Lakhs (As per Group list enclosed).

Earnest Money :- 2% of approx. value of work, 1% in case of S.T., S.C., & OBC. Time of Completion: 90 (Ninety) days from the date of issue of formal work order

Detailed particularly of NIT & other terms & Conditions may be had in the office of the undersigned during the office hours & the tender paper will be sold on payment of Rs 300.00 (Rupees Three hundred) Only in cash per set.

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/1403

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Udalguri-Mazbat Division (Irrign), Udalguri

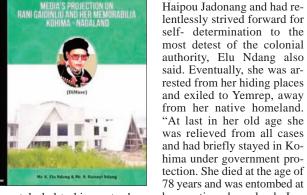
New book on Rani Gaidinliu 'Scripted by K Elu Ndang and N Haisoyi Ndang'

DIMAPUR, Feb 3: The book entitled "Media's Projection on Rani Gaidinliu & Her Memorabilia, Kohima-Nagaland" published by M/s Kenz & Sons Co. was released by Neiba Ndang, former Speaker of Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA) on January 31, in a solemn function held at Shalom Resort Gaili, Peren, Nagaland. The book was scripted by K Elu Ndang and N Haisoyi

Ndang. According to K Elu Ndang, one of the authors, the book depicts the anarchy of the British Empire in India, where the cloud of darkness engulfed the entire country and non-exceptionally, the Nagas of north east too suf-



fered the brunt of the colonial brutality, where humanity was non-existent during that period. In the midst of chaos Haipou Jadonang exponentially revolted which ulti-



mately led to his martyrdom without any justice whatsoever, Elu Ndang stated. Thereafter, Rani Gaidinliu

in her most tender age of 13

years, when she should be

lentlessly strived forward for self- determination to the most detest of the colonial authority, Elu Ndang also said. Eventually, she was arrested from her hiding places and exiled to Yemrep, away from her native homeland. "At last in her old age she was relieved from all cases and had briefly stayed in Kohima under government protection. She died at the age of 78 years and was entombed at her native homeland Luangkao, Manipur", Elu Ndang added.

playing with her toys, picked

up the unfinished work of Lt

Nevertheless, all her belongings seized by the British became artifacts, under the

possession of British, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, and the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford which is under active process to return to Nagaland India under the aegis of DiMuse 4 years project. Nonetheless, Elu Ndang said the book at it best por-

traying to clear the air of variable perception of the Naga intellectuals without any bias, hence, 'Media's projection on Rani Gaidinliu & her Memorabilia'. "Therefore, hereupon, the authors ardently implore upon various media houses and intellectuals to value the historical importance before jumping into any conclusion to rue at leisure time", Elu added. (NNN)

JP Nadda attacks AAP over scams, calls for 'Viksit Delhi'



NEW DELHI, Feb 3: BJP national president JP Nadda on Monday launched a scathing attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), asserting that the upcoming elections are a battle for Delhi's future to make it Viksit Delhi'.

At a public meeting in Burari, Nadda expressed confidence in the growing discontent against former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejri-

"The enthusiasm I see here is a clear indication that Kejriwal's journey will come to a standstill on

the 5th of next month," he said. He urged voters from all communities to support the BJP, emphasizing, "We need every vote to bring about this change.

"This election is not just about the BJP's lotus symbol or any other party's symbol; it is about changing Delhi's fate and image," Nadda said, urging voters to bring an end to what he termed as "AAPda". He accused the AAP government of stalling progress in Delhi and called for a return to a "Viksit

Nadda criticized the AAP government's governance style, alleging that their daily routine consisted only of holding press conferences and blaming the Central government.

"Every morning, they wake up, hold a press conference, hurl abuses at Modi Ji, criticize the Centre and make baseless allegations to cover up their failures. Keiriwal has been doing this for the last ten years," he remarked.

The BJP leader also labelled the

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: No criminal

proceedings against Naleen Kumar

Kateel, former Karnataka state BJP

president, would continue in con-

nection with allegations of extor-

tion linked to the electoral bond

scheme, the Supreme Court on

A bench comprising Chief Jus-

tice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice

Sanjay Kumar refused to entertain

an appeal of one Adarsh R Iyer

from "Janaadhikaaara Sangharsha

Parishath" against the December 3,

2024 verdict of the Karnataka

High Court. The high court

quashed the criminal proceedings

against Kateel and others in con-

nection with allegations of extor-

tions and there are no materials

also...we will not allow any roving

"There are no specific allega-

Iyer, represented by advocate

Prasant Bhushan, said money was

extracted under the scheme by

using the probe agencies like En-

Referring to the case laws,

The bench said it cannot allow a

"We are not inclined to interfere

roving inquiry in the absence of

with the high court order," it

Bhushan assailed the high court

verdict and said a criminal case

couldn't be scuttled like this.

tion linked to the scheme.

inquiry," said the bench.

forcement Directorate.

concrete material

AAP as a "lying machine" and "an encyclopedia of corruption and de-

Nadda accused the party of misleading the public while indulging n corruption

Those who once called themselves the 'kattar imaandar' (staunchly honest) party have turned out to be the 'kattar bhrashtachari' (staunchly corrupt) party. Their chief minister is out on bail, their deputy CM is out on bail and their ministers have spent time behind bars," he said.

"They have not been declared innocent; they are guilty.

Nadda went on to highlight the allegations of scams under the AAP government, including a purported ₹ 2,800 crore liquor scam, a 1.300 crore school building scam, and a ₹ 65,000 crore fake medical test scam linked to Mo-

"They looted public money while building a luxurious palace for themselves," he accused.

The BJP leader also took a jibe at the AAP's handling of education and infrastructure, claiming that science education was being neglected in classes 10 and 11.

"Do you want such an education system to continue?" he asked the

Nadda assured that, before 2026, Delhi would receive 2,600 new electric buses and reiterated the BJP's commitment to providing pucca houses to slum dwellers

without demolishing existing ones. He also alleged that the AAP government had mismanaged Yamuna cleaning funds.

"Did you get clean water in the Yamuna? They gobbled up ₹ 8,000 crore and then blamed the Haryana government for poisoning it," he

Elections to the 70-member Delhi Assembly will be held on February 5 and the votes will be counted on February 8. (PTI)

the dismissal of the present plea

did not mean any other case or FIR

could not be filed in future if sup-

ruled the complaint lacked legal

standing and failed to establish

even a prima facie case of extor-

tion. It observed the complainant

was not an aggrieved party and

lacked the locus standi to file the

"If a victim had come forward

with a complaint stating that he

was forced to purchase electoral

bonds, the situation would be dif-

ferent. However, in this case, the

complainant is an outsider to the

trial court failed to apply judicial

for investigation under Section

mere rubber stamp to a complaint

alleging extortion without verify-

"A magistrate cannot act as a

It also held that essential ingre-

The case stemmed from a pri-

vate complaint filed by Iyer, who

alleged Kateel, along with several

other BJP leaders and officials.

was part of an extortion racket that

coerced corporate entities into pur-

chasing electoral bonds under

dients of the offence of extortion

156(3) of CrPC.

were not satisfied.

ing its merit," it added.

The high court pointed out the

complaint for extortion.

The high court's judgement

ported by concrete material.

Criminal case not to continue against

Karnataka BJP leader, says SC

Opposition MPs in Lok Sabha seek accountability from govt over Kumbh stampede

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Opposition MPs in the Lok Sabha on Monday voiced strong concerns over the Kumbh Mela stampede, accusing the government of negligence and insensitivity and calling for accountability

Speaking during the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, DMK MP Kanimozhi expressed her condolences and criticised the government for its failure to ensure the safety of

"I would like to express my grief and empathy to the people who lost their lives in the Kumbh Mela stampede. These people trusted the Union and state governments, hoping they would be protected, but unfortunately, no one protected them," she said.

The Lok Sabha on Monday witnessed prolonged noisy protests by opposition parties, demanding a discussion on the stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj and a list of the

She alleged that the government's approach to governance has led to societal divisions.

"When religion and politics merge, it is the innocent who suffer. We don't even know the exact number of people who died in the stampede," she remarked.



Highlighting broader concerns about representation, Kanimozhi pointed out, "Just look around -there is a decreasing number of Muslim members in Parliament and fewer bureaucrats from the SC, ST, OBC, and minority communi-

Meanwhile, the President's Address glorified 'civilisational nationalism,' a phrase increasingly used to promote a monolithic culture, she said.

She also slammed the government's policies towards minorities, citing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy,

"Minorities are being made to feel on the edge. The government's approach on issues like CAA, triple talaq, and lynching makes them feel threatened," she said.

On the subject of governance in non-BJP states, Kanimozhi alleged that governors were being used to create confusion and hinder administration. She also opposed the idea of 'One Nation, One Election,' arguing that it would suppress statespecific issues and allow national parties to dominate the agenda.

Samajwadi Party MP Naresh Chandra Uttam Patel also lashed out at the Uttar Pradesh governevent.
"The Kumbh Mela was not

struck by a natural disaster; it was a glaring example of the government's failure," he said.

He questioned why the authorities had not anticipated the overwhelming number of attendees and why no list of the deceased had been released vet.

"The double-engine government has made a mockery of governance. To date, we have no official count of those who lost their lives in the stampede," he said.

Shifting focus to the broader state of affairs, Patel also criticised the government's handling of the education sector.

Trinamool Congress MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar condemned the government's response to the Kumbh tragedy, criticising the brevity of the President's mention

of the incident. "Millions of Hindus were preparing for the Mahakumbh, and many poor people saved money for the Mauni Amavasya. It is sad to say that the President only spent 61 words on this tragedy. She has neither condemned the deaths nor sent condolence messages to the families of the deceased," she said.

She further alleged discrepancies

AAP has turned Delhi into 'dirty slum': BJP

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: BJP Rajya Sabha member Kiran Choudhry on Monday accused AAP of turning Delhi into a "dirty slum", saying it was making excuses and blaming others for the bad state of affairs in the national capital.

Initiating the discussion on the motion of thanks on the President's address in the Rajya Sabha, Choudhry said AAP has lost the faith of the people of Delhi.

Without naming former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, she tore into APP leaders for using "condemnable terms" like "water terrorism, genocide, poison in Yamuna being supplied to Delhi and equating it with the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki" during the campaign for Delhi assembly elections.

They seem to have "lost their senses" and are making these statements when they have realised that after ten years, the people of Delhi are fed up with them for their non-performance.

Alleging that the AAP government did not take up any developmental work in Delhi, Choudhry said they have not fulfilled the promises that they made to the people of Delhi, and it is shame-

"Today, the condition of Delhi has gone from worse to the worst. The state of Delhi, the national Capital, is like that of a dirty slum," she claimed.

Further, she said that for the namesake, Delhi is the capital of the country, and the world only sees Luytens' Delhi but a visit to the interior streets, outskirts and small colonies of Delhi presents the reality of Delhi, which is full of "dirty drainages, overflowing garbage dumps, overflowing sewers, and polluted and stinking drinking water"

"They should also go there and see what is the condition of Delhi. They will hang their heads in shame," she asserted.

Terming the condition of the present Yamuna river a "cesspool of absolute dirt, toxic element" that the people of Delhi are made to drink, she asked AAP where has the ₹ 6,000 crore that was supposed to be used in the cleaning of the Yamuna been used?

Delhi, under the AAP government, has the highest loss of processed water to the tune of 40-50 per cent. Nothing can be more shameful than this, she added.

Asserting that Haryana supplies oure drinking water to Delhi through an uninterrupted canal network with no room for contamination, Choudhry said, "I challenge the AAP leader to confirm if this is right or wrong".

Seconding the discussion, BJP member Neeraj Shekhar, without naming Kejriwal, wondered can a former CM make such statements that Haryana is sending poisonous water to Delhi.

He also asked the former CM to worry about his own future and not worry or comment about the future of the chief election commissioner, who would be retiring

Without naming Sonia Gandhi, Shekhar also condemned the 'poor lady' remark on President Droupadi Murmu made outside Parliament after the President's address

He also hit back at other Opposition leaders' statements that the President's address was boring, saying it was not for entertainment and being a serious matter about the nation there won't be

in Rajasthan Assembly



JAIPUR, Feb 3: The Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2025 was introduced in the ongoing Budget Session of the state Assembly on Monday. The offence under the anti-conversion bill will be cognisable and non-bailable and triable by a court. The Bill is aimed at prohibiting unlawful conversion from one religion to another and has provisions for imprisonment of up to 10 years and a fine of up to ₹ 50,000.

It was introduced by Health Minister Gajendra Singh Khinvsar and will be passed by the House following a debate during the session.

Religious conversion by misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage has been made an offence in

The Bill provisions imprisonment for a term not less than one year but it may extend to five years with a fine of ₹ 15,000. Those who violate the rules in respect of a minor, a woman or a person belonging to the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of two years which may extend to 10 years along with a fine of ₹ 25,000.

The bill provisions three years of jail extending up to 10 years and a fine of ₹ 50,000 in case of mass converdiscretion while referring the case

However, those who desire to convert his/her religion shall give a declaration in the prescribed form at least sixty days in advance, to the District Magistrate.

According to the aims and objectives of the Bill, the Constitution of India guarantees religious freedom to all people which reflects the social harmony and spirit of India. The objective of this right is to sustain the spirit of secularism in India.

"In the recent past, many such examples have come to light where gullible persons have been converted from one religion to another by misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or fraudulent means.

"The law related to the right to religious freedom already exists in various states of the country but there was no statute on the said subject in Rajasthan. In view of the above, it was decided to enact a law to provide for prohibition of unlawful conversion," the Bill states. (PTI)

and "increasing" attacks on civil ment's handling of the Kumbh in the official death toll. (PTI) Anti-conversion bill tabled 70 lakh voters added in Maharashtra between LS and assembly polls, EC must provide data: Rahul

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged that about 70 lakh voters, equivalent to Himachal Pradesh's population, were added to the electoral rolls in Maharashtra between the Lok Sabha and state elections, and demanded the Election Commission furnish data to opposition parties in the state. Speaking to the Motion of Thanks on the

President's address, Gandhi raised several questions over the integrity of the Maharashtra polls held in November last year in which the BJP-led Mahayuti won a massive mandate, and said he was confident the EC would not provide the details sought by the opposition parties. With a copy of the Constitution in hand,

Gandhi said this is supported by the "vote of our people and without a secure vote, the Constitution means nothing". "Now, I want to bring to the notice of this

House some data about Maharashtra polls. Between the Lok Sabha polls, which the INDIA bloc won, and the assembly elections, the number equivalent to the population of Himachal was added to the voting rolls of Maharashtra," Gandhi told the House, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in attendance

Gandhi claimed that the difference between the Lok Sabha polls in June and the state polls in November was that almost 70 lakh voters suddenly arriving. "More voters were added in Maharashtra

assembly polls than in five years," the former Congress president said. Citing an example, he claimed that in a

in five months between the Lok Sabha and

building in Shirdi, about 7,000 new voters were added after the Lok Sabha polls.

"I am not making an allegation, I am only saying that there is something problematic that the population equivalent to that of Himachal was added in Maharashtra through magic after the Lok Sabha polls," Gandhi

"We have requested the Election commission repeatedly that we are not making an allegation, 'give us the Lok Sabha voters' list and that of the Vidhan Sabha...we are saying to the EC that 'please give us names and addresses of voters of all booths from the Lok Sabha elections and the assembly elections', so we can calculate who these

voters are," Gandhi said.

He said the new voters have been added mostly in constituencies where the BJP eventually won.

"I am still not making an allegation. I am saying on the floor of the House that the EC has to give the data of Maharashtra elections to the Congress, Shiv Sen (UBT) and NCP (SC)," Gandhi said, adding that the opposition will get to see exactly where these voters have been added and who has been subtracted.

He said the Election Commissioner used to be chosen by a committee comprising the prime minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the chief justice but the chief Justice was removed from the panel by the

This raises a crucial question for the Prime Minister: why was this change made?In a few days, I will be attending a meeting with Mr. Amit Shah and Mr. Modi, which seems like an uneven playing field, with a 2:1 ratio. What's the point of my attendance? Am I merely there to rubberstamp what Modi ji and Amit Shah ji say?"

The presence of the Chief Justice would have facilitated a more balanced discussion. he said, adding this change to remove the CJI appears to be a deliberate strategy.

"Furthermore, the Election Commissioner was replaced just before the Lok Sabha elections, two election commissioners were appointed. To safeguard the Constitution, the entire Opposition is requesting data on the Maharashtra Election," Gandhi

Gandhi's address was centred around on what an INDIA bloc government's presidential address would look like.

"The third element of the presidential address would be a determining the defence of India's institutions, democratic system, a relook at the entire democratic framework and looking again at all the institutions that have been taken away from the people of India," Gandhi said.

His remarks in the Lower House came a day after the Congress set up an eight-member committee -- Empowered Action Group of Leaders and Experts (EAGLE) -- to monitor the conduct of free and fair elections by the Election Commission of India. (PTI)

threat of government raids. (PTI) Delhi model failed, city residents can't distinguish between drinking and drainage water: Naidu

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Ahead of the assembly polls in the city, TDP chief and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday launched a scathing attack on the ruling AAP over the lack of infrastructure development and dubbed the Delhi model as a "total failure"

Naidu, whose Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is an ally of the ruling NDA at the Centre, took a jibe at the AAP government, saying Delhi has a "half-engine sarkar", and needs a double engine sarkar to achieve development.

Speaking to reporters after an election campaign in the national capital, he highlighted lack of infrastructure development in the capital over the last decade.

"In Delhi, you cannot differentiate between drinking and drainage water" despite Central government schemes like AMRUT and Jal Jeevan Mission, he claimed.

These two schemes were not implemented because the credit will go to the BJP-led central government, he said, adding even Swachh Bharat Mission was not imple-

He also said "weather and polit-



ical pollution" were plaguing

Delhi Underlining that performance and better living standards are becoming relevant and not ideology, Naidu said "poor people in Delhi have to think if they want to live permanently in slums without proper amenities and opportuni-

He also questioned the sustainability of welfare politics without wealth creation.

"Without creating wealth, what is the right of a politician to distribute wealth?" he asked, calling for a national debate on the issue. Drawing from his political expe-

rience since 1978, Naidu highlighted the stark contrast between Delhi's current state and its historical position as a career-building

"Originally, Delhi used to be home for building careers. It was our pride. Today, nobody is coming here. People are going from Delhi to other places for livelihood and opportunities," he observed. On development projects, he

asked if there "have been any infra

projects in the last 10 years? Long

back, the metro had come. Nothing has been done.

Naidu termed Delhi's controversial liquor policy as the "worst scam" compared to other corruption cases and spoke about his own experience of introducing Extra Neutral Alcohol (ENA) in 1995 to reduce impurities in liquor.

Advocating for a developmentfocused approach, Naidu proposed his "P4" model -- public, private, and people's partnership -- to address poverty. He suggested that the top 10 per-

cent of high-net-worth individuals should adopt the bottom 20 percent to improve living standards. Expressing confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leader-

ship, Naidu endorsed the vision of

India becoming a developed nation by 2047 He cited the success of his own "Hyderabad model" from 1995, which he said has made the city "the most livable place" with the highest per capita income in Telan-

"In Delhi, it is half engine Sarkar. All these things are possible with the double engine Sarkar," he said, adding that Andhra

Pradesh is benefiting as an ally of

the NDA. "Some people ask what have we got? We have got everything I am confident on that (collaboration with the central government," he said, noting, "Always, one should be at the right place, right time, and with the right people. Then things will happen automatically."

Naidu further said the Centre has given oxygen for Andhra Pradesh which was on a ventilator. Several projects are sanctioned for the state, more are required. "We are confident of development."

In China too, economic development transcends political ideology, he said and urged Delhi voters to understand the gravity of the situ-Even caste and religion is reality

and one needs to respect them for inclusive development, he added. Addressing the Congress-AAP rift, Naidu emphasised development over ideology. on the right side, not on the left side, then you can move forward. Otherwise, on the left side, you will be ignored and isolated," he

said, adding that "right develop-

ment is right politics." (PTI)

AYODHYA (UP), Feb 3: Calling the Milkipur bypoll a direct contest between "people and administration", Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday said it is not just an election but a chal-

Addressing a rally here on the last day of campaigning, Yadav also said Milkipur will send a strong message for the future of Uttar Pradesh politics.

He alleged that the BJP deliberately postponed the Milkipur bypoll, fearing a loss.

'This is not just an election, it is a challenge. The BJP knew that people of Milkipur would never abandon the Samajwadi Party, so they ensured the poll did not take place earlier.

"But those who run from elec-

tions will have to face the people's verdict," Yadav said while addressing the rally in support of party candidate Ajit Prasad.

The former chief minister accused the BJP government of en-

challenge: Akhilesh on Milkipur bypoll gaging in divisive politics while failing to address real issues.



Not just an election but a

management and underreporting of "They claim crores have taken a dip in the Maha Kumbh, but thev are unable to provide the real count of those who lost their lives in the

"The chief minister says he wakes up at 3 am to monitor arrangements, but when the tragedy happened, where was he?" he

Referring to the victory of SP's Awadhesh Prasad from the Faizabad seat in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Yadav said people of Ayodhya had already rejected communal politics.

"The BJP tried to create a communal atmosphere, but Ayodhya's voters stood with Samajwadis. Now, Milkipur will send another strong message for the future of Uttar Pradesh politics," he added.

The Milkipur bypoll is scheduled for February 5 and the results will be announced on February 8. The contest is primarily between the SP and the BJP, with both parties deploying senior leaders for campaigning. (PTI)

TIMA

HC grants interim bail to Kuldeep Sengar for eye surgery

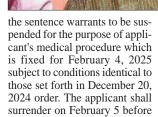
Delhi High Court on Monday granted interim bail to expelled BJP leader and Unnao rape case convict Kuldeep Singh Sengar to undergo an eye surgery on February 4.

A bench of Justices Yashwant Varma and Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar suspended Sengar's sentence of life imprisonment and directed him to surrender before the jail authorities on February 5.

In view of the reprieve given by the division bench, single judge Justice Vikas Mahajan extended the same relief to Sengar in the case over the custodial death of the survivor's father and temporarily suspended the 10-year jail term in this matter.

The division bench noted that the former MLA's cataract surgery was fixed on February 4 in AIIMS Delhi.

"... we are of the opinion that



Unnao rape case

The counsel said Sengar's surgery couldn't be performed on the scheduled date due to circumstances beyond his control.

the jail superintendent," it said.

The court had granted interim bail to the politician for the surgery but the survivor's lawyer opposed the plea and argued he could not be given interim bail endlessly

Sengar's plea for interim bail formed part of his appeal against the December 2019 trial court's verdict in the rape case, which is pending in the high court. He sought setting aside of his conviction and sentence.

conviction in the case of survivor's father's custodial death issue on merit and finally. case is also pending, where he has sought suspension of sentence on ground that he has alperiod in iail.

The minor girl was allegedly posed a fine of ₹ 10 lakh, in the custodial death case of the rape sole bread earner'

connected cases were transferred to Delhi from a trial court in Uttar Pradesh on the directions of the Supreme Court on August 1, 2019. (PTI)

SC fixes Feb 12 to hear case against CEC making the commissioners appointment

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: The Supreme Court on Monday fixed February 12 to hear pleas against the appointment of the chief election commissioner and election commissioners under the 2023 law.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh said it would decide the

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for Association for Democratic Reforms NGO, said the matter was listed on ready undergone a substantial February 4 but not likely to be heard due to other matters

Bhushan, who referred to the superankidnapped and raped by Sengar nuation of incumbent Chief Election in 2017. On March 13, 2020, Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar on Sengar was sentenced to 10 February 18, said the matter required an years of rigorous imprisonment urgent hearing as it was covered by the by the trial court, which also im- 2023 verdict of the Constitution bench.

He said the 2023 verdict ruled the election commissioners couldn't only be apsurvivor's father. The trial court pointed by the government, but by an said "no leniency" could be independent committee comprising the shown for killing a family's Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition and Chief Justice of India or else it would The rape case and other be a threat to the electoral democracy.

> "They have brought an Act by which they have removed the chief justice and brought in another minister, effectively

only at the pleasure of the government. That's precisely what the Constitution bench said that it is opposed to the levelplaying field and our electoral democracy. You need to have an independent committee to appoint the election commissioners," said Bhushan.

Advocate Varun Thakur, appearing for petitioner Congress' Jaya Thakur, said they had moved the application seeking a direction to the Centre that the appointment of the CEC should be made as per the March 2, 2023 verdict of the Constitution bench.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta for the Centre opposed Bhushan's submission and his request for an interim order. Another bench of the apex court re-

fused to pass an interim order, said Mehta.

He said the Centre was ready for arguments in the matter and court could fix it for a final hearing.

On January 8, the top court said it would be the court's opinion versus the legislative power to enact a law and agreed to adjudicate the issue.

GOVT. OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER (PHE)

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL, DIPHU

SITUATION VACANT

A- 451/Pt/ PA/SW/2024/45 Dated: 21-01-2025 application in prescribed form with testimonials

arc being invited from local candidates for selection of candidates for filling up the following

Grade III & IV sanctioned post under Public Health Engineering department and will be

In pursuance of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu vide letter No. KAAC/FIN

On March 15, 2024, the top court re-

fused to stay the appointments of new ECs under a 2023 law which excluded the CJI from the selection panel and deferred the hearing on a batch of pleas

challenging the appointments. The apex court told the petitioners the March 2, 2023 verdict directed for the three-member panel comprising the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition and the CJI to operate till Parliament en-

acted a law. The NGO challenged the CJI's exclusion and contended the election commission should be insulated from "political" and "executive interference" for maintaining a healthy democracy.

ADR's plea alleged the verdict was overruled by the Centre without removing its basis and the composition of the selection committee under the new law which amounted to excessive interference of the executive in the appointments and was detrimental to the independence of the poll panel.

Former IAS officers Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Sandhu were recommended to be appointed as ECs in 2024 by a selection panel chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi under the new law. (PTI)

grade

pay

Two philatelists preserve over 100 rare stamps on Maha Kumbh, Simhastha festivals

INDORE. Feb 3: The Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj and the Simhastha Mela of Ujjain are among the prominent religious events featured in the collection of more than 100 rare stamps and special postal covers preserved by two philatelists in Indore.

Their collections boast of a special cover focusing on the Maha Kumbh held at Prayagraj in 1977 and a "bazaar postcard" (used for writing letters before independence) of the Maha Kumbh in the Uttar Pradesh city in 1906.

"I have been going to the Maha Kumbh fair held in Prayagraj since childhood. I have always been quite interested in this religious event and that is why I started collecting postage stamps and special covers related to it," philatelist Omprakash Kedia (73) told PTI on Monday.

Since the number of postage stamps and special covers issued on the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh and Ujjain Simhastha is very limited, it is very difficult to find them, he said.

Kedia said a special cover focusing on

Delhi court awards life

term to man in murder case

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: A Delhi court

has awarded life-term imprisonment to

a convict and said death penalty could

not be given as it was not a "rarest of the

rare" case. Additional sessions judge

Ekta Gauba Mann was hearing argu-

ments on the quantum of sentence

against Ashish alias Babloo against

whom the Prasad Nagar Police Station

registered an FIR under IPC provisions

In an order on January 31, the court

said, "In the present case, on January 11,

2027, the convict Ashish came at the

spot...at a public place and took out his

improvised pistol from his pocket, put

the said pistol on the head of the victim

Paras and fired and murdered the vic-

It said the aggravating circumstances

in the case were that a 25-year-old

stitution provided everyone with a right

to life and the basic law of nature re-

quired the maxim "live and let others

of 34 years at the time of the incident and

said he was the bread winner for his fam-

and rehabilitation. (PTI)

The court considered the convict's age

young man was murdered and the Con-

for murder and the Arms Act.

during 1977, which he acquired from a seller at an exhibition. is the oldest item in his collection

Another city-based philatelist Alok Khadiwala (53) said he has also preserved postage stamps and special covers issued for Maha Kumbh and

Simhastha fairs held in the past years. The most valuable part of his treasure is the "bazaar card" focusing on the 1906

Prayagraj Maha Kumbh, he said. "Bazaar cards were used as letters before the country's independence," he

Khadiwala said that to include the postage stamps and special covers issued on Maha Kumbh and Simhastha fairs in his collection, he also took the help of junk dealers from different places and rummaged through several waste paper

Kedia and Khadiwala's collections also include ancient coins bought by devotees as souvenirs at different pilgrimage sites in the country.

In order to improve water resource management and rainwater harvesting in drought-prone regions, the ministry said the AI-based tools can be used for AI-Enabled Irrigation Scheduling, Remote Sensing and AI-Based Crop Monitoring, Automated Smart Irrigation Systems, Predictive Maintenance for Irrigation Infrastructure

Advanced AI enhanced models can provide improved predictions of groundwater behaviour, identify vulnerable areas prone to pollution and depletion and enables proactive interventions, the minister said in a written response to

IoT-based pressure and flow control valves are being implemented to ensure precise irrigation, preventing overwatering and conserving

Jal Shakti Ministry to leverage AI and IoT for advanced water management: C R Paatil

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Jal Shakti Minister C R Paatil on Monday said that his ministry can harness Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) for enhanced water resource management and rainwater harvesting in drought-prone regions.

and Decision Support Systems.

a question in the Rajya Sabha.

vital water resources.

AI-based remote sensing applications are monitoring crop water usage, while AI-powered maintenance systems are evaluating water supply based on seasonal variations, water availability, cropping patterns and real-time weather

The ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj started on January 13 will continue till February 26. (PTI) **Sum Ultimate Medicare honoured**



BHUBANESWAR, Feb 3: SUM Ultimate

noured at the first edition of the ET Now Industry Icons-2025 East Chapter awards held in Kolkata on Friday

padma Dash, chief executive officer of SUMUM, promoted by Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA), from Rohit Chadha, president and COO of Times Network Digital at a spe-

"Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital-2 at Phulnakhara was also awarded as the best multi-specialty hospital of Odisha while IMS and SUM Hospital-3 at Sitalapalli in Berhampur was chosen as the best multispecialty emerging hospital of the state," the

Both the hospitals are run by SOA. Bhubaneswar's departments of Cardiology, Oncology, Neurology, Gastroenterology,

superintendent of IMS and SUM Hospital at Bhubaneswar, Prof (Dr.) Rajesh Kumar Lenka, Medical Superintendent of IMS and SUM Hospital-2 and SOA Deemed to be University's Public Relations Officer Sub-

Popular Odia newspaper 'The Prameya', published by Summa Real Media Limited, was also honoured as Odisha's number one vernacular daily at the event. The award was received by the company's Group Director (Sales and Marketing) Mr Himanshu Bhushan Hota. Eminent Sarod player Aman Ali Bangash, Bollywood actor Tara Shah Badusha, eminent film producer, director and writer Nandita Roy, actor, director and writer Shiboprosad Mukherjee, actor and producer Rutuparna Sengupta Chakrabarty and Bollywood actor Aparshakti Khurana were present

Biman Dutta, assistant vice-president and Regional Head (East), Times Network, welcomed the dignitaries and managed the show.

statement added.

HT Correspondent

Medicare (SUMUM), the next-generation multi-super specialty quaternary care hospital, has been honoured as the best corporate hospital in eastern India, said an official state-

The award was received by Dr. Sweta-

cial function.

as best corporate hospital

As per the statement, the hospital was ho-

ily and took care of his elderly parents and two minor children, while underlining the probability of the convict's reformation

Besides, IMS and SUM Hospital, Hematology and Nephrology were chosen as the best departments in those category in

Prof (Dr.) Pusparaj Samantasinhar, medical hadarshini Mishra received the awards.

to give away the awards.

IIT Madras launches first-ofits-kind cancer genome database

Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras on Monday launched a first-of-its-kind cancer genome database to help research on the disease in the country.

According to IIT Madras Director, V Kamakoti, despite having a high cancer incidence, India has been under-represented in global cancer genome studies. In the absence of genomic

architecture of cancers prevalent in India, specific genetic variants from Indian cancers are not adequately captured and catalogued for any diagnostic kits and drug develop-

"In order to fill the gap in the genomic landscape for different cancers in India. IIT Madras initiated the cancer genome programme in 2020. Under this programme, 960 whole exome sequencing from 480 breast cancer patient tissue samples collected across the



country has been completed. 'We are releasing yet another health-related data, the second this academic year, the cancer genome data after brain data. We hope that this will provide deep insights on reasons leading to this deadly disease and help prevent the same with early interventions," he

Kamakoti informed that the Bharat Cancer Genome Atlas (BCGA) will fill the gap in the genomic landscape from different cancers in the country.

"It provides a compendium of genetic variants representing the contemporary Indian breast cancer population to classify variants involved in early diagnostics, disease progression, and treatment outcomes," he

IIT Madras in collaboration with Karkinos Healthcare, Mumbai, the Chennai Breast Clinic and Cancer Research and Relief Trust, Chennai analysed the data and assemof genetic variants from Indian breast cancer samples

The research was led by the institute's Centre of Excellence on Cancer Genomics and Molecular Therapeutics, which was funded under the Centre government's "Institutions of Eminence" initiative.

'This database will be an in-

valuable resource to identify cancer-specific biomarkers in India, which will enable early detection of breast cancers. Further, it will also be very useful to identify novel drug targets for developing better treatment strategies specific to the Indian population," S Mahalingam, Head, Centre of Excellence on Cancer Genomics and Molecular Therapeutics. IIT Madras.

"BCGA also aims to host data from researchers working on cancer genomics across cancer types and would be open to accepting submissions. (PTI)

received upto 4: 00 PM of 14th February 2025 in the office of the undersigned.

SI. No.	Name of post	No. of vacancy	Minimum required educational qualification	Pay Band / Grade pay
1	Stenographer	1(one) Nos.	Graduate with diploma in stenography	₹14000 - ₹60500 grade pay ₹6400
2	Junior Assistant	12 (twelve)Nos.	Graduate with diploma in computer application	₹14000 - ₹49000 grade pay ₹6200
3	Sectional Assistant	2 (two) No.	HS passed or equivalent with diploma in computer application	₹14000 - ₹ 49000 grade pay ₹5600
4	Asstt. driller	1 (one) No.	HSLC passed with ITI diploma	₹14000 - ₹49000

6800 3 (three) No Class VIII passed ₹12000 - ₹37500 Peon grade pay ₹3900 ₹12000 - ₹37500 Class VIII passed Chowkidar 3 (three) grade pay ₹3900

General terms & conditions

- 1. The candidates must be an Indian Citizen as defined in the Article 5-8 of the constitution of India
- 2. Candidates must not be less than 18 years or not more than 38 years of age as on 01/01/2025. The upper age limit is relaxable for ST/ SC candidates as per govt. standing
- The application must be submitted with self-attested copies of all relevant documents/ testimonials along with 2 copies of recent passport size photographs.
- 4. The candidates serving in govt. / Autonomous bodies/ Institutions should submit their application through proper channel.
- the selection of board along with all testimonials / documents in original. 6. The candidates must have registered their name in District Employment Exchange and

5. The candidates will have to appear for written test/ interview at their own cost before

- Registration No. and date must be mentioned in the application. 7. The envelope containing the application form should be clearly superscript APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF" and one selfaddressed envelope affixing Z5/- (Rupees five) only postal stamp should be enclosed with application form.
- Incomplete application will be summarily rejected.
- The competent authority reserved the right to enhance or reduce the post and right to cancel the interview at any date.
- 10. No correspondence will be entertained from the candidates and canvassing in any form will be treated as disqualification.
- 11. The actual no. of post posts may be increased at the time of filling up the posts which may arise due to the superannuation / appointment promotions etc.
- 12. No admit card will be send to the candidates for appearing in the written / interview /oral. The aspiring candidates must collect the admit card from the office of the undersigned and the time & dates will be notified local vernacular newspaper in due course of time.
- 13. No written test will be held for the post of grade IV (Peon and Chowkidar) only oral
- 14. There will be a written test for grade —III (Junior Assistant, Stenographer, sectional Assistant and Asstt. driller)
- 15. Any changes of dates shall be published through local vernacular dailies.

Sd/-

Additional Chief Engineer (PHE) Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu

Memo. No. Addl. CPHE/DIP/Estt - 73/2024 - 25/2026-36

Date 31/01/2025

SPARKLE, COLOUR POP AMID MORE SUBDUED TONES ON GRAMMYS RED CARPET



piece with pearls and flower touches above large pearl chandelier earrings. And she had a scepter, where she stashed her ac-

"Honestly this is kind of hilarious," she joked after returning to the stage for a third time. "Yikes!" she started her fourth accept-

Chappell Roan walked in a vintage look from Jean Paul Gaultier Haute Couture, long wavy red hair flowing down her back. Her signature white powder makeup was full of color: yellows and blues and pinks and reds.

Roan's look had touches of teal and images of Degas' dancers on the skirt. It was Gaultier vintage from spring 2003.

"The singer has become known for her bold, artistic red carpet choices that reflect her unique sense of style and personality, and tonight was no exception," said Claire Stern Milch, digital direc-

Roan's gown is from spring 2003. It was first worn by Beyoncé in Elle that April. The two are up against each other for Grammys.

"Chappell Roan inherently understands that if you want to be a pop star, you need to pave your own lane. She also understands you don't just wear vintage to wear vintage — you do it to continue your sartorial storytelling," Betancourt said. 'It's probably her best red carpet look yet."

The Young Smiths: Jaden wears a castle, and Willow goes classic young Hollywood
Jaden Smith walked the red carpet in Louis Vuit-

ton with a large black castle on his head, his face peeking out. His sister, Willow Smith, was at his side. She went for classic young Hollywood in a tiny, sparkling black two piece with a long match-

Willow wore her hair loose and natural as she worked her itty bitty look, a pair of towering black platform

LOS ANGELES, Feb 3: The 67th Grammy Awards kicked off Sunday with a red carpet full of black and subdued tones against the backdrop of loss and devastation from the Los Angeles wild-

But there was plenty of sparkle and statement looks in huge sleeves and embellishment. The colour red had a moment on Haley

"While the Grammys carpet is one where we see most celebrities take major risks, some of the night's most notable artists stayed true to their personal style," said Bianca Betancourt, digital culture edi-

Madeline Hirsch, fashion features director for InStyle, agreed. 'There was a lot more edge and personality than usual on this red carpet. Everyone followed their own vision and aesthetic, which was fun to watch," she said.

Here's a few celebrity looks and fashion moments from the red carpet: Sierra Ferrell won BIG with four Grammys. She did it just as BIG in a huge white gown that evoked a way enthusiastic bride with no fashion fears, designed by Jeffrey Kelly Designs. Ferrell's dress included huge lumi-

nescent sleeves, pearl em-

bellishment all over and a matching choker piece. And she didn't forget her bold bride's veil: a head sandals on her feet. Rapper Ye, formerly no

known as Kanye West, is stranger to causing a scene at Grammys. Ye and partner, Bianca Censori, took

the spotlight with her barely there transparent dress that left nothing to the imagination. Censori is known for causing a stir with her sheer street style.

At the Grammys, she dropped her dark fur coat to reveal her exposed backside to the flash of cam-

Sabrina Carpenter was among those who stuck close to her signature style codes, Betancourt said. She opted for a baby blue satin gown by Jonathan Anderson for Loewe with a tousled updo and plunging back with feather boa detailing.

"It was just the right amount of sexy and old Hollywood glam that her red carpet looks usually aim for," Betancourt said. (PTI)

Grammys leave out Zakir Hussain from 'In Memoriam' section



NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Four-time Grammy winner and Indian tabla maestro Zakir Hussain was excluded from the 'In Memoriam' segment that was streamed live as part of the 67th Grammy Awards ceremony, leaving many Indian fans fu-

Hussain, however, found a mention on the 'In Memoriam' list on the official website of the Recording Academy, alongside ghazal maestro Pankaj Udhas, folk singer Sharda Sinha, and sarod player Aashish Khan.

The awards ceremony, organised by the Recording Academy, was held on Sunday at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles. Every year, the Grammys pay tribute to industry legends who passed away in

the year gone by in its 'In Memoriam' montage.

Hussain, who became the first musician from India to register three wins at last year's Grammys, died from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis in a San Francisco hospital on December 15. He was 73. During the live event, the Grammys honoured musicians such as Liam Payne,

Kris Kristofferson, Cissy Houston, Tito Jackson, Joe Chambers, Jack Jones, Mary Martin, Marianne Faithfull, Seiji Ozawa, and Ella Jenkins. Singer Chris Martin, fresh from the India leg of his band Coldplay's world tour

'Music of the Spheres', performed the 'In Memoriam tribute' with guitarist Grace Bowers on his song "All My Love". A section of social media users were not happy and wrote posts tagging the

Recording Academy on microblogging site X about the omission.

"How come no mention of Zakir Hussain in Grammy obituary #Grammys2025 he was a winner last year (sic)" wrote one on X.

"Big miss. I didn't see @RecordingAcad mention Zakir Hussain in the memoriam section. #GRAMMYs," said another.

"Shame not to see 4 time winner and multiple times nominee Zakir Hussain in the Grammy tribute to artists lost recently. Real shame. SVP #GRAMMYs #Grammys2025 #ZakirHussain @RecordingAcad," read another post

The 'In Memoriam' list, posted on the official website, also featured other Indian musicians, such as Bengali composer Ashima Bhattacharya; folk artist Darshanam Mogilaiah; Carnatic singer and composer K G Jayan; chenda artist Kelath Aravindakshan Marar; music director and theatre artist Malabar Manoharan; Musafir Ram Bhardwaj, who played paun mata (a type of drum akin to a damru); Tamil music composer Praveen Kumar; folk singer Sakini Ramachandraih; Tamil playback singer Uma Ramanan; and Kannada music com-

poser Vijay Anand. Comedian Trevor Noah hosted 2025 Grammys, marking his fifth consecutive

The 2025 Grammys streamed live on Disney+ Hotstar in India. (PTI)

CHAPPELL ROAN WINS BEST NEW ARTIST GRAMMY AWARD

LOS ANGELES, Feb 3: Chappell Roan nudged aside Sabrina Carpenter to win the Grammy for best new artist Sunday, capping a remarkably explosive rise to fame for an artist dropped by her last record label. Roan, who is openly queer and taps into drag culture, was the sassy toast of the pop world in 2024 with tracks that include "Good Luck, Babe!" "Red Wine Supernova" and "Hot To Go!" from her 2023 album "The Rise and Fall of a Midwest

In her speech, she called for record labels to give a livable wage and health insurance to artists. "Labels, we got you but do you got us?"

She is also up for three other Grammys - album of the year, song of the year and record of the year. She lost both best pop solo performance and best pop vocal album to Carpenter.

For the best new artist crown, Roan beat out Carpenter, Benson Boone, Doechii, Khruangbin, RAYE, Shaboozey and Teddy

Roan began her music career in 2015 when she signed with Atlantic Records, releasing several singles including "Pink Pony Club." In 2020, the label dropped

her. She moved back to her hometown to

work as a barista before releasing her debut full-length album. Roan first hit the mainstream as the

opener for Olivia Rodrigo's Guts Tour and drew a record-breaking crowd at Lolla-

She also won best new artist at the 2024 MTV VMAs, beating Shaboozey, Gracie Abrams, Tyla and Teddy Swims,

"I think that a lot of the songs are from daydreams, and a lot of that daydreaming happened from Missouri, from this repressed state of not having a queer community growing up and feeling really weird," she told the AP in 2023. (AP)

Beyonce wins album of year at 2025 Grammys for 'Cowboy Carter'

LOS ANGELES, Feb 3: Beyonce has won album of the year for "Cowboy Carter" at the 2025 Grammys, delivering her — at last — the show's elusive top award.

The superstar, who is both the most awarded and nominated artist in Grammys history, has been up for the category four times before and many feel she has been snubbed by its top

In winning album of the year with "Cowboy Carter," Beyonce has become the first Black woman to win the top prize in the 21st century. The last was Lauryn Hill with "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" 26 years ago. Before her was Natalie Cole and Whitney Houston. That means Beyonce is only the fourth Black woman to win album of the year at the Grammys.

Members of the Los Angeles Fire Department presented Beyoncé with the trophy Sunday, one of several times the show reflected the recent wildfires that burned thousands of homes. "It's been many, many years," Beyonce said in her speech. "I want to dedicate this to Ms. Martell," she said, referencing Linda Martell, the performer who became the first Black woman to play the Grand Ole Opry.

"We finally saw it happen, everyone," host Trevor Noah said, nodding to the long overdue achievement for one of music's transcendent artists.

Kendrick Lamar won song and record of the year for his diss track "Not Like Us," taking home two of the night's most prestigious awards.

"We're gonna dedicate this one to the city," Lamar said before shouting out Los Angeles area neighborhoods. It is the second hip-hop single to

ever win in the category. The first was Childish Gambino's "This Is Amer-

The Weeknd mends fences, Chappell Roan challenges music industry The Weeknd has mended his fractious relationship with the Grammy Awards with a surprise performance of

his new single, "Cry For Me" and

"Timeless" with Playboi Carti. His decision is a direct reflection of the changes the Recording Academy has made to diversify its voting body, CEO Harvey Mason jr. said in his introduction. The Weeknd has been openly critical of the Grammys organization, dating back to 2020 when he wrote on Twitter: "The Grammys re-

main corrupt.' It was just one of many pleasant surprises Sunday night. Chappell Roan was named best new artist.

She read a speech from a notebook, speaking directly to major labels and the music industry, instructing them to "offer a living wage and healthcare, especially to developing artists." She described getting signed as a minor, getting dropped and entering the workforce during COVID-19 with no work experience and no health care. She asked them to treat artists like "valuable employees."

"Labels, we got you," she concluded her speech. "But do you got us?" Beyonce and Chappell Roan give Grammys a country theme

In one of the biggest moments of the evening so far, Taylor Swift presented the award for best country album to Beyoncé. She became the first Black woman to ever win in the category.

"Genre is a cold word to keep us in our place as artists," she said in her speech. "I'm still in shock. Thank you so much for this honor.

Beyonce entered the night as the leading nominee. (AP)



India is a sleeping giant in golf: Greg Norman

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025

GURUGRAM, Feb 3: Australian legend Greg Norman believes India is a sleeping giant in golf and it would require more competitions in the country to help its players realise their true potential as he pitched for making the recently-concluded International Series here an annual affair.

The 69-year-old former world number one, who has 88 professional titles under his belt, was hopeful of India's growth in the

"One of my initial focus points was to invest into the sleeping giant, which was the Asian tour. India is a sleeping giant when it comes to Golf. I mean you just look what's happening in India with the game of golf, it has only just started, right?" Norman told select media on the sidelines of the Asian Tour event here on Sunday.

"For the next 25 years, which is a generation, India is right in the middle of them," he said.

Norman was the CEO of LIV, a breakaway league founded in 2022 and financed by Saudi Ara-

It has introduced some fresh rules like three-day 54-hole tournaments, instead of the traditional 72-hole four-day events. The LIV tournaments have also done away with the concept of weekend cut and all those who start get to play the entire tournament besides being entitled to prize money.

The International Series is a partnership between the Asian Tour and LIV but it adheres to the traditional 72-hole concept with a cut at the end of two rounds to ensure that players are entitled to points under the world golf ranking system, which has refused to recognise the 54-hole LIV events

The LIV events have also faced significant resistance from the existing PGA Tour (USA) and the European Tour, which claim that the parallel tour "disrupts" the sport by offering players higher prize money and a seemingly more relaxed rules struc-

Pragg beats Gukesh in final day tiebreaker to clinch Tata Chess title



WIJK AAN ZEE (NETHER-LANDS), Feb 3: The Indian juggernaut in international chess remained unstoppable as Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa fought through exhaustion and nerves to defeat world champion D Gukesh in a clash of compatriots to clinch the Tata Steel Masters title for the first time in his prolific career.

The bespectacled 19-year-old from Chennai, a city that has become the cradle of Indian chess, came from behind to upstage the 18-year-old world number three 2-1 in the tiebreaker of the event's 87th edition here on Sunday.

This was after both players ended up tied on 8.5 points after losing their 13th-round games. While Gukesh lost to fellow Indian Arjun Erigaisi, Praggnanandof Germany.

huge drama typical of two young players looking to win each and every game they played in the tournament as they played the tie-

day of his chess career, which began when he was a mere two years of age.

"Today is more special because I won the tournament. Definitely most stressful day," he responded. Praggnanandhaa faced the

the first game of the tie-break and it seemed like he had equalised easily in the middle game.

won, thanks to a blunder by Praggnanandhaa that cost him a full In a must-win second game of the tiebreaker, Praggnanandhaa

employed the Trompowsky opening, and this time Gukesh could claim a slight advantage with his black pieces "I was just trying to relax, to rest

a bit. It was a very difficult game. Against Vincent I didn't play anywhere close to the level I was playing here. I should buy something for Arjun. At some point I thought Gukesh was better," the former world youth champion quipped.

highlight. When I came here. I wanted to win but the field was very strong. I didn't really think about it much until yesterday," he

"I am completely exhausted. I get some rest now."

Man City thrashed 5-1 by Arsenal; Man United loses at home again in Premier League

LONDON, Feb 3: After a re- 30 minutes is not acceptable. cent uplift in their results, the pain returned for Manchester Stones said. "I'm angry, City and Manchester United in the Premier League.

City conceded a goal inside two minutes and was overwhelmed in the second half in a 5-1 loss at Arsenal, which trimmed the gap to leader Liverpool to six points on Sunday. United lost again at home, 2-0 to Crystal Palace, and now has seven defeats in 13 league games at Old Trafford this season — something not seen since the 1890s. The chances of City winning

a fifth straight Premier League title are surely over — the champions are 15 points behind Liverpool with 14 matches remaining — and they must have felt humiliated by the end of the game at Emirates that again demonstrated the new-found hostility be-

tween Arsenal and City. City arrived having won six of its last eight games in all competitions but all is still not right with Pep Guardiola's team, which let in a sloppy opener when Manuel Akanji was dispossessed near his own area and Martin Odegaard scored.

Haaland was goaded after that goal by Gabriel in a hangover from the spiky 2-2 draw between the teams in September but responded by equalizing in the 55th. Arsenal went back in front in the 57th through Thomas Partey's deflected shot and there were further goals from Myles Lewis-Skelly, Kai Havertz and Ethan Nwaneri as City fell apart in a similar fashion to the 4-2 loss at Paris Saint-Gerin the Champions League last month.

"How we played in the last United." (AP)

It's not us," City defender John upset.'

Arsenal reveled in the win. Lewis-Skelly, an 18-year-old defender, marked his goal by sitting down, crossing his legs and delivering a "Zen" celebration — one often used by Haaland. And when the final whistle sounded, the home team played Kendrick Lamar's "Humble" loudly around the stadium - surely a nod to Haaland telling Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta to "stay humble" after the 2-2 draw in September.

This is a thing that's been building up over a certain amount of time," Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice said. "With the Etihad at the start of the season and everything that went on there, you do have that fire in your stomach."

Arsenal was alone in second place, three points above Nottingham Forest and nine above fourth-placed City.

On the day locally born striker Marcus Rashford edged closer to a departure from Old Trafford, Manchester United lacked a cutting edge up front in the loss to Crystal Palace.

And there was more bad news Sunday for United with a tearful Lisandro Martinez carried off on a stretcher with a left knee injury – the latest injury to afflict the Argentina defender

Jean-Philippe Mateta scored both goals in the second half for Palace to end United's three-match winning run in all competitions — a streak coming after manager Ruben Amorim had called his team "the worst team, maybe, in the

Lewandowski scores winner as Barcelona beats Alaves to move closer to the top in Spanish league

MADRID, Feb 3: There was Alaves, which ended with no rout this time but Barcelona no attempts on target, stayed still prevailed with Robert inside the relegation zone with ond-half winner as the Catalan club beat Alaves 1-0 to move within four points of rival Real Madrid at the top of the Spanish league.

"It's not every time that we will be able to score three, four or five goals in a game," Lewandowski said. "We had to be patient and in the end we did what we had to do, which was to score one more goal than our opponent.'

Madrid lost 1-0 at Espanyol on Saturday after a run of 10 victories in its last 11 matches in all competitions.

Third-placed Barcelona is three points behind secondplaced Atletico Madrid,

which ended a twomatch winless streak in the league with a 2-0 victory Mallorca on Saturday. knew we had win this

match,

Lewandowski

"We needed the victory. We had lost too many points in the league already."

It was an unusually lowscoring game for Barcelona, which had claimed 14 goals in its last three matches — including a 7-1 rout of Valencia in the league.

Lewandowski scored his fourth goal in as many matches across all competitions, and his seventh in the last eight games.

The Poland striker scored from close range after a volley by Lamine Yamal from inside the area deflected off a defender.

Yamal had amazed the crowd only a few minutes into the game, using nifty moves to get past six defenders in a run that ended with Raphinha sending a shot wide of the net.

Alaves said Conechny sustained a head trauma and was expected to spend the night in the hospital.

> tory over 1 3 t h placed Celta

Valencia won two in a row at home in the league for the first time this

Sociedad 2-1 at home. It was the third straight league loss for Sociedad.

tory, with its last win in the competition coming against

earn the draw in Seville. (AP)

its last 11 matches in all com-

Barcelona midfielder Gavi and Alaves forward Tomás Conechny had to be substituted in the first half after a collision of heads while going for the ball about 10 minutes into the match at Montjuic stadium.

Gavi left the field on his own but Conechny was carried off on a stretcher and taken to a local hospital for further

> Second-to-last Valencia rebounded from the embarrassing 7-1 Barcelona with a 2-1

Vigo, which is winless in its last f i v e matches competitions.

season. It beat Real Sociedad 1-0 two rounds ago. Ante Budimir scored a goal in each half as seventh-placed Osasuna defeated 11th-placed

Osasuna won for the first time after nine consecutive league matches without a viclast-place Valladolid back in

Fourth-placed Athletic Bilbao missed a chance to move even closer to the top three after a 2-2 draw at ninthplaced Real Betis. Athletic twice came from behind to In the tie-breaker, there was

"I am still shaking, it was such a crazy day. I don't know how to express. I didn't really expect to win. Somehow things went my way," Praggnanandhaa told the official tournament website after his

Asked if it was the most tense

Benoni with reversed colours in

However, Gukesh had other thoughts as he kept trying and

> was also quite tired. I just want to During the tie-break, by just

keeping his position together, Praggnanandhaa patiently waited and capitalised on an unforced error from Gukesh to first knock down a pawn and then his technical abilities were enough to see the normal blitz games through with a 1-1 score.

This took the match into sudden death, where Praggnanandhaa drew white and once again Gukesh was better with some imaginative play on the queen side

WPL: UPW pick Chinelle in place of Alyssa Healy;

Women's Premier League

but at the same time elated to

right," said Healy, who cap-

Women's Ashes match against

The wicketkeeper batter had

nings of 440, as the home side

recorded a thumping innings

Henry, who represents West

Indies, has so far played 62

England at Melbourne.

RCB draft in Heather Graham, Kim Garth for the upcoming edition of the wickets against her name in Cricket Players Association

for Rs 30 lakh. Healy was ruled out of the third season of the WPL due to Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Introduction on the third season of the WPL due to Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Introduction of the third season of the WPL due to Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Introduction of the third season of the WPL due to Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Introduction of the third season of the WPL due to Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Introduction of the third season of the WPL due to Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Introduction of the third season of the WPL due to Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Introduction of the third season of the WPL due to Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Introduction of the third season of the WPL due to Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Introduction of the third season of the third season of the WPL due to Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), Introduction of the third season of the picked Heather Graham and "Unfortunately for me, I've Kim Garth as replacements for got a couple of months of feet Sophie Devine and Kate Cross up. I'm pretty bummed by that, respectively. Devine and Cross will not

have a little bit of downtime feature in this WPL due to perand try and get my body sonal reasons. The 35-year-old Devine has tained Australia in the recent

taken an indefinite break from the game to address her "well-"Player well-being is para-

mount to us - it takes precemade 34 in Australia's lone indence over everything else," Liz Green, NZC's head of women's high performance development, had said last week.

"Sophie's had excellent sup-

T20Is. She joins the Warriorz and from our own high performance unit staff, and every-Cross, the England all

rounder, is recuperating from a back injury Graham, the Australian all-

rounder, has played five T20Is and has eight wickets. Garth has represented Aus-

tralia in 59 T20Is, in addition to 56 ODIs and 4 Tests. She has 764 T20I runs and 49 T20I wickets.

Garth had previously played for Gujarat Giants (GG) in the WPL. Graham and Garth join RCB for ₹ 30 lakh each respectively.

The third edition of the WPl begins on February 14 in Vadodara. (PTI)

Marcus Rashford joins Aston Villa on Ioan after falling out of favor at Man United

and 122-run win.

LONDON, Feb 3: Marcus sion for disciplinary reasons. Rashford will look to reignite his career at Aston Villa after joining on loan for the rest of the season from Manchester United, where he has fallen out with recently hired manager Ruben Amorim.

The move was completed late Sunday, with neither Premier League club disclosing any more terms surrounding the deal. The Press Association and other sections of the British media have reported Rashford was joining Villa with a view to a permanent transfer for 40 million pounds (\$50 million) and that Villa was paying a loan fee as well as covering the majority of Rashford's salary, reportedly worth nearly \$400,000 a week.

The 27-year-old forward, one of the most famous players in the Premier League, had not played for United, his hometown club, since Dec. 12 amid concerns from Amorim about Rashford's commitment to training. He has also been overlooked for recent England squads and didn't play at the European Championship last year, after a season when he was dropped by United on one occa-

There was speculation about a move to Italy or Saudi Arabia, but Rashford is staying in England and now needs to prove to Villa manager Unai Emery he

Kajaria

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: UP in Chinelle Henry as a replace-

Warriorz on Monday drafted ment for injured Alyssa Healy

deserves playing time. Villa sold Colombia striker Jhon Duran to Saudi club Al-Nassr for a reported fee of 64 million pounds (\$80 million) on Friday so needed an attacking player to provide competition for Ollie Watkins.

Rashford scored 30 goals in the 2022-23 season, the most prolific of his career after bursting onto the scene early in 2016 at the age of 18, but hasn't approached that level since. He has seven goals in all competitions this season. Amorim recently said he

would rather put United's 63year-old goalkeeping coach in the squad ahead of someone who isn't fully committed in training, as he perceives Rashford. "The reason is the training, what I think a footballer should

do in training, in life and every

day. If things don't change, I

will not change," he said, "It's

the same situation for every



player. If you do the maximum and the right things then we can use every player." At one point, Rashford even acknowledged he was "ready for a new challenge." Rashford has made 426 appearances for United, scoring

138 goals, and made a name for himself for his off-the-field work during the pandemic when his lobbying led to the British government agreeing to keep funding meals for poor students after initial resistance. (AP)

MI Cape Town crush Pretoria Capitals by 95 runs

CAPE TOWN, Feb 3: MI Cape Town underlined their status as the SA20 table-toppers with a comprehensive bonuspoint victory over the Pretoria Capitals to complete a perfect record at the Newlands. Robin Peterson's team followed in the Paarl Royals' footsteps by becoming the second side to preserve an unbeaten home record with five victories here.

MI Cape Town finished on 35 points - a record points tally after the league phase.

The home team dominated the contest from the outset, putting up 201/5 before bundling out the Capitals for 106 to register a 95-run win. The new opening pair of Sediqullah Atal and Connor Esterhuizen displayed MI Cape Town's formidable depth with a stunning 133-run stand for the first wicket.

Left-hander Sediqullah royally entertained the Newlands crowd with a dashing 46-ball 77 (4x6, 6x6), while Esterhuizen also pummelled 69 off 43 balls

(6x4, 3x6).Delano Potgieter added the extras with a 15-ball 26 to power MI to the highest total at Newlands this season. (PTI)

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12 THE HILLS TIMES

We want to play high-risk, high-reward cricket in T20s: Gambhir



MUMBAI, Feb 3: India head coach Gautam Gambhir said the team is ready to push the barriers in T20 Internationals with the adoption of a fresh "high-risk, high-reward" approach, and the target is now "to get 250-260 regularly" in the

That shift in mindset was evident in India's 4-1 mauling of England in the just-concluded five-match series.

In the fourth T20I at Pune, India kept attacking England despite losing wickets to eventually set a match-winning 181 for 9, and at Mumbai on Sunday, the hosts raced to 247 for 9, their fourth highest total in this format.

"That's the kind of T20 cricket we want to play. We don't want to fear losing a game of cricket. We want to play high-risk, high-reward cricket. And these guys have adopted that ideology really well," Gambhir told the host broadcaster after the match on Sunday.

tall totals in the vicinity of 250 in every game, and he doesn't mind getting out for a low score in some matches while attempting to achieve the task.

"We want to try and get to 250-260 regularly. And in trying to do that, there'll be games where we'll get bundled out for 120-130. And that is what T20 cricket is all about.

'Unless and until you don't play that high-risk cricket, you won't get those big rewards as well. Most importantly, I think we're on the right track. Come those big tournaments, we want to continue playing this way and we don't want to fear losing anything," he

"I think the ideology of this T20 team is based on selflessness and fearlessness, and I think in the last six months, these guys have done it day in, day out.' Gambhir used the breathtaking 54-ball

Gambhir said they are looking to post 135 of Abhishek Sharma to further validate his point.

"We want to keep backing players like Abhishek Sharma. We have to be patient with these boys. I haven't seen a better T20 hundred against bowlers who are bowling at 140-150 kph consistently," he

Gambhir also lauded spinner Varun Chakravarthy for reinventing himself and coming back stronger to international cricket.

"I think his transformation from IPL to international T20 cricket has been phenomenal. This series was probably the benchmark as well because England is a high-quality side.

"They've got some really quality cricketers and the kind of surfaces we've played on - I think they were fantastic batting wickets and the way he's bowled those tough overs has been phenome-

Chakravarthy was the highest wickettaker in the series with 14 scalps at an av-

erage of 9.85 and economy rate of 7.66. There were talks about rifts in the Indian dressing room after the team's disastrous outing in the Border-Gavaskar

Trophy series against Australia. Gambhir said everything will fall in place once the team returns to winning

"They (these players) have played a lot of cricket against each other. That's all Indian cricket is all about us.

"When results start going your way, everything goes well. Our players know what it means to represent 140-150 crore Indians," he added.

On the controversy surrounding Harshit Rana coming in as a concussion sub for Shivam Dube in the previous match at Pune, Gambhir said rather lightly: "He (Dube) probably bowled four overs today." (PTI)

U-19 Women's WC: Trisha,

Kamalini, Aayushi, Vaishnavi

in Team of the Tournament

Mr Dependable Michael Bevan inducted to Cricket Australia"s Hall of Fame

MELBOURNE, Feb 3: Former batter Michael Bevan, widely regarded as one of the greatest ODI finishers who displayed impeccable game awareness and mastered difficult run chases with minimal risk, has been inducted to Cricket Australia's Hall of Fame.

The 54-year-old, who was a part of Australia's 1999 and 2003 World Cup-winning teams, made 6912 ODI runs at a brilliant average of 53.58 in 232 games, batting in middle-order, mostly at number

During his career that ran from 1994 to 2004, Bevan exemplified maximum returns at minimum risk, and was a genius in keeping the required rate during chases in check by picking singles and twos that would often lull the opposition and ultimately steer Australia over the line.

"Congratulations to former Australian player Michael Bevan on his induction to the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame," Cricket Australia posted on X.

Speaking to 'cricket.com.au',

Karbi Anglong district Khel Maharon

2.0 concludes

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Feb 3: In the con-

cluded Khel Maharon 2.0, 2025,

Karbi Anglong district, held

from February 2 to 4 at Han

janglangso Sports Complex, and

in chess competition in women's

category, Gitawali Boruah has

won in first, Nirola Beypi in sec-

ond, Debina Bora Gogoi in

third, Gangutri Borah in fourth

and Anjana Rabhain fifth posi-

tion respectively. They will be

representing Karbi Anglong at

While in the men's category

the five final rankings are Robi

Singh Teron, Welson Timung,

Sarjon Rongphar, Thong Teron

and Bapuram Engti. The men

category in State Khel Maharan,

will be representing the district.

General secretary, Karbi Ang-

long District Chess Association,

Girish Chandra Borah informed.

Tickets for India's CT

matches to go on sale

from AED 125 (INR 2,900 ap-

already gone on general sale last

"Tickets for the much-antici-

pated final, set to take place on

Sunday, 9 March, will be released following the conclusion

of the first semi-final in Dubai,'

the ICC said. The Champions

Trophy will feature the world's

top eight teams, competing in 15

high-stakes matches over 19

days, with every game crucial in

the quest to reign in the coveted

white jackets. (PTI)

week.

the state-level Khel Maharon.



the imposing left-hander, who has also dabbled in coaching, said his

understanding of the format. "When I reflect on my one-day career, and get an understanding

of why I performed like I did, how I was able to manage the innings, or the run rate...I think that was sort of natural to me," he

"Minimising risk, understanding which bowlers to target, what types of shots to play in certain situations, and the ability to understand when to put your foot down, and when to take the foot off the accelerator as well...(were) the principles that I used," he added the owner of 67 unbeaten ODI knocks who struck 46 halfcenturies and six hundreds in the

He could never really replicate that success in Tests and Bevan said he accepted that the traditional form was not really meant for him quite early. Bevan played only 18 Tests. He made his debut in 1994 and played the five-day game only till 1998.

"I wasn't ready to play Test cricket. I had my own demons,'

His long-time captain Steve

ethic in the nets and in his book. he mentioned that Bevan "would literally invent strokes to fuel his search for greatness and his desire to attain new levels of excel-

evan could maneuver Australia out of trouble with his tenacity and the ability to find the gaps in the tightest fields to keep the scoreboard ticking and eventually chase down targets for victories by the thinnest of margins.

"...I felt with the one-day game, I always did what I did had the ability to win close games, and that was always there. It wasn't something that I learned or had to go through, it was really just intrinsic, which is kind of a bit weird," he said of his career.

"...I was just matched with the finishing role and the number six in one-day cricket. I'm not going to say 'it felt easy', because it didn't, but I felt aligned with being the reliable, dependable person in a pressure situation," he added. (PTI)

women's Under-19 T20 World Cup with four players from the country, including the swashbuckling G Trisha, finding a place in the line-up. India outclassed South Africa by nine wickets in the final here on

Sunday to defend the title that they had first won in 2023. The hard-hitting Trisha, who was named Player of the Tournament, her opening partner G Kamalini

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 3:

Newly-crowned champions India

dominated the ICC's 'Team of the

Tournament' for the just-concluded

along with left-arm spin pair of Vaishnavi Sharma and Ayushi Shukla made it to the team, the ICC said in a statement. Trisha was also the top run-getter in the tournament, making 309 runs

with a hundred against Scotland, the first-ever three-digit score in the showpiece.

also picked up seven wickets with her handy leg-spin.

Kamalini gave solid support to Trisha at the pole position, making 143 runs and her most important innings was an unbeaten 56 from 50 balls against England in the semifi-

nal to send India into the final. Aayushi took 14 wickets in the tournament and she grabbed two for 9 against SA in the final.

Vaishnavi, who bagged 17 wickets, recorded a sensational 5/5 against Malaysia including a hat-

South Africa's Jemma Botha, England's Davina Perrin, and Australia's Caoimhe Bray, all of whom scored more than 100 runs over the course of the competition, too found a place in the team.

Sri Lanka's Chamodi Praboda, Puja Mahato of Nepal and England's Katie Jones were the other members of the team, with South Africa's Kayla Reyneke as the capruns at a strike rate of over 147. She Nini was named 12th player following her six wickets across the tour-

Abhishek Sharma's innings was as clean a ball striking as I have seen: Jos Buttler

MUMBAI, Feb 3: England captain Jos Buttler has heaped high whirlwind 54-ball 135 in India's 150-run win in the fifth T20I here, describing the record knock as one of the finest examples of "clean ball striking".

Abhishek entered record books with the second fastest T20I century by an Indian batter off 37 balls and hit 13 sixes -- the most in an innings for any player from the country, powering the hosts to 247 for

"Yeah, (we are) obviously disappointed (with the result), they (India) played a fantastic batting innings. Î think credit to Abhishek Sharma, I thought that's as clean a ball striking as I've seen, I thought he played fantastically well," Buttler told the media after India recorded their second biggest T20I win by runs on Sunday.

Buttler denied England were think of what more could you do, "shellshocked" from Abhishek's how could we get him out, how praise on Abhishek Sharma for onslaught on his bowlers but said could we slow him down and, but there were only two options for his

side — either to go boom or bust. "We always sit down and think what more could we have done or how we could have stopped him, but some days I think you have to give a lot of credit to the opposition, I thought he played brilliantly well," Buttler said.

"Shellshocked's not quite the word, I think. It can be difficult sometimes when a player gets on a roll and they play as well as he did," Buttler said.

"Looking back at the last IPL, him and Travis Head were the same at the top of the order for Sunrisers (Hyderabad) and obviously he's brought that into India."

"He (Abhishek) played a brilliant credit the opposition. You always chase that down.(PTI)

yeah, credit to us for, you know, sticking in there and fighting back and keeping them down to 240 after the start they got," Buttler said. The England captain acknowledged the pitch remained the same for his batters as the visitors were bowled out for 97 in 10.3 overs with Phil Salt scoring a 23-ball 55.

"I've played in a few games like this and it generally goes one of two ways, you either get actually somewhere near or you fall in a heap and today was that day," he

said. "The way Phil Salt went out there and struck the ball, it was obviously a really good wicket, you needed someone to go with him and one or two guys to catch fire innings and sometimes you want to and that's the way you're going to

Sanju Samson fractures index finger, out of action for five to six weeks

NEW DELHI, Feb 3: Star wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson has fractured his index finger after being hit by a Jofra Archer scorcher during the fifth T20 International against England in Mumbai and will be out of action for more than a month, side-lining him from the upcoming Ranji Trophy quarterfinals. It is learnt that Sanju has returned to his home base Thiruvananthapuram and will only start training after completing his rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy (NCA). he would need NCA's green light before returning to competitive action.

"Samson has fractured his right index finger. It will take him five to six weeks before he can resume proper nets. So there is no chance of him playing the Ranji Trophy quarter-final for Kerala (vs J&K) in Pune from February 8-12," a BCCI source in the know of things told PTI on conditions of

National Games: Sift Kaur Samra, Jonathan Anthony clinch gold

DEHRADUN, Feb 3: Punjab's Sift Kaur Samra and Karnataka's Jonathan Anthony secured gold medals in women's 50m 3 positions and men's 10m pistol events respectively at the ongoing 38th National Games here on Mon-

The 23-year-old Samra, an Asian Games gold medallist, produced a commanding performance to score an impressive 461.2 points to grab the top spot in a competitive final held at Maharana Pratap Sports College here.

"This feels like a comeback for me after the Olympics. I didn't take a break and kept training, so winning gold today feels special," Samra, who couldn't make the finals in Paris Olympics, said in a release.

"I'm pleased with how I executed my routine and the small details that made the difference. It's also wonderful to share the podium with Anjum, who's an incredible shooter." Her fellow state-mate Anium Moudgil, also from Punjab, claimed the silver medal with 458.7 points, while Telangana's Surabhi Bhardwaj Rapole took bronze with a score of 448.8. (PTI)

Abhishek Sharma on self-belief, fearlessness, and the Yuvraj influence

from Monday evening DUBAI, Feb 3: The tickets for MUMBAI, Feb 3: In a format as fickle as him in their countless sessions in myriad T20 cricket in which a batter is destined India's three group-stage Chamfor more failures than success, India's pions Trophy matches and the newest power-hitter Abhishek Sharma has first semifinal scheduled to take learnt quite early that self-belief and fearplace in Dubai will begin on lessness are essential to increase the prob-Monday evening, the ICC announced. This edition of the ability of a favourable outcome. It has not yet been a full year since the Punjab batter Champions Trophy is scheduled arrived at the international stage on the to be held across Pakistan and back of high promise in domestic cricket, Dubai from February 19. India including an immensely successful IPL will be playing their games in with Sunrisers Hyderabad in 2024. Dubai. The tickets, which start But at only 24, Abhishek has begun

threatening records which took several prox), will be available for purchase starting 5:30pm IST. years for others to create. His maiden T20I century was the joint-Ticket sales for the 10 third fastest for any Indian (46 balls) in matches scheduled in Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi, have

only his second match. On Sunday against England, his second T20I ton was the second fastest for any Indian (37 balls). In between, he smacked a 28-ball century to claim the joint-fastest hundred for

any Indian in the prestigious Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy. What is the secret of such towering success at a young age, one would wonder. The answer is not too complex for Abhishek, who grew up partnering Shubman

Gill for Punjab in the opening slot. Yuvraj Singh's imprints on Abhishek's flourish are hard to miss but to his credit, he has reciprocated on the field all that the great Indian all-rounder has sounded to

set-ups over the last few years.

"The focus was very much clear (during practice). Yuvi Paaji put all these things in my mind three or four years back," Abhishek told the media after his 54-ball 135 (13x6s, 7x4s) became the highest individual total by an Indian in T20Is, surpassing his friend Gill (126 off 63 balls in 2023).

"Yuvi paaji was the one to believe in me, and when someone like Yuvraj Singh is telling you that you are going to play for the country and you are going to win the games, obviously you try to think that okay I will play for India and I will do my best'," he said.

"They (Yuvraj and Punjab coach Wasim Jaffer) have played a major role in my cricketing career and they are going to continue doing that. But as I have said before, it is all because of him (Yuvraj)," he

It is only natural for a young cricketer to have self-doubt and insecurities, but Abhishek's success story tells that believing in the trust shown by well-wishers can go a long way in dealing with those. This support system also includes the Indian team management.

"Because of the way he (Yuvraj) has treated me in the past and (during) every innings, he is someone who is always there for me," said Abhishek, who made 484



runs in 16 IPL matches in 2024 at a strike rate of 204.21 with three fifties.

"He is the one guy I have always listened to and I think he knows better than me so I believe that," he added.

Abhishek said the confidence given to him by the team management to go allout and not worry about failures also

"I didn't do well in few matches before this series and when your captain and coach tell you that 'you have to play like this and we are backing you, and we will be there for you always', as a youngster,

that is the biggest motivation, I would say," he said.

"In South Africa, I remember Hardik (Pandya) Paaji and Surva (Survakumar Yadav) Paaji telling me that you will 100 per cent make some runs, but just believe

"In this series, obviously, Gauti (Gautam Gambhir) Paaji came back and then Surva Paaji. I feel really grateful that the way they believe in me. That's not normal for any player because that's the biggest motivation I would say for any young cricketer," he said.

And then there was Brian Lara who rates him very highly and gave him an idea that made a huge difference to his approach. He lit up the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy 2023-24 with 485 runs in 10 matches at 48.50 with two hundreds and three fifties. His runs came at a strike rate

"I practiced a lot of match scenarios. I did a lot of open nets. But there was one thing in my mind that Brian Lara had (once) told me, 'play your shots but make

sure you don't get out'. "I used to be careful that I won't get out to any bowler. That really helped me in

these few years," he said. While he has shown incredible promise in an incredibly unpredictable format, Abhishek knows how far he can go in making or breaking records, like Yuvraj's six sixes

"I don't think that record can be broken anvtime soon. I don't know if it can be broken at all. But if you consciously think about it while going in, then it won't hap-

"I think when you play your normal game, there are situations where you are in a zone and able to execute. I had asked Yuvi Paaji as well. He did not have any such plan of hitting six sixes but it happens when you are on the spot in such a zone," Abhishek added. (PTI)

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